

PROJECT SUMMARY DOCUMENT

Environment Effects Statement

Beaufort Bypass



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1.1 Funding

The Victorian and Australian Governments have invested more than \$50 million to plan for a bypass of Beaufort. There is no funding for construction.



1.2 General

Regional Roads Victoria (RRV) is undertaking an Environment Effects Statement (EES) for a Western Highway bypass of Beaufort.

- The Western Highway is one of the state's busiest rural highways.
- Connecting Melbourne and Adelaide, it is a key transport link for freight and trade between Victoria and South Australia.
- Farming, grain production, regional tourism and a range of manufacturing services rely heavily on this highway.

1.3 Traffic volumes

- More than 6500 vehicles travel the highway west of Ballarat each day, including 1500 trucks.
- These traffic volumes are expected to increase to approximately 7500 by 2025 and 9500 by 2040.

1.3.1 Safety

- The Western Highway passes through the centre of the township of Beaufort.
- The highway on either side of the township is two lanes in each direction with speed limits of 110km/h and 100km/h.
- The highway reduces to one lane in each direction and 60km/h on the outskirts of town and passes numerous residences and small businesses.
- Essential services are located either side of highway (Neill Street) in Beaufort. Pedestrians regularly need to cross the highway for services such as education, health, community facilities and transport (train station).
- There is only one set of traffic lights at a key intersection (Lawrence Street and Neill Street) and although these pedestrian signals are frequently used, the movement of pedestrians within the shopping precinct often occurs at other, non-designated crossing points along the length of the street, posing significant

risk to pedestrians. There are no dedicated on-road bike lanes or bicycle facilities within the Neill Street precinct.

- The presence of larger vehicles within the narrow confines of Neill Street, and the interaction of these vehicles with cyclists and pedestrians, is a safety concern to the community.
- These large trucks utilising the existing road environment discourages the community from shopping or undertaking business transactions in Neill Street.

1.3.2 Crash information

The project is intended to improve road safety through reduced traffic volumes through the Beaufort township, resulting in reduced traffic and pedestrian interaction.

In the five-year period between 2016 and 2020 there have been nine crashes in the Beaufort investigation area.

Seven of these crashes have occurred on the Western Highway between Smiths Lane and Martins Lane, including one fatality.

1.4 Project objectives

- Improved safety, by reducing the number of trucks travelling through the town centre
- Improved freight efficiency, by providing trucks a smooth alternative route with less interruptions
- Increased future capacity for freight, with an upgraded route that can handle increased truck volumes.

1.5 About the project

The Beaufort Bypass will add a new 11-kilometre duplicated section of the Western Highway to bypass Beaufort, linking completed sections of the Western Highway duplication to the east and west of Beaufort. The project includes:

- Two interchanges with entry and exit ramps to connect the township to Western Highway at the east and west ends
- One road-over-rail bridge at the Melbourne-Ararat rail line
- Waterway crossings

- Noise reduction barriers
- Service and access roads
- An interchange to connect with the local road network at Beaufort-Lexton Road
- Three overpass bridge structures over the local road network.

1.6 Why RRV prefers option C2 alignment

- Option C2 was selected by RRV as a preferred alignment from three other shortlisted alignments (C0, A0 and A1) through the EES.
- Option C2 is located in a semi-rural area and takes a northerly direction.
- Our studies and technical investigations show that Option C2 has, on balance, the least impact across a variety of key selection criteria compared with the other three options (C0, A0 and A1) we presented in 2018.
- C2 has less impact on:
 - native vegetation
 - registered aboriginal sites

- historically important areas
- Camp Hill
- C2 also requires less land acquisition than Option A.
- While Option C2 is our preferred alignment based on EES studies, this is not a final decision and no approvals have been granted.
- You still have an opportunity to have your say on the EES and draft Planning Scheme Amendment through the EES public exhibition and Inquiry and Advisory Committee hearing process.
- During the exhibition of the EES, the EES main report, technical appendices, map book, summary report and the draft Planning Scheme Amendment will be available to the public for consideration.
- To learn more about option C2 and other alignments and their effects, as well as planning and environmental background please review the exhibited EES.

