

REFERRAL OF A PROJECT FOR A DECISION ON THE NEED FOR ASSESSMENT UNDER THE *ENVIRONMENT EFFECTS ACT 1978*

REFERRAL FORM

The *Environment Effects Act 1978* provides that where proposed works may have a significant effect on the environment, either a proponent or a decision-maker may refer these works (or project) to the Minister for Planning for advice as to whether an Environment Effects Statement (EES) is required.

This Referral Form is designed to assist in the provision of relevant information in accordance with the *Ministerial Guidelines for assessment of environmental effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978* (Seventh Edition, 2006). Where a decision-maker is referring a project, they should complete a Referral Form to the best of their ability, recognising that further information may need to be obtained from the proponent.

It will generally be useful for a proponent to discuss the preparation of a Referral with the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) before submitting the Referral.

If a proponent believes that effective measures to address environmental risks are available, sufficient information could be provided in the Referral to substantiate this view. In contrast, if a proponent considers that further detailed environmental studies will be needed as part of project investigations, a more general description of potential effects and possible mitigation measures in the Referral may suffice.

In completing a Referral Form, the following should occur:

- Mark relevant boxes by changing the font colour of the 'cross' to black and provide additional information and explanation where requested.
- As a minimum, a brief response should be provided for each item in the Referral Form, with a more detailed response provided where the item is of particular relevance. Cross-references to sections or pages in supporting documents should also be provided. Information need only be provided once in the Referral Form, although relevant cross-referencing should be included.
- Responses should honestly reflect the potential for adverse environmental effects. A Referral will only be accepted for processing once DPCD is satisfied that it has been completed appropriately.
- Potentially significant effects should be described in sufficient detail for a reasonable conclusion to be drawn on whether the project could pose a significant risk to environmental assets. Responses should include:
 - a brief description of potential changes or risks to environmental assets resulting from the project;
 - available information on the likelihood and significance of such changes;
 - the sources and accuracy of this information, and associated uncertainties.
- Any attachments, maps and supporting reports should be provided in a secure folder with the Referral Form.
- A CD or DVD copy of all documents will be needed, especially if the size of electronic documents may cause email difficulties. **Individual documents should not exceed 2MB.**

- A completed form would normally be between 15 and 30 pages in length. Responses should not be constrained by the size of the text boxes provided. Text boxes should be extended to allow for an appropriate level of detail.
- The form should be completed in MS Word and not handwritten.

The party referring a project should submit a covering letter to the Minister for Planning together with a completed Referral Form, attaching supporting reports and other information that may be relevant. This should be sent to:

Postal address

**Minister for Planning
PO Box 500
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002**

Couriers

**Minister for Planning
Level 17, 8 Nicholson Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002**

In addition to the submission of the hardcopy to the Minister, separate submission of an electronic copy of the Referral via email to ees.referrals@dpcd.vic.gov.au is encouraged. This will assist the timely processing of a referral.

PART 1 PROPONENT DETAILS, PROJECT DESCRIPTION & LOCATION

1. Information on proponent and person making Referral

Name of Proponent:	VicRoads
Authorised person for proponent:	Ewen Nevett
Position:	Project Director – Western Highway
Postal address:	PO Box 148, Wendouree VIC 3355
Email address:	ewen.nevett@roads.vic.gov.au
Phone number:	(03) 5309 1050
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Person who prepared Referral:	Grant Deeble
Position:	Team Leader Planning
Organisation:	VicRoads
Postal address:	PO Box 148, Wendouree, Vic 3355
Email address:	grant.deeble@roads.vic.gov.au
Phone number:	03 5309 1071
Facsimile number:	03 5309 1099
Available industry & environmental expertise: (areas of 'in-house' expertise & consultancy firms engaged for project)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecology Partners Pty Ltd was appointed to conduct a standard assessment of the existing flora and fauna and make a Net Gain Assessment. • Vincent Clark & Associates was appointed to conduct a cultural heritage desktop study. • CPG Australia were engaged to undertake a traffic analysis between Ballarat and Stawell

2. Project – brief outline

Project title:	Western Highway Project – Stage 3 (Ararat to Stawell)
Project location: (describe location with AMG coordinates and attach A4/A3 map(s) showing project site or investigation area, as well as its regional and local context)	<p>This section of the Western Highway Project begins at the end of the 80 km/h speed zone north of Ararat and finishes at the start of the 80 km/h speed zone, approaching Stawell on the Adelaide bound lane. The project area is shown in Figure 1.</p> <p>Ararat: 5874675 N 669965 E (approx.) Stawell: 5894860 N 658052 E (approx.)</p>
Short project description (few sentences):	<p>The Ararat to Stawell section of the Western Highway is approximately 24km long, commencing about 204 km west of Melbourne, north of Ararat and finishing south of Stawell in central Victoria.</p> <p>The works will include a combination of duplicated carriageway and realigned dual carriageway containing rail and watercourse crossings as appropriate. The township of Great Western will be bypassed by the proposed development. The corridor is shown in Figure 1 with an area of interest for the identification of a preferred alignment option shaded within Figure 2 to Figure 4, with final route selection subject to detailed assessment and design investigations</p>

3. Project description

Aim/objectives of the project (what is its purpose / intended to achieve?):

The overarching objectives of the Western Highway Project are to:

- Allow safe overtaking at all times and eliminate traffic queuing
- Decrease travel time
- Improve safety for motorists
- Better efficiency of freight movements between important manufacturers in regional areas

In meeting these objectives the project deliverables to be met are as follows:

- Minimise delays for all traffic
- Reduce crash rate
- Minimise impact on environment, vegetation and cultural heritage
- Minimise impact on services
- Minimise maintenance costs

Background/rationale of project (describe the context / basis for the proposal, eg. for siting):

The Australian Government made a commitment to fund this Project under its Nation Building Program with an initial contribution of \$404 million on the basis that the Victorian Government contributes 20% of the total project cost. The Victorian Government included a funding commitment of \$101 million towards the Project in the Victorian Transport Plan, released in December 2008.

The Ararat to Stawell section of the highway is the third of three segments. The study does not include bypasses of either town, as these are intended to be addressed separately if (and when) the need arises.

Main components of the project (nature, siting & approx. dimensions; attach A4/A3 plan(s) of site layout if available):

The project is likely to comprise of a combination of the following, the extent of which will be determined by the options selected through further ongoing assessment:

- duplication - adding a second carriageway adjacent to the existing highway (the existing highway is retained and used as one of the two carriageways) and
- realignment - construction of a dual carriageway on a new alignment (the existing carriageway is retained as a service road providing access to properties and local roads).

The two carriageways will be separated by a central median. The Right-of-Way (ROW, or road reservation) requirements assumed for this project are an additional 50m in addition to the existing road reserve width for a duplication, and 80m width for realigned dual carriageway.

The township of Great Western will be bypassed with a new alignment to be constructed either east or west of the town, subject to further assessment and design investigations.

The existing railway line presents a constraint within the corridor in terms of potential alignments and where it can sensibly be crossed. New crossings are likely to be required depending on the selected alignment. Railway crossings will be grade-separated.

Intersection treatment with local roads will be designed appropriate to the traffic volumes.

Ancillary components of the project (eg. upgraded access roads, new high-pressure gas pipeline; off-site resource processing):

Local access roads may require upgrading as part of the Project. An Access Strategy will be developed and implemented to ensure that access to properties and local roads is retained through the use of service roads where necessary. Utility services may need to be relocated.

