

8. Future development of the project

8.1 Selection and design of the preferred route

Assessment of the route options requires a consistent set of criteria against which each option can be evaluated. These criteria need to ensure the major issues associated with the routes and their impacts are adequately covered in order to distinguish between the options. Major issues include:

- Road safety.
- Road user costs and benefits.
- Environmental and social impacts.
- Engineering factors, such as feasibility.
- Transport issues, such as corridor requirements.
- Socio-economic issues including impact on local businesses and access, and impacts on communities.
- Construction issues including staging and cost.
- Regional development and economic returns to the community.

The assessment framework was originally developed at an early stage of the project investigations and has been progressively refined following these investigations and after subsequent discussions and input from government agencies and the community.

A Value Management Study will be held following the route options display to provide input to the selection of a preferred route. The Value Management Study will involve a workshop with technical and non-technical representatives from a range of government, Council and community interests. Recommendations arising from the study will be considered as part of the subsequent evaluations of options.

8.2 Environmental impact assessment

Changes to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

The NSW Parliament passed the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Infrastructure and Other Planning Reform) Act 2005 No 43* on 16 June 2005. This amendment came into force on 1 August 2005.

The amendment introduces a new Part 3A to the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (“the EP&A Act”) to cover the assessment of major infrastructure development. This type of development was previously assessed under Part 4 and/or Part 5 of the EP&A Act.

Application of Part 3A of the EP&A Act to the Wells Crossing to Iluka Project

By an order gazetted on 29 July 2005, the Minister for Planning declared that Part 3A applies to all projects for which the proponent is also the determining authority and which otherwise would have required an EIS to be obtained under Part 5.

Within the meaning of Part 5 of the EP&A Act, the RTA is both the proponent and the determining authority for the Wells Crossing to Iluka Road Project. However, the RTA has not yet determined whether an EIS under Part 5 of the Act would be required for this Project, and will not make that decision until a preferred route is selected. It is therefore too early to say whether Part 3A would apply to this project. If Part 3A does not apply, the project would be assessed under Part 4 or 5 of the EP&A Act.

Assessment under Part 3A of the EP&A Act

The level of environmental assessment required for a proposal under Part 3A would be determined by the Director-General of Planning, who issues environmental assessment requirements after consultation with the relevant public authorities and local Councils. When completed, the environmental assessment would be publicly exhibited and submissions would be sought. The RTA may be asked to prepare a report on the submissions and revise its statement of commitments. It would also consider modifications to the project to minimise environmental impacts. The Department of Planning may request the RTA to display, for public information, a Preferred Project Report which identifies proposed modifications.

The Department of Planning would consider the environmental assessment, the public submissions and any report requested from the RTA in recommending to the Minister for Planning whether the project should be approved.