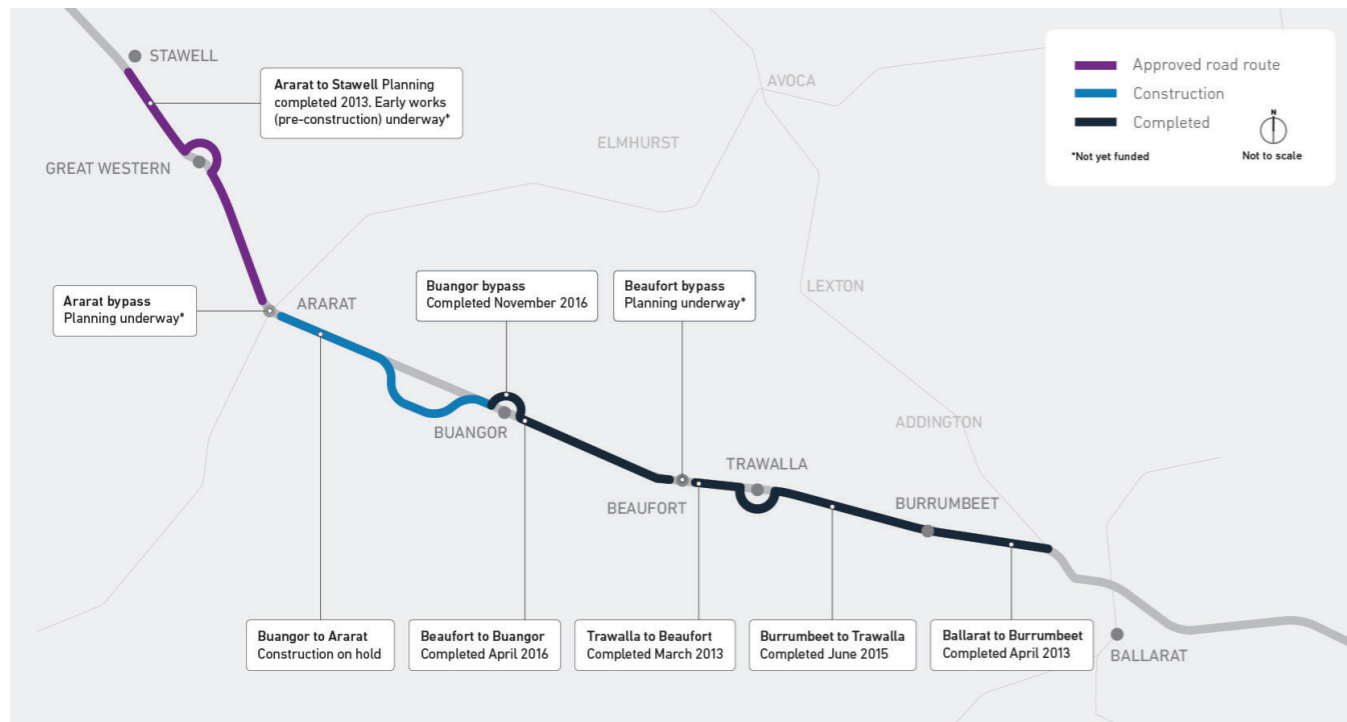


Figure 1 Western Highway duplication project overview map. Supplied by MRPV.