Key construction activities:

Construction of new pavement, stream crossings and railway overpasses will predominately occur separate to the existing carriageway for the majority of the corridor. Some modifications to the existing highway close to Ararat and Stawell will be required to merge dual carriageway into a single carriageway into the towns. The construction methodology will be designed to minimise the duration and extent of disruption to the existing road.

Works on the new pavement(s) will involve excavation, cut and fill (where necessary) and construction of new foundations. Traffic management measures will be introduced where applicable for construction vehicles.

Following the construction of the pavement, minor construction activities include line marking, installation of signage, landscaping and final clean up.

Key operational activities:

The duplicated Western Highway will be used for the same purpose as the current highway, that being to enable efficient passenger vehicle and freight transport movements between cities and towns.

Key decommissioning activities (if applicable):

The project will not be decommissioned; rather an on-going program of maintenance will be implemented.

Is the project an element or stage in a larger project?

No Yes If yes, please describe: the overall project strategy for delivery of all stages and components; the concept design for the overall project; and the intended scheduling of the design and development of project stages).

The Western Highway Project is divided into three sections:

- Section 1 - Ballarat to Beaufort
- Section 2 - Beaufort to Ararat
- Section 3 - Ararat to Stawell

Section 1 is further considered to two stages: 1A (Ballarat to Burrumbeet) and 1B (Burrumbeet to Beaufort). 1A is under construction following a Planning Scheme Amendment. Discussions with DPCD are underway regarding the other stages.

A referral for section 1B was submitted on 25 June 2010.

A referral for section 2 has been prepared concurrently with this referral.

The project has been divided into stages to streamline the delivery of the project such that construction can commence section-by-section as the relevant approvals are obtained. Current timeframes seek approvals to be obtained by the end of 2011, with construction completed by 2016.

Is the project related to any other past, current or mooted proposals in the region?

No Yes If yes, please identify related proposals.

Two other concurrent proposals as per previous question:

- Section 1B (Burrumbeet to Beaufort)
- Section 2 (Beaufort to Ararat).

4. Project alternatives

Brief description of key alternatives considered to date (eg. locational, scale or design alternatives. If relevant, attach A4/A3 plans):

A broad corridor of interest has been developed for the duplication of the Western Highway from Ararat to Stawell, as shown in Figure 2 to Figure 4. The corridor has aimed to include the existing road reservation wherever possible and avoid existing known environmental and social assets (wherever practicable). Alignments within the broad corridor have been discussed with the community through various forums.

Brief description of key alternatives to be further investigated (if known):

The broad corridor of interest within which a preferred alignment is likely to be identified is shown in Figure 2 to Figure 4.

5. Proposed exclusions

Statement of reasons for the proposed exclusion of any ancillary activities or further project stages from the scope of the project for assessment:

As stated above, the overall project (Sections 1, 2 and 3) does not include bypasses of Beaufort or Ararat. These bypasses are subject to a separate needs assessment and provision of funding for potential construction at a later date subject to the appropriate consultation and planning processes. The need for bypasses would be identified by the relevant local authority.

The overall project – Ballarat to Stawell – has been separated into three sections to reflect the different environmental conditions (east and west of Beaufort in particular), but also the capacity of VicRoads to manage and coordinate the design, approvals and delivery of each stage.

6. Project implementation

Implementing organisation (ultimately responsible for project, ie. not contractor):

VicRoads

Implementation timeframe:

VicRoads are proposing the following indicative timeframes for key milestones:

- Approvals obtained: 2011
- Construction completed: 2016

Proposed staging (if applicable):

Construction will be ongoing following receipt of relevant approvals through to the completion of construction. It is envisaged that construction will be completed by 2016. Construction is unlikely to impede on the existing operation of the highway as works will either occur on a new carriageway adjacent to the existing highway or on a new alignment.

The phasing of the project, in terms of where works will occur at what time is yet to be determined and will be subject to detailed design and funding availability.

7. Description of proposed site or area of investigation

Has a preferred site for the project been selected?

No Yes If no, please describe area for investigation.

If yes, please describe the preferred site in the next items (if practicable).

The broad study corridor has been identified as 1500m either side of the existing highway, and an area of interest encompassing the existing road reservation and possible new alignments has been identified for further investigation.

General description of preferred site, (including aspects such as topography/landform, soil types/degradation, drainage/ waterways, native/exotic vegetation cover, physical features, built structures, road frontages; attach ground-level photographs of site, as well as A4/A3 aerial/satellite image(s) and/or map(s) of site & surrounds, showing project footprint):

The study corridor varies from undulating to predominately flat rural land. The township of Great Western is located along the corridor. The Ararat Regional Park is adjacent to the existing highway at the southern end of the corridor near Ararat, and the remainder of large vegetation along the corridor is predominately within the road reserves or scattered across rural land.

A significant proportion of the area comprises introduced vegetation for agricultural land use, however there are areas of roadside vegetation and significant ecological vegetation classes (EVCs) within and outside the existing ROW. Relevant EVCs are identified in Section 12 of this referral

There are a number of named creeks which are likely to be crossed as follows:

- Allenvale Creek
- Cobey's Creek
- Conoongella Creek
- Donald Creek
- Hyde Park Creek
- Robinsons Creek

A number of wineries have also established in the broader area, and along the existing highway, a number of residences have direct access to the highway with the dwelling and associated buildings often located within 50m of the existing ROW.

Aerial photography of the study area is shown in each of Figure 2 to Figure 4.

Site area (if known): Not known (hectares) NA

Route length (for linear infrastructure) approximately 24km **and width** 3000m (broad study area)

Within the identified area of interest for potential alignment options, the width of individual alignment option ROWs is either 50m (for and additional single carriageway duplication) or approximately 80m (for dual carriageway realignment).

Current land use and development:

The majority of the land within the corridor of interest is currently used as road reserve for the existing Western Highway. Other land is predominantly used for various forms of farming, including grazing, cropping and plantations. Isolated dwellings exist along the Highway either within minor townships, on farm land or within small rural subdivisions.

Description of local setting (eg. adjoining land uses, road access, infrastructure, proximity to residences & urban centres):

The local setting consists of a rural environment with two minor townships (Armstrong and Great Western) over a 24 km length. Adjoining land use is for farming activities. Local roads and property accesses exist at grade with the existing Western Highway. Overhead powerlines exist throughout the area as does the standard gauge freight rail line linking Melbourne and Adelaide.

Along the corridor, the land use is predominately privately owned rural land. Great Western contains recreational, business and residential land uses immediately adjacent to the existing road reserve.

The existing Western Highway is the only direct road linking Ararat and Stawell, and therefore carries all traffic between these centres and local roads which intersect the highway. Outside of township areas, there are a number of residences which have direct access to the highway.

Telstra and Optus telecommunication cables, and high voltage transmission cables are present within the corridor.

Planning context (eg. strategic planning, zoning & overlays, management plans):

The study corridor includes land within two planning schemes: Rural City of Ararat, and Northern Grampians Shire Council.

The land use within the Western Highway reservation is classified as Category 1 Road (RDZ1), and the railway reserve is zoned Public Use Zone 4 (PUZ4). The land use outside the highway reservation is predominantly rural, classified as Farming Zone (FZ) or Rural Living Zone (RLZ). RLZ is the predominant zone applied west of the highway between Armstrong and Great Western.

Other land use zones in the vicinity of the Western Highway between Ararat and Stawell include:

- Public Conservation and Resource Zone (PCRZ), (Ararat Regional Park),
- Public Park & Recreation Zone (PPRZ), (Sisters Rocks), and
- Rural Conservation Zone (RCZ), (Black Range).

There are three overlays applicable to the area:

- The Wildfire Management Overlay (WMO) is applied across the Black Range and surrounding area, and north of the Western Highway into Stawell. It is also applied west of Armstrong, and over the Ararat Hills Regional Park. This overlay is applicable in both the Ararat and Northern Grampians local government areas. The WMO aims to minimise the risk of bushfire damage through appropriate building and development. A detailed Fire Management Plan will be developed and approved by both local councils prior to works commencing.
- A Heritage Overlay (HO1) is applied to the Seppelts Champagne Cellars in Great Western, adjacent to the Western Highway in the township. This overlay provides for the protection of listed heritage places in Victoria by controlling developments to/adjacent to these sites. The Western Highway is not proposed to affect the Seppelts Champagne Cellars, as it will be diverted around the township of Great Western.
- A Vegetation Protection Overlay is also in place in areas either side of the existing Highway between Ararat and Armstrong. This overlay provides for the protection of native vegetation within the Ararat local government area. All approvals relevant to this overlay will be obtained with planning approvals relating to *Victoria's Native Vegetation Management – A Framework for Action* including net gain assessments and offset management plans. No unauthorised removal of native vegetation will occur during construction or operation of the Western Highway.

Local government area(s):

The project encompasses two local government municipalities:

- Rural City of Ararat
- Northern Grampians Shire Council.

8. Existing environment

Overview of key environmental assets/sensitivities in project area and vicinity

(cf. general description of project site/study area under section 7):

The key environmental assets/sensitivities in the project area and vicinity are:

- Ararat Regional Park (adjacent to the existing highway north of Ararat);
- Black Range (south of Stawell and west of the highway).
- Sisters Rocks (near Black Range);

Ararat Regional Park contains numerous relics of gold mining activity including shallow mine shafts, a mining dam and water races. Further it contains a number of large old tree sites and numerous Aboriginal sites.

The Sisters Rocks is a women's ceremonial place of significant Aboriginal heritage. The Sisters Rocks also has post settlement significance.

Black Range State Park contains significant Aboriginal cultural sites including rock shelters, rock art, quarries and at least one scarred tree.

Topography and land use – the topography of the study area is predominately flat with some undulations. Ararat Regional Park and the Black Range provide areas of ecological significance, without being designated State Parks. The land is predominately used for agricultural purposes, including a number of wineries which have established in the area. The highway currently bisects the township of Great Western and bypasses the smaller community of Armstrong. To the north east of Great Western, two sand/gravel quarries are operating under Work Authority (WA) 1149, WA606 and WA891. This land is zoned Farm Zone.

Water – the existing highway, and potential alignment options, cross five named water courses as identified in Section 7 of this referral. Local drainage lines may be present through the study area, which may require consideration as part of the detailed design. Local groundwater has not been investigated and is unlikely to be affected.

Flora and fauna – the study area predominately comprises introduced vegetation for agriculture, however there are significant areas of Ecological Vegetation Classes both within the existing road reserve and across private land. The EVCs within the area are identified below in Section 12 (Native Vegetation). Furthermore, significant flora and fauna species have been recorded along the Ararat to Stawell corridor as identified within a desktop study undertaken by Ecology Partners (2008) which reviewed online databases and the Atlas of Victorian Wildlife. Species of national, state and regional significance have been recorded across the wider study area, with some species recorded in the immediate vicinity of the existing highway. These are identified below in Section 12.

Archaeological and cultural heritage – areas of potential Aboriginal heritage significance have been identified through discussions with Aboriginal Affairs Victoria within 250m of the named water courses. The presence of individual sites (or artefacts) of significance, where currently known, has been discussed in a desktop assessment between Burrumbeet and Stawell, undertaken by Dr Vincent Clark and Associates. Sister's Rocks (Place ID SL414) near Stawell is a site listed on the Victorian Heritage Register, as are a number of sites within Great Western which will not be affected as the project will bypass this township. There are a number of scar trees scattered across the study area.

9. Land availability and control

Is the proposal on, or partly on, Crown land?

No Yes If yes, please provide details.

Current land tenure (provide plan, if practicable):

The road reserves adjacent to the existing Western Highway and relevant local roads are publicly owned. The rail reserves and infrastructure are owned and managed by VicTrack. Other land will be privately owned.

Intended land tenure (tenure over or access to project land):

The land ultimately required to develop the preferred alignment option will likely need to be acquired by VicRoads and be zoned Road Zone for use as a public freeway.

Other interests in affected land (eg. easements, native title claims):

Adjacent to the existing highway, but outside the road reserve, Telstra and Optus have installed fibre-optic communication lines.

10. Required approvals**State and Commonwealth approvals required for project components** (if known):

Approvals may potentially be required under the following legislation:

- *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic)
- *Heritage Act 1995* (Vic)
- *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic)
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic)
- *Water Act 1989* (Vic)
- *Wildlife Act 1975* (Vic)
- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth)

Have any applications for approval been lodged?

No Yes If yes, please provide details.

Approval agency consultation (agencies with whom the proposal has been discussed):

Ararat Rural City Council
 Department of Planning and Community Development
 Department of Sustainability and Environment
 Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (Cwlth)
 Northern Grampians Shire Council
 Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV)
 Martang Pty Ltd
 Wimmera Catchment Management Authority (CMA)
 Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority (CMA)

Other agencies consulted:

Environment Protection Authority
 Country Fire Authority
 Police, CFA
 Department of transport

PART 2 POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**11. Potentially significant environmental effects**

Overview of potentially significant environmental effects (identify key potential effects and comment on their significance and likelihood, as well as key uncertainties):

The following potential impacts may occur (and are not necessarily predicted to occur) during the construction and operation of the project.

- Damage to native flora, fauna and habitat areas including spreading of noxious weeds and pests. Impacts will be reduced by minimising the width of the footprint, developing

offset measures and implementation of various strategies. Such strategies may include an EMP, flora and fauna translocation plans, and conservation management plans for specific species if necessary.

- Damage to flora and fauna by fragmentation of habitat. This is especially relevant for road- and creek-side vegetation and in the vicinity of Ararat Regional Park. Alternatives such as the re-alignment of the road and design features to provide fauna linkages will be considered in this area. The design of the project will aim to avoid and minimise potential impacts.
- Damage to aquatic fauna and habitat, through physical disruption or water quality. This will be relevant at the creek crossings identified in Section 7 of this referral. Impacts will be minimised by appropriate bridge design including best practice water sensitive urban design treatments for freeway and stormwater runoff and implementing an EMP during construction which will include erosion and sediment control measures where appropriate.
- Damage to cultural heritage. Impacts will be minimised by developing and implementing a Cultural Heritage Management Plan. A number of sites have been identified within 500m of the existing Western Highway as discussed in Section 15 of this referral.
- Reduction of water quality from sediment and toxicant runoff from the site and roads. Impacts will be reduced by implementation of best practice water sensitive road design treatments for freeway and stormwater runoff and implementing an EMP during construction.
- Groundwater contamination and salinity. If road construction results in groundwater seepage, a drainage system will be designed to capture and channel groundwater from beneath the road.
- Noise nuisance to residents. In cases where the noise levels increase over +12dba or greater than 63 dba for residential developments, noise attenuation may be implemented in accordance with VicRoads noise policy. During construction, VicRoads will comply with the requirements of the EPA Guidelines for noise during construction.
- Visual impacts. Impacts will be minimised by the implementation of a Landscape Plan.
- Reduction in air quality, particularly in relation to dust during construction. Impacts will be minimised by implementing dust control measures such as stabilising disturbed soil through watering or sowing, undertaking rehabilitation of disturbed areas as soon as possible and the use of defined haul routes.
- Property severance and acquisition. A land acquisition overlay has not previously been developed or incorporated in planning schemes and therefore is a new impact for local communities. In addition, impacts will be minimised by implementing a land acquisition program in accordance with relevant legislative requirements
- Social impacts. VicRoads is currently undertaking an independent social impact assessment to understand the true impact of the route alignment options. VicRoads will consider any mitigation measure suggested that will have an overall benefit to reducing social impact to communities. VicRoads have undertaken extensive consultation with members of the community and have adjusted route alignment options to minimise the overall impact.
- Traffic disruption and traffic control. Traffic disruption will be minimised as far as practicable and detailed traffic plans will be put in place during construction which will include advance warning of traffic management measures causing temporary inconveniences.