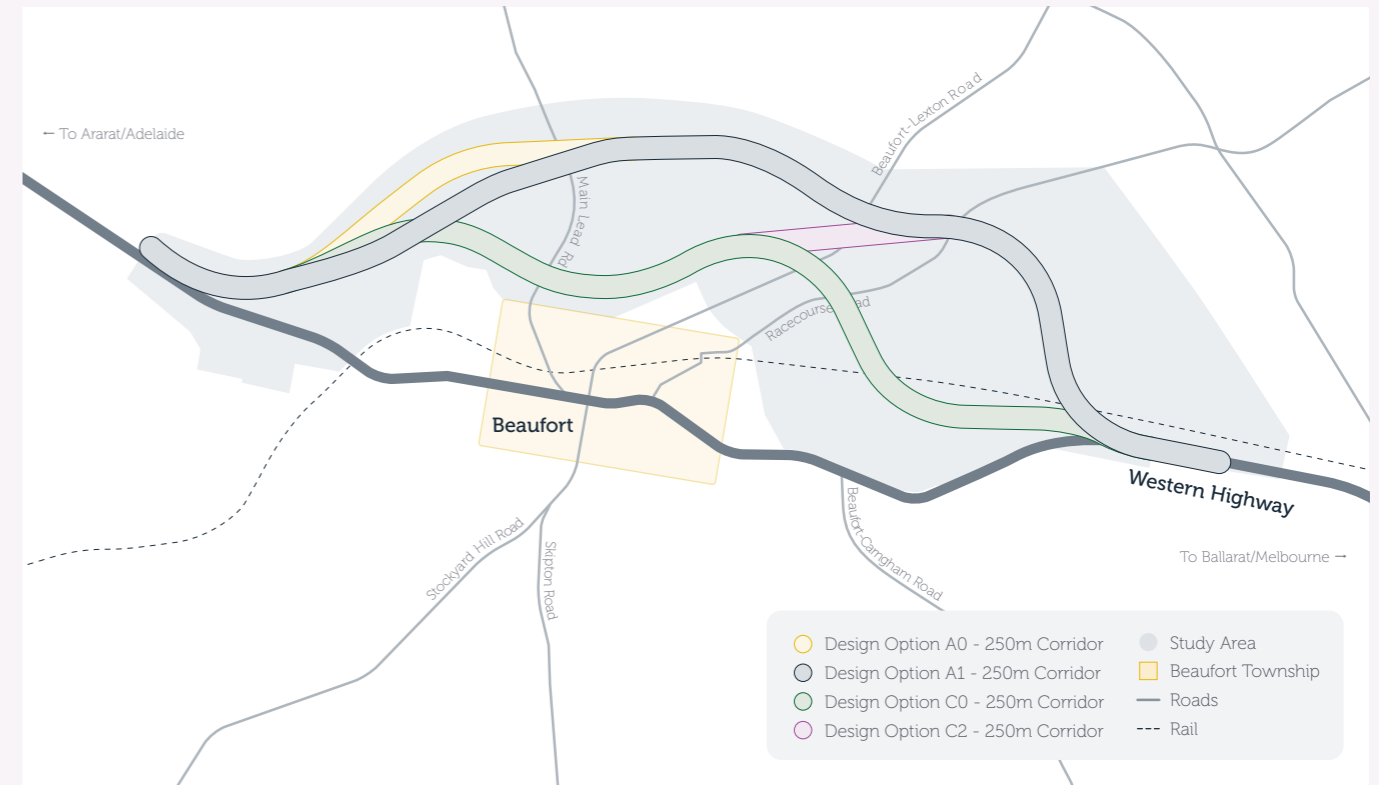


Figure 2 Four alignment options, referred to as Options A0, A1, C0 and C2, were assessed in order to identify a preferred bypass. Following extensive community consultation and technical assessments, Option C2 was selected as the preferred route.