12. Native vegetation, flora and fauna

Native vegetation

Is any native vegetation likely to be cleared or otherwise affected by the project?

NYD No Yes If yes, answer the following questions and attach details.

What investigation of native vegetation in the project area has been done? (briefly describe)

A desktop ecology assessment of the Western Highway between Burrumbeet and Stawell was completed by Ecology Partners Pty Ltd in September 2008. This investigation focussed on identifying the existing available information.

More recently, a detailed flora and fauna assessment of the Ararat to Stawell was undertaken by Ecology Partners in July 2010. The assessment report discusses the flora and fauna present in the study area, and assesses the impact of the works for each of the six option alignments, across a corridor extending 100m either side of the indicative alignments. Areas of native vegetation and scattered trees proposed for removal and their corresponding Habitat Hectare scores are also discussed within this report.

What is the maximum area of native vegetation that may need to be cleared?

NYD Estimated area 186 to 250ha, depending on the selected route within the 'area of interest'. This is based on a 250m wide corridor centred on the indicative alignment. The actual alignment will be approximately 80m wide but may be up to 100 metres wide in some cases. Impact on existing native vegetation will be avoided or minimised in concept and detailed designs.

How much of this clearing would be authorised under a Forest Management Plan or Fire Protection Plan?

N/A approx. percent (if applicable)

Which Ecological Vegetation Classes may be affected? (if not authorised as above)

NYD Preliminary assessment completed. If assessed, please list.

The following EVCs have been identified within the project area between Ararat and Stawell and may be impacted. These are situated within three bioregions:

- Goldfields
- Central Victorian Uplands
- Wimmera.

Bioregion	EVC Number	EVC Name	Conservation Significance
Goldfields	22	Grassy Dry Forest	Depleted
	55	Plains Grassy Woodland	Endangered
	68	Creekline Grassy Woodland	Endangered
	175_61	Grassy Woodland	Vulnerable
Central Victorian Uplands	48	Heathy Woodland	Depleted
	55	Plains Grassy Woodland	Endangered
	68	Creekline Grassy Woodland	Endangered
	175_61	Grassy Woodland	Endangered
Wimmera	48	Heathy Woodland	Depleted
	55	Plains Grassy Woodland	Endangered
	175_61	Grassy Woodland	Endangered

Have potential vegetation offsets been identified as yet?

NYD Yes If yes, please briefly describe.

Once identified, VicRoads will initially utilise the native vegetation within its Net Gain bank. If there are not enough matches within this bank, additional sources will be obtained through Bushbroker, Trust for Nature and discussion held with relevant Councils.

Other information/comments? (eg. accuracy of information)

NYD = not yet determined

Flora and fauna

What investigations of flora and fauna in the project area have been done?

(provide overview here and attach details of method and results of any surveys for the project & describe their accuracy)

A detailed flora and fauna assessment of the Ararat to Stawell was undertaken by Ecology Partners in July 2010. The assessment report discusses the flora and fauna present in the study area, and assesses the impact of the works for each of the six option alignments. This also included a simple investigation of waterbodies for aquatic fauna. Areas of native vegetation and scattered trees proposed for removal and their corresponding Habitat Hectare scores and offset requirements are also discussed within this report.

Have any threatened or migratory species or listed communities been recorded from the local area?

NYD No Yes If yes, please:

- List species/communities recorded in recent surveys and/or past observations.
- Indicate which of these have been recorded from the project site or nearby.

Ecology Partners (2010) identified a number of State-significant flora and fauna species as having been previously recorded within the Ararat to Stawell study area (referencing the Atlas of Victorian Wildlife). The tables below identify these species which are listed under the FFG Act, have been previously recorded within 10km of the existing highway between Ararat and Stawell and are likely to be found within the corridors of interest.

National and State Significant Flora – Known Occurrence or Habitat Present

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing	Likely Use of Study Area
Large-headed Fireweed	<i>Senecio macrocarpus</i>	VU, e, L	Habitat present
Fringed Sun-orchid	<i>Thelymitra luteocilium</i>	r	Habitat present
Crimson Sun-orchid	<i>Thelymitra X macmillanii</i>	v	Habitat present
Half-bearded Spear grass	<i>Austrostipa hemipogon</i>	r	Habitat present
Rosemary Grevillea	<i>Grevillea rosmarinifolia</i>	r	Known occurrence
Rising Star Guinea Flower	<i>Hibbertia humifusa</i> subsp <i>humifusa</i>	r	Habitat present
Pale-flower Crane's-bill	<i>Geranium sp 3</i>	r	Habitat present

VU – Vulnerable under the EPBC Act, L – listed under FFG Act, e – endangered (Advisory list of Threatened Flora Victoria, DSE 2005), r – rare (Advisory list of Threatened Flora Victoria, DSE 2005), v – vulnerable (Advisory list of Threatened Flora Victoria, DSE 2005)

A further six nationally significant species (five of which are FFG listed) have habitat present but a low likelihood of being present. An additional sixteen species of State significance are also considered to have habitat present but a low likelihood of being present.

National and State Significant Fauna – Known or Possible Residents and Frequent Visitors

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing	Likely Use of Study Area
Southern Brown Bandicoot	<i>Isoodon obesulus obesulus</i>	EN*, NT#, L	Possible resident
Golden Sun Moth	<i>Synemon plana</i>	CE*, EN#, L	Possible resident
Striped Legless Lizard	<i>Delmar impar</i>	VU*, EN#, L	Frequent visitor
Bush Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus grallarius</i>	EN#, L	Possible resident
Barking Owl	<i>Ninox connivens</i>	EN#, L	Possible resident
Powerful Owl	<i>Ninox strenua</i>	VU#, L	Possible resident
Hooded Robin	<i>Melanodryas cucullata</i>	NT#, L	Possible resident
Grey-crowned Babbler	<i>Pomatostomus temporalis</i>	EN#, L	Possible resident
Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	<i>Calamanthus pyrrhopygius</i>	VU#, L	Possible resident
Speckled Warbler	<i>Pyrrholaemus sagittatus</i>	VU#, L	Possible resident
Brown Treecreeper (south-eastern spp.)	<i>Climacteris picumnus victoriae</i>	NT#	Known resident
Painted Honeyeater	<i>Grantiella picta</i>	VU#, L	Possible resident
Diamond Firetail	<i>Stagonopleura guttata</i>	VU#, L	Possible resident
Brush-tailed Phascogale	<i>Phascogale tapoatafa</i>	VU#, L	Possible resident
Squirrel Glider	<i>Petaurus norfolcensis</i>	EN#, L	Possible resident
Lace Goanna	<i>Varanus varius</i>	VU#	Possible resident
Brown Toadlet	<i>Pseudophryne bibronii</i>	EN#, L	Possible resident
Yellow Ochre Butterfly	<i>Trapezites luteus luteus</i>	L	Possible resident

*EPBC, # Advisory List of Threatened Vertebrate Fauna in Victoria (DSE 2009), L listed as threatened under the FFG Act, EN endangered, CE critically endangered, NT near threatened, VU vulnerable

A further five species of regional significance are known or possible residents and/or frequent visitors.