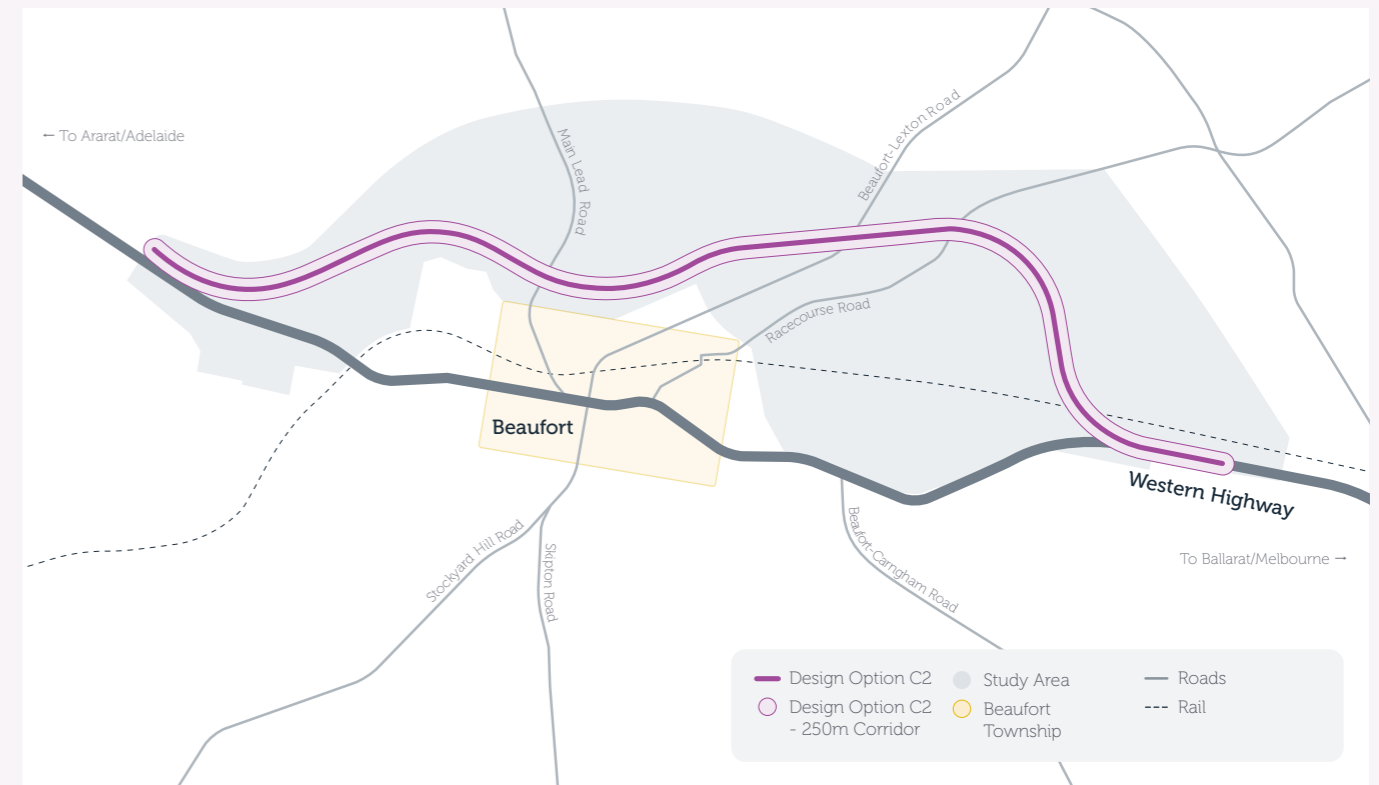


Figure 3 Option C2 is 11 km in length. At the western extent, access to Beaufort via the existing Western Highway will be maintained by a half diamond interchange, and there will be a full diamond interchange over Beaufort-Lexton Road. Access to Beaufort via the existing Western Highway at the eastern approach will be maintained by an outbound exit ramp at the eastern interchange.

1.7 EES

In July 2015, the Minister for Planning determined the need for an EES, to assess the potentially significant environmental impacts of options to inform the planning and approvals for the proposed Beaufort bypass.

- The EES process is a transparent, rigorous and integrated assessment of the potential environmental impacts of a project.
- An EES needs to describe the proposed project, its rationale/benefit and its potential environmental effects. It should enable stakeholders and decision-makers to understand how the project is proposed to be implemented and the likely environmental effects of doing so.
- The EES also needs to examine avoidance, mitigation or other measures to reduce the environmental effects and describe how the project will implement this.
- An EES has two main components:
 - EES main report (integrated, plain English document that assesses the potential impacts, drawing on technical studies, data and statutory requirements); and
 - EES technical reports/appendices – specialist studies, investigations and analyses that provide the basis for the EES main report. These reports will be exhibited in full, as appendices to the main report.
- The EES has investigated the following technical matters, in line with the scoping requirements:
 - Traffic and transport
 - Biodiversity
 - Aboriginal cultural heritage
 - Historic heritage
 - Surface water
 - Social
 - Planning and land use
 - Regional Economy
 - Landscape and visual
 - Soils and geology
 - Groundwater
 - Noise and vibration
 - Air quality
- The EES process culminates in a Minister’s Assessment of project’s effects, which informs decision-makers and the proponent about the environmental effects of a project and their acceptability. Decision makers, including the Minister for Planning, local government and statutory authorities, must consider this assessment when making decisions or approvals on the project.
- The EES documents, prepared by RRV, describe the outcomes of the technical investigations and is RRV’s statement of the projects potential environmental effects.
- As part of the EES process, the Minister for Planning will appoint a joint independent inquiry and advisory committee (IAC) to consider the EES, public submissions and the proposed draft planning scheme amendment. See below for further details.
- At the end of the IAC process, the IAC will provide a report to the Minister for Planning, which will inform the Minister for Planning’s assessment of the project’s environmental effects and their acceptability.
- For more information about the EES process in Victoria visit www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/what-is-the-ees-process-in-victoria
- For more information about the EES process for this project, visit www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/Beaufort-bypass

1.8 Consultation

Between 2016 and 2018, the community provided input to the planning process including one-on-one meetings, online consultation, five rounds of public consultation and a Public Engagement Group.