Listed communities

Potentially affected EVCs are discussed earlier in Section 12 of this referral. Ecology Partners (2010) state that one FFG listed community may be present in the study area:

- Victorian Temperate Woodland Bird Community

The study supports habitat and species assemblages which define the community, and seven woodland dependant bird species were recorded during the recent assessment.

If known, what threatening processes affecting these species or communities may be exacerbated by the project? (eg. loss or fragmentation of habitats) Please describe briefly.

- Fragmentation of habitat and wildlife corridors, particularly along watercourses and roadside vegetation as a result of vegetation clearing along the proposed alignment.
- Invasion of native vegetation by Blackberry *Rubis fruticosus* L. agg could occur due to increased disturbance in the study area, promoting opportunities for growth and spread of this woody weed.
- Invasion of native vegetation by environmental weeds due to soil disturbance and subsequent weed invasion into native vegetation remnants into the study area.
- Loss of hollow-bearing trees from the study area as a result of removing large old trees.
- Spread of *Pittosporum undulatum* in areas outside its normal distribution as a result of disturbance.

Are any threatened or migratory species, other species of conservation significance or listed communities potentially affected by the project?

NYD No Yes If yes, please:

There is potential for all of the FFG-listed species in the tables above to be affected by the

project. However, some species are more likely to be affected than others. Potential affects to the Golden Sun Moth, Striped Legless Lizard, Brown Tree Creeper, Hooded Robin, Grey-crowned Babbler, Chestnut-rumped Heathwren, Speckled Warbler, Painted Honeyeater, Diamond Firetail, Powerful Owl, Barking Owl, Brush-tailed Phascogale, Squirrel Glider, Yellow Ochre Butterfly and Brown Toadlet may occur as a result of habitat removal due to clearing for the project.

Is mitigation of potential effects on indigenous flora and fauna proposed?

NYD No Yes If yes, please briefly describe.

Targeted surveys of listed species that are likely to occur within the study area will be completed prior to the commencement of works to ensure impacts to any species found onsite can be minimised. Detailed potential effects on species or communities will be determined once alignment options have been identified. Removal of native vegetation will be conducted in the presence of a qualified zoologist to salvage and translocate any displaced fauna.

VicRoads will seek to avoid and minimise impacting on native flora and fauna. Where impacts are unavoidable, vegetation offsets will be sought and implemented in accordance with the *Victorian Native Vegetation Management Framework – A Framework for Action*. A Construction Environmental Management Plan and relevant Conservation Management Plans (including translocation of species, as appropriate) will be prepared and implemented to manage potential impacts to species where identified as necessary. This may include scheduling appropriately to avoid clashing with sensitivities at certain times of year (i.e. breeding seasons) and implementing construction and micro-siting techniques, such as fencing areas of native vegetation to be retained.

Other information/comments? The Ecology Partners flora and fauna assessment was conducted outside the optimum period for flora surveys, therefore spring growing and flowering species may not have been detected. Further surveys will be required to detect these species.

13. Water environments

Will the project require significant volumes of fresh water (eg. > 1 GI/yr)?

NYD No Yes If yes, indicate approximate volume and likely source.

Will the project discharge waste water or runoff to water environments?

NYD No Yes If yes, specify types of discharges and which environments.

Are any waterways, wetlands, estuaries or marine environments likely to be affected?

NYD No Yes If yes, specify which water environments, answer the following questions and attach any relevant details.

Although no wetlands and marine environments are affected the alignment is likely to cross between 13 and 24 waterway/flood plains. The relevant watercourses include:

- Allenvale Creek
- Cobey's Creek
- Conoongella Creek
- Donald Creek
- Hyde Park Creek
- Robinsons Creek

Detailed design, construction methods and environmental management during construction will minimise or avoid the likelihood of adverse impacts to these watercourses.

Are any of these water environments likely to support threatened or migratory species?

NYD No Yes If yes, specify which water environments.

Are any potentially affected wetlands listed under the Ramsar Convention or in 'A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia'?

NYD No Yes If yes, please specify.

Could the project affect streamflows?

NYD No Yes If yes, briefly describe implications for streamflows.

<p>Could regional groundwater resources be affected by the project? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NYD <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, describe in what way.</p>
<p>Could environmental values (beneficial uses) of water environments be affected? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NYD <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, identify waterways/water bodies and beneficial uses (as recognised by State Environment Protection Policies)</p>
<p>Could aquatic, estuarine or marine ecosystems be affected by the project? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NYD <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, describe in what way.</p>
<p>Is there a potential for extensive or major effects on the health or biodiversity of aquatic, estuarine or marine ecosystems over the long-term? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, please describe. Comment on likelihood of effects and associated uncertainties, if practicable.</p>
<p>Is mitigation of potential effects on water environments proposed? <input type="checkbox"/> NYD <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, please briefly describe. Although no works within or affecting waterways are proposed, significant species have been previously recorded and have potential to be present, and targeted surveys for these species may be undertaken in the relevant watercourses to identify whether they are present. If so, appropriate mitigation measures will be identified to avoid or minimise impacts to those species. An Environmental Management Plan and Conservation Management Plans will be developed where necessary to manage the potential residual risks to water courses during construction, following incorporation of design features to ensure that bridge piles and footings are not located within the watercourse.</p>
<p>Other information/comments? (eg. accuracy of information)</p>

14. Landscape and soils

Landscape

<p>Has a preliminary landscape assessment been prepared? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, please attach.</p>
<p>Is the project to be located either within or near an area that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to a Landscape Significance Overlay or Environmental Significance Overlay? <input type="checkbox"/> NYD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, provide plan showing footprint relative to overlay. • Identified as of regional or State significance in a reputable study of landscape values? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NYD <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, please specify. • Within or adjoining land reserved under the <i>National Parks Act 1975</i> ? <input type="checkbox"/> NYD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, please specify. • Within or adjoining other public land used for conservation or recreational purposes ? <input type="checkbox"/> NYD <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, please specify. <p>The identified area of interest intersects public land, however the extent of impact will be determined following identification of a preferred option.</p>
<p>Is any clearing vegetation or alteration of landforms likely to affect landscape values? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NYD <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, please briefly describe.</p>
<p>Is there a potential for effects on landscape values of regional or State importance? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NYD <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Please briefly explain response.</p>
<p>Is mitigation of potential landscape effects proposed? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NYD <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, please briefly describe.</p>
<p>Other information/comments? (eg. accuracy of information)</p>

Note: A preliminary landscape assessment is a specific requirement for a referral of a wind energy facility. This should provide a description of:

- The landscape character of the site and surrounding areas including landform, vegetation types and coverage, water features, any other notable features and current land use;
- The location of nearby dwellings, townships, recreation areas, major roads, above-ground utilities, tourist routes and walking tracks;
- Views to the site and to the proposed location of wind turbines from key vantage points (including views showing existing nearby dwellings and views from major roads, walking tracks and tourist routes) sufficient to give a sense of the overall site in its setting.

Soils

Is there a potential for effects on land stability, acid sulphate soils or highly erodible soils?

NYD No Yes If yes, please briefly describe.

The identified area of interest intersects soils that form the Shepparton Formation. This area has potentially soft, expansive soils.

Are there geotechnical hazards that may either affect the project or be affected by it?

NYD No Yes If yes, please briefly describe.

Other information/comments? (eg. accuracy of information)

There is potential for contaminated soils in tips north east of Great Western that would require appropriate disposal if the preferred alignment option intersects this area.

15. Social environments

Is the project likely to generate significant volumes of road traffic, during construction or operation?

NYD No Yes If yes, provide estimate of traffic volume(s) if practicable.

Construction activities will result in additional vehicles being in the project area. The volume of construction traffic has not yet been determined however it is expected that this will result in a negligible impact on the overall traffic volumes.

Duplication of the Western Highway between Ararat and Stawell is not expected to generate significant extra traffic on its own, however the corridor is a major National route with a predicted growth factor of 2.4% annual growth rate for the total Western Highway corridor.

Is there a potential for significant effects on the amenity of residents, due to emissions of dust or odours or changes in visual, noise or traffic conditions?

NYD No Yes If yes, briefly describe the nature of the changes in amenity conditions and the possible areas affected.

Increased dust and noise emissions are common impacts from civil engineering construction sites and will be managed under an Environmental Management Plan developed by the Contractor upon award of the construction contract. Existing traffic conditions may be affected at times when construction occurs in close proximity to the existing highway.

Traffic conditions will change for residents with direct driveway access onto the existing highway. Alternative access arrangements will be developed for these residents.

Following construction, increased noise levels are likely to occur for a small number of residents along the corridor due to the construction of one or two new carriageways in closer proximity to their residence. A number of residences are likely to experience a slight decrease in noise levels due to a new carriageway carrying traffic further from their house than the existing highway.

<p>Is there a potential for exposure of a human community to health or safety hazards, due to emissions to air or water or noise or chemical hazards or associated transport? <input type="checkbox"/> NYD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, briefly describe the hazards and possible implications.</p> <p>The level of environmental impact caused by the project is considered highly unlikely to create health or safety hazards to human communities.</p>
<p>Is there a potential for displacement of residences or severance of residential access to community resources due to the proposed development? <input type="checkbox"/> NYD <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, briefly describe potential effects.</p> <p>Depending on the final route alignment chosen, VicRoads will need to acquire sufficient land to construct the duplicated highway. This will result in some land severance and direct highway access being removed. Of the alignment options remaining, land severance affects from between four and 10 properties, while direct highway access will be removed from between 10 and 23 properties.</p>
<p>Are non-residential land use activities likely to be displaced as a result of the project? <input type="checkbox"/> NYD <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, briefly describe the likely effects.</p> <p>Agricultural land will be unavoidably acquired for the delivery of the project.</p>
<p>Do any expected changes in non-residential land use activities have a potential to cause adverse effects on local residents/communities, social groups or industries? <input type="checkbox"/> NYD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, briefly describe the potential effects.</p> <p>Although it is unlikely that activities will be displaced as a result of the project the area of interest intersects Best's Winery. Depending on the eventual preferred option, this property may be severed between their vineyards and cattle land; however the Bests cattle area is subject to frost and based on feedback from the wineries owner, it is unlikely that grape vines would be planted there in the future.</p>
<p>Is mitigation of potential social effects proposed? <input type="checkbox"/> NYD <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, please briefly describe.</p> <p>Dust suppression measures will be implemented during construction as part of the Environmental Management Plan to be constructed.</p> <p>Noise walls will be installed in accordance with the VicRoads <i>Traffic Noise Reduction Policy</i>.</p>
<p>Other information/comments? (eg. accuracy of information)</p>

Cultural heritage

<p>Have relevant Indigenous organisations been consulted on the occurrence of Aboriginal cultural heritage within the project area? <input type="checkbox"/> No If no, list any organisations that it is proposed to consult. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, list the organisations so far consulted.</p> <p>Within the study area for this section, there is no Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) has been appointed to this area but there are two RAP applications currently before council which are Martang and Barengi Gadjin.</p> <p>VicRoads have consulted with AAV regarding aboriginal heritage matters in this area and Martang Pty Ltd. VicRoads will shortly commence consultation with Barengi Gadjin. Both RAPs will play an equal part in future cultural heritage assessments while their applications are before council.</p>
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What investigations of cultural heritage in the project area have been done?

(attach details of method and results of any surveys for the project & describe their accuracy)

A desktop assessment of cultural heritage was completed by Dr Vincent Clark & Associates in 2008. This survey identified the existing records of Aboriginal and European heritage places and sites. This assessment involved a 1km wide corridor (500m both sides) along the Western Highway from Burrumbeet to Stawell. Further field investigation will be required to determine the impact of the proposed works.

Is any Aboriginal cultural heritage known from the project area?

NYD No Yes If yes, briefly describe:

- Any sites listed on the AAV Site Register
- Sites or areas of sensitivity recorded in recent surveys from the project site or nearby
- Sites or areas of sensitivity identified by representatives of Indigenous organisations

Seven recorded scar trees and two artefact scatter sites have been recorded within 500 m of the existing Western Highway. The study area also includes ' Sisters Rocks', a women's ceremonial place of significant Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Areas of cultural heritage sensitivity are identified as being within 50 m of registered Aboriginal cultural heritage places or within 200 m of waterways. The study area includes a number of waterways as well as the registered places noted above. Therefore there are a number of areas of sensitivity in the project area, however the extent of the impact of each of the alignment options has not yet been determined.

Are there any cultural heritage places listed on the Heritage Register or the Archaeological Inventory under the *Heritage Act 1995* within the project area?

NYD No Yes If yes, please list.

There are a number of sites listed on the Victorian Heritage Register within Great Western. These will not be affected as it is not proposed to duplication the highway through the town.

Is mitigation of potential cultural heritage effects proposed?

NYD No Yes If yes, please briefly describe.

A mitigation strategy will be developed within a Cultural Heritage Management Plan if Aboriginal heritage sites are identified within the construction footprint.

Other information/comments? (eg. accuracy of information)**16. Energy, wastes & greenhouse gas emissions****What are the main sources of energy that the project facility would consume/generate?**

- Electricity network. If possible, estimate power requirement/output
- Natural gas network. If possible, estimate gas requirement/output
- Generated on-site. If possible, estimate power capacity/output
- Other. Please describe.

Please add any relevant additional information.

Fossil fuels (such as diesel, oil and hydraulic fluid) will be consumed during construction, however this cannot be quantified as the number and duration of construction vehicles has not yet been determined.

The completed project itself will not consume sources of energy.

What are the main forms of waste that would be generated by the project facility?

- Wastewater. Describe briefly.
- Solid chemical wastes. Describe briefly.
- Excavated material. Describe briefly.
- Other. Describe briefly.

Please provide relevant further information, including proposed management of wastes.

There is the potential for an amount of excavated material to be surplus to construction requirements. The quantity of such waste will only be known on adoption of the final route alignment, assessment of earthworks quantities and completion of geotechnical studies on site.

What level of greenhouse gas emissions is expected to result directly from operation of the project facility?