- In 2017, RRV presented the community with three options for a Beaufort Bypass. In 2018, RRV narrowed these options down to two, with a variation of each, and returned to the community for further feedback.
- RRV publicly announced our nominated preferred option for a Beaufort Bypass in July 2019.

1.8.1 Public engagement group

- The Public Engagement Group was established in 2016 and consists of 12 members of the Beaufort community including representatives from local businesses, sporting clubs and environmental groups.
- Members of the group have discussed and contributed to:
 - project time frames and next steps
 - potential changes to local roads including bus routes
 - how impacts to changes in local traffic will be measured

1.9 EES technical investigations

- As part of the EES process, RRV has undertaken detailed studies to determine the potential impacts a bypass may have on aspects related to safety, community, environment and more.
- The EES technical investigations were undertaken to meet the scoping requirements issued by the Minister for Planning for this EES.
- To read these scoping requirements, visit the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) website www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/beaufort-bypass

- opportunities to create positive outcomes from the project
- how the local community can provide input throughout the planning process.

1.9.1 Technical reference group

- A Technical Reference Group (TRG) was established by DELWP at the request of the Minister for Planning to provide specialist advice to RRV and DELWP on the draft EES and adequacy of technical environmental assessments.
- The TRG included representatives from:
 - DELWP
 - Pyrenees Shire Council
 - Department of Transport (formerly Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources)
 - Parks Victoria
 - Heritage Victoria
 - Fire Rescue Victoria
 - Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority
 - Southern Rural Water
 - First Peoples - State Relations
 - Central Highlands Water



1.10 Pre-notification

- RRV will notify the public on our website and in newspapers to confirm of the up coming public exhibition process.
- You can learn more about where to view the EES and where to provide your feedback on the RRV website www.regionalroads.vic.gov.au/map/grampians-improvements/beaufort-bypass
- Register your interest in being notified when the exhibition commences via beaufortbypass@roads.vic.gov.au

1.11 Consultation during public exhibition

- During the EES preparation phase, RRV led engagement to inform their preparation of the EES documents.
- Now engagement is led through the exhibition and invitation for public comment and the Inquiry and Advisory Committee panel process.

1.12 Public exhibition

The EES and draft Planning Scheme Amendment C50pryn will be on public exhibition for 35 business days from 21 March 2022 to 6 May 2022.

- During the exhibition of the EES, the EES main report, technical appendices, and the draft Planning Scheme Amendment will be available to the public for consideration.
- The public exhibition of the EES will be the opportunity for people to make formal submissions on the project and its environmental effects and the proposed approvals, particularly the draft Planning Scheme Amendment.
- The EES will be available for review on our website here: www.regionalroads.vic.gov.au/map/grampians-improvements/beaufort-bypass

- To comment on the EES or to make submissions for the inquiry process, go here: www.engage.vic.gov.au/beaufort-bypass-IAC
- To receive an EES information pack, register your interest via beaufortbypass@roads.vic.gov.au
- The EES information pack will contain:
 - A USB loaded with the complete EES and key approval documents
 - A printed copy of the EES Summary Report
 - A printed copy of the EES Map Book
 - A printed information sheet on 'How to Navigate the EES'.
- For more information about the public exhibition process visit www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/what-is-the-ees-process-in-victoria



1.13 How to access the EES and draft Planning Scheme Amendment documents

The EES and draft Planning Scheme Amendment documents are now available to read and download online.

- Visit www.regionalroads.vic.gov.au/map/grampians-improvements/beaufort-bypass
- Hard copies are available to view at the following locations during the public exhibition period:

Beaufort Community Resource Centre and Library

72 Neill Street, Beaufort

10am – 5pm
Monday to Friday

10am – 1pm
Saturday and Sunday

Regional Roads Victoria office

88 Learmonth Road, Wendouree

8.30am – 4.30pm
Monday to Friday

DELWP Ballarat Office

402 Mair Street, Ballarat

9am – 5pm
Monday to Friday

Pyrenees Shire Council office

5 Lawrence Street, Beaufort

9am – 5pm
Monday to Friday

1.14 Planning Scheme Amendment

A draft Planning Scheme Amendment C50pryn affecting the Pyrenees Planning Scheme has been prepared and is included in the exhibited documents (EES Attachment V).