- Less than 50,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per annum
- Between 50,000 and 100,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per annum
- Between 100,000 and 200,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per annum
- More than 200,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per annum

Please add any relevant additional information, including any identified mitigation options.

One of the key objectives of the project is to improve the efficiency for the various road users which will reduce the operating costs for freight operators and reduce travel times. A result of having a more efficient road will be a reduction in CO₂ emissions. The project has set a target which will see a reduction in CO₂ emissions by 5% over 30 years.

17. Other environmental issues

Are there any other environmental issues arising from the proposed project?

- No Yes If yes, briefly describe.

Not yet identified.

18. Environmental management

What measures are currently proposed to avoid, minimise or manage the main potential adverse environmental effects? (if not already described above)

- Siting: Please describe briefly
The major environmental and social constraints were identified prior to the identification of the broad corridor of interest.
- Design: Please describe briefly
Concept and detailed designs are yet to be developed however environmental and social issues will be considered during design processes in order to avoid and minimise effects (i.e. avoid placing piles within stream beds, avoiding seasonal sensitivities for significant species)
- Environmental management: Please describe briefly.
A Construction Environmental Management Plan and/or Project Environmental Protection Strategy will be implemented. Where necessary, Conservation Management Plans will be prepared and include translocation provisions.
- Other: Please describe briefly

Add any relevant additional information.

19. Other activities

Are there any other activities in the vicinity of the proposed project that have a potential for cumulative effects?

No Yes If yes, briefly describe.

20. Investigation program

Study program

Have any environmental studies not referred to above been conducted for the project?

No Yes If yes, please list here and attach if relevant.

Has a program for future environmental studies been developed?

No Yes If yes, briefly describe.

VicRoads will, where necessary, engage specialists to undertake the studies and investigations deemed necessary as a result of this referral. It is currently anticipated that the following investigations may be required:

- Traffic and Transport
- Business and Tourism
- Land Use Planning
- Social
- Landscape and Visual
- Flora and Fauna
- Cultural Heritage
- Noise
- Surface water monitoring
- Hydrology and Hydraulics
- Geotechnical, Groundwater and Salinity

Consultation program

Has a consultation program conducted to date for the project?

No Yes If yes, outline the consultation activities and the stakeholder groups or organisations consulted.

A community meeting was held in Great Western on 11 November 2009 to inform the community on the duplication of the Western Highway from Ararat to Stawell and to seek input from the community.

A second community meeting was held in Great Western on 10 February 2010 to display a number of draft alignment options contained within the identified area of interest to the community and to seek community feedback.

Another community meeting was held on 21 July 2010 to help understand the individual concerns of the community, particularly the people that are directly affected.

Has a program for future consultation been developed?

No Yes If yes, briefly describe.

Additional consultation with stakeholders and the general public will be required, however the timing and scope of this has not yet been identified.

Authorised person for proponent:

I, Ewen Nevett.....(full name),

...Project Director – Western Highway.....(position), confirm that the information contained in this form is, to my knowledge, true and not misleading.



Signature

Date: 7/9/2010

Person who prepared this referral:

I, ...Grant Deeble.....(full name),

.....Team Leader Planning.....(position), confirm that the information contained in this form is, to my knowledge, true and not misleading.