- The draft Planning Scheme Amendment provides an outline of how the project is to be implemented in accordance with conditions contained within an incorporated document without the need for further planning permission.
- The Planning Scheme Amendment also includes a Public Acquisition Overlay over the route of the preferred alignment to reserve land for road purposes.
- You may make a submission or provide comments on the draft Planning Scheme Amendment by making a submission on the EES.

1.15 COVID-19 physical distancing requirements

- In the event COVID-19 restrictions are in place during the exhibition period and physical distancing is required in Victoria, conventional exhibition of the EES will not be possible.
- In absence of the physical display of printed copies in the public places outlined, alternative arrangements will be available to ensure appropriate access to copies of the EES documents for any interested person or parties.
- For those with accessibility issues, to request a hard copy or assistance, or for more information in accessing the EES documentation, please contact RRV on 133 778.

1.16 Independent inquiry and advisory committee

- Following the public exhibition, the Minister for Planning will appoint a joint independent IAC to consider the EES, draft Planning Scheme Amendment and public submissions. It will review and consider the environmental effects of the project in accordance with Terms of Reference issued by the Minister for Planning.
- The IAC will consider and prepare a report for the Minister for Planning on the project and its effects and the draft Planning Scheme Amendment.
- For more information, visit www.planning.vic.gov.au/panels-and-committees
- The IAC will be managed by Planning Panels Victoria.

1.17 Making a submission

- Submissions on the EES and draft Planning Scheme Amendment must be made in writing and received by 11.59 pm on Friday 6 May 2022.
- Each submission is a public document and will be treated as a submission on the EES and as relevant on the other exhibited documents.
- Online submissions are preferred and can be lodged via the Victorian Government's engagement website www.engage.vic.gov.au/beaufort-bypass-IAC
- Hard copy submissions must be accompanied by a coversheet, available by calling the DELWP Customer Service Centre on 136 186. Each written submission must have its own coversheet and they cannot be copied.
- All submissions must state the name and address of the person making the submission. Submissions will be treated as public documents and will be published on the Victorian Government's engagement

website. Therefore, your submission and your name will be made public.

- For more information about how to make a submission, please visit www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/beaufort-bypass or call Planning Panels Victoria through the DELWP Customer Call Centre on 136 186.
- The submission process is independently managed by Planning Panels Victoria.

1.18 Inquiry and advisory committee process

- The Minister for Planning will appoint a joint IAC under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* and *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.
- The IAC will review the EES, draft Planning Scheme Amendment and public submissions, and consider the environmental effects of the project.
- After the exhibition period, the IAC will hold a Directions Hearing approximately 4 weeks after

the exhibition period to make arrangements for the conduct of the public hearing.

- Further information about the Directions Hearing arrangements (including whether it will be held in person or conducted online by video conference) will be published on www.engage.vic.gov.au/beaufort-bypass-IAC when determined.
- The Public Hearing is likely to commence approximately 5 weeks after the Directions Hearing and will run for a period as established at the Directions Hearing.
- Information on the Hearing process and the timetable for the hearings will be published as it becomes available at www.engage.vic.gov.au/beaufort-bypass-IAC
- Members of the public and any other parties seeking to be heard at the public hearing are required to submit a written submission and indicate that they would like to be heard at the hearing.



1.19 Panel report

- The Minister for Planning will consider the report prepared by the IAC, public submissions and the EES and issue an assessment of the project's environmental effects and the acceptability of those effects.
- The Minister will release his assessment, along with the IAC report.
- The Minister's assessment and IAC report once released will be available here:
www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/beaufort-bypass

1.20 More information

- Call 133 RRV (778) and ask to speak to a member of the Beaufort bypass team
- Email the bypass planning team - beaufortbypass@roads.vic.gov.au
- Visit www.regionalroads.vic.gov.au and search for 'Beaufort bypass' (www.regionalroads.vic.gov.au/map/grampians-improvements/beaufort-bypass)
- For questions about the IAC process (including questions about how to make a submission), please contact Planning Panels Victoria at 136 186 or planning.panels@delwp.vic.gov.au
- For questions about the EES process, contact the Impact Assessment Unit at Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning at environment.assessment@delwp.vic.gov.au or call 8392 5475.