Signature

Date: 7/9/2010

Figure 1 Study area: Ararat to Stawell

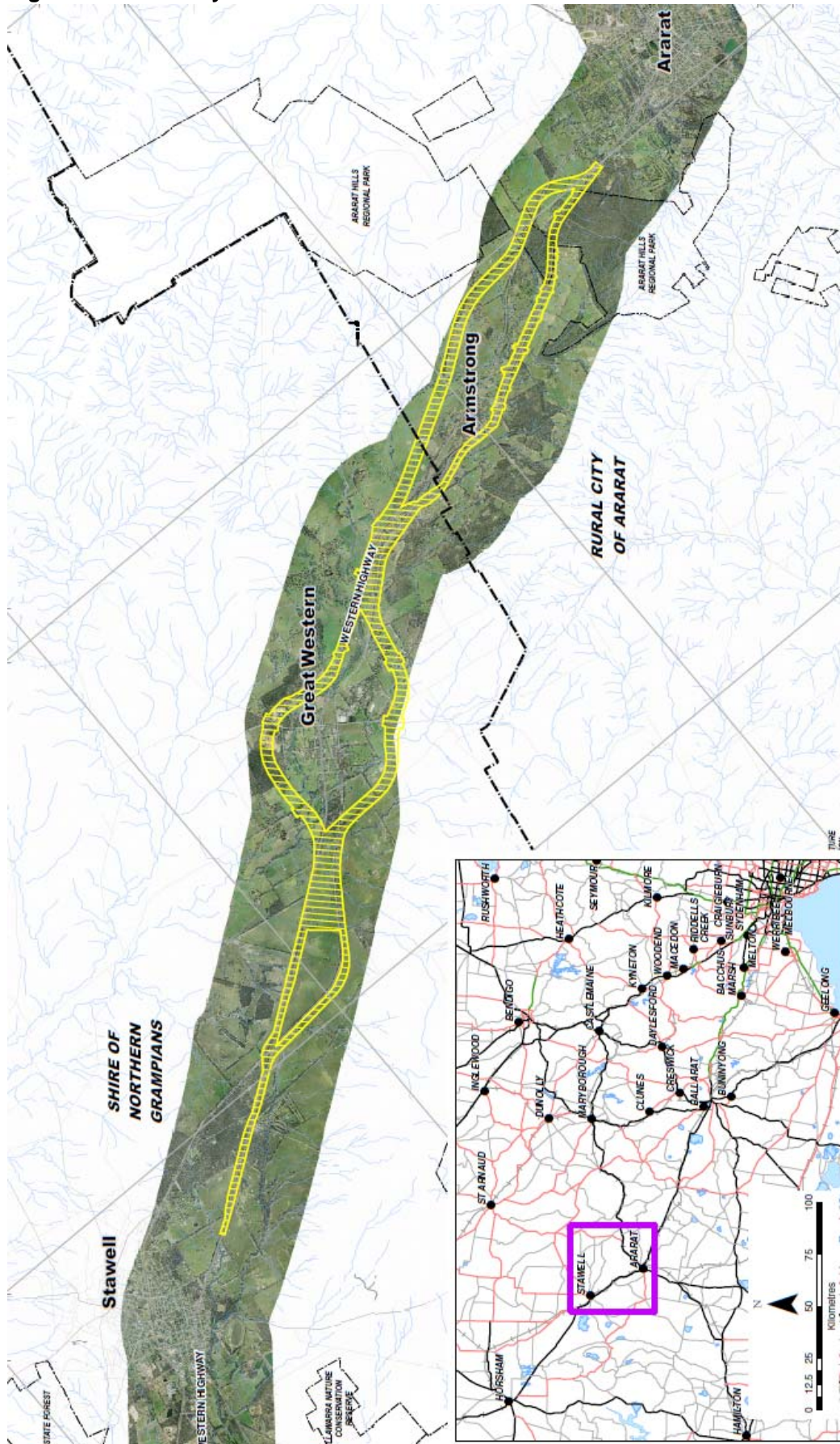


Figure 2 Area of interest for potential alignment options – southern section

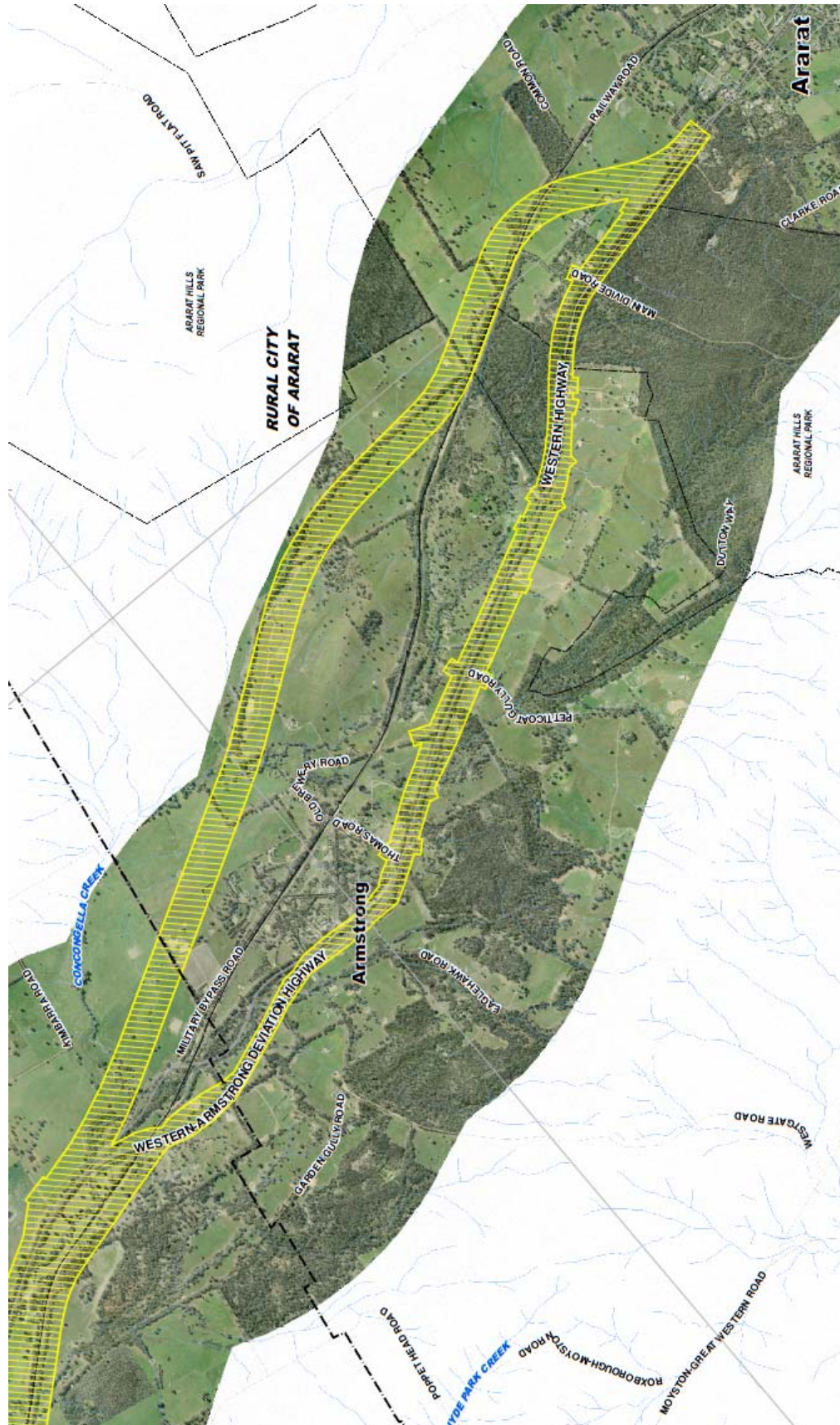


Figure 3 Area of interest for potential alignment options – central section

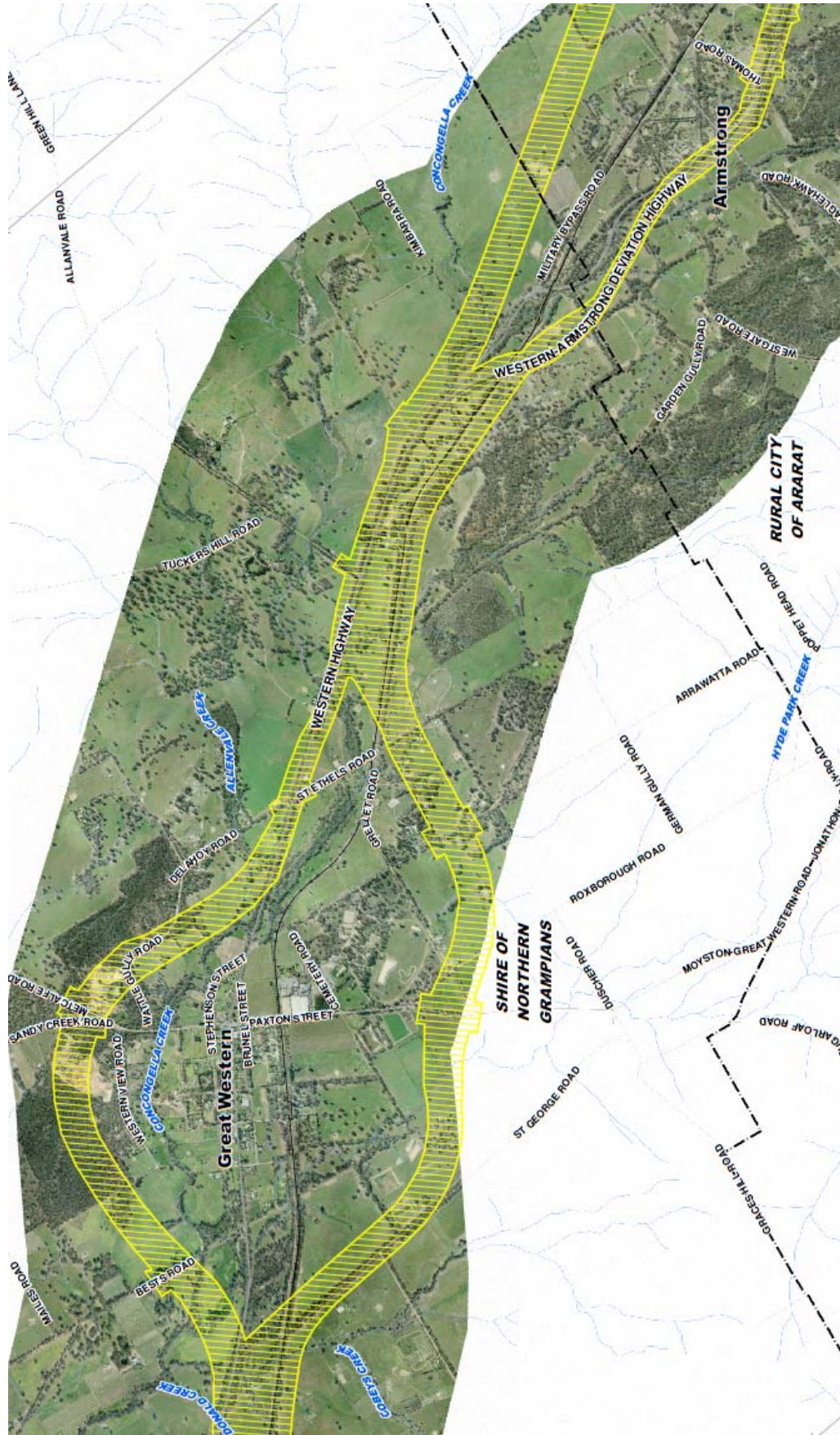


Figure 4 Area of interest for potential alignment options – northern section

