

Beaufort bypass

Environment
Effects Statement

Consultation Plan, updated 2022

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1. Introduction

The Victorian and Australian governments have committed more than \$50 million to plan for a Beaufort bypass.

Beaufort bypass

In 2015, the Minister for Planning determined an Environment Effects Statement (EES) would be required under the Environment Effects Act 1978 for the Beaufort bypass. Regional Roads Victoria (RRV), formerly VicRoads, is the proponent for this process.

An EES is an assessment of the potential environmental and social impacts of a proposed project. It is prepared to inform the Minister for Planning's assessment of the environmental effects a project may have, which is considered by subsequent decision-makers in deciding whether to approve a project.

A Planning Scheme Amendment (PSA) process is required to reserve land in the Pyrenees Planning Scheme. The PSA may be exhibited with the EES or at a later date.

Consultation plan

Engagement is an integral component of any RRV project and an essential part of project planning and decision making.

RRV has engaged with the Beaufort community and wider stakeholders to understand their needs, expectations and concerns, how they use the road system and what they need and expect from it. We've engaged customers and community to find out how we can best serve them, how we can incorporate their needs into our planning and operations, and how we can provide opportunities for people to be involved in decisions that impact them.

Genuine and timely consultation with communities and stakeholders has enabled us to invest and manage our resources for the greatest benefit. Stakeholders are individuals, groups or organisations that affect, or can be affected by project decisions. In the context of this project, the local Beaufort community is a major project stakeholder.

As part of preparing the EES, the Ministerial Guidelines require that the proponent prepare and implement a Consultation Plan to inform individuals and groups who could be affected and provide opportunities for input.

This Consultation Plan was prepared specifically for the Beaufort bypass EES in accordance with the procedures and requirements of the Environment Effects Act 1978. This Consultation Plan has guided consultation activities to inform the EES process. The consultation program will be integrated with the Social Impact Assessment process being undertaken as part of this EES.

Input and feedback received has helped the project team understand key issues and existing conditions in the local area during the preparation of the EES. It has also informed decisions on project design.

Consultation activities relating to the Western Highway Upgrade and Beaufort bypass have been ongoing since 2009. Major Road Projects Victoria (MRPV - formerly VicRoads) is undertaking the Western Highway Upgrade project. RRV is planning for bypasses of Beaufort and Ararat.

This Consultation Plan was prepared in recognition of the broader Western Highway Upgrade works, but with a specific focus on the stakeholders and community of Beaufort. The consultation approach, stakeholders and issues reflected in this Consultation Plan build on previous consultation undertaken for early investigations in relation to the Beaufort bypass.

Consultation objectives

This consultation process has focused on enhancing understanding of the EES process and ensuring that stakeholders and the community were aware of opportunities for input.

This consultation program has had the following key activities:

- Informed stakeholders and the community about the Beaufort bypass project and EES process, including the project's purpose, benefits, and relationship to the broader Western Highway Upgrade project.
- Informed public and stakeholders about the opportunities for input to the EES studies/impact assessment.

- Sought input and gathered further information from community and stakeholders to identify issues of concern, obtain local knowledge and understand perceptions of potential effects.
- Ensured the EES responded to stakeholder feedback addressing concerns about possible issues and describing how these have been considered in the preliminary design process.

Consultation principles

This Consultation Plan was prepared to align with the VicRoads Engagement Standards (February 2016) and the Public Participation in Government Decision-Making Better Practice Guide prepared by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2015).

This consultation approach reflected the core values of International Association of Public Participation (IAP2). Consultation focused on the 'inform', 'consult' and 'involve' levels of participation as described on the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum. These are described below.

Inform: To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.

Consult: To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision

Involve: To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

A description of the consultation activities and communication materials within each level is included in Appendix A of this plan

2. Western Highway Upgrade

Scope of upgrades

With traffic along the Western Highway expected to increase in the future, planning for upgrades between Ballarat and Stawell commenced in 2008.

The Victorian and Australian governments have jointly funded the upgrade of the highway to provide a safer and more efficient four-lane divided route.

In addition to separating the traffic lanes, highway safety will be improved with sealed road shoulders, safety barriers, protected turning lanes, intersection improvements, and service lanes for local access at some locations.

A progressive program of upgrade works commenced west of Ballarat in 2010:

- Trawalla to Beaufort - completed March 2013;
- Ballarat to Burrumbeet - completed April 2013;
- Burrumbeet to Trawalla - completed June 2015;
- Beaufort to Buangor - completed April 2016;
- Buangor bypass - completed April 2016;
- Buangor to Ararat - construction on hold
- Ararat to Stawell - planning completed 2013. Early works (pre-construction) underway.

The upgraded highway finishes at either side of Beaufort, where four lanes of traffic must merge into two lanes (one lane in each direction) and continues in this arrangement through the centre of town.

Project benefits

- Improved safety;
- Better freight efficiency; and
- Easier access to local facilities

Relationship to Beaufort bypass

The Beaufort bypass is an integral part of the Western Highway Upgrade, however bypass planning was not included in the scope of works of the project.

Beaufort community members and motorists who travel the highway regularly will be familiar with these works, which began on either side of the town in 2010.

As bypass planning continues and construction of duplicated sections of the Western Highway progress, it has been critical that this consultation program acknowledge and ensure that stakeholders have had a clear understanding of the status of all projects along the highway, how they relate to each other, where to find information, and how to provide effective feedback to the bypass.

More information

To learn more about the Western Highway duplication, visit the Major Road Projects Victoria website bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/mrpv/western-highway-duplication

3. Beaufort bypass

Proposed bypass

The planning for the bypass has helped us identify a potential route so land can be reserved and a Public Acquisition Overlay (PAO) can be incorporated into the Pyrenees Planning Scheme.

There is currently no funding for the construction of a bypass.

In August 2019, RRV publicly announced the nomination of Option C2 as a preferred route. This route is approximately eleven kilometres in length, with the planning study area spanning the eastern, northern and western outskirts of the township (see Figure 1).

This bypass route will include:

- half diamond interchanges on either side of the Beaufort township at the eastern and western tie ins to the Western Highway;
- full diamond interchange at Beaufort-Lexton Road;
- one road-over-rail bridge across the Melbourne-Ararat line;
- overpass structures which will bridge across the existing road network;
- culverts and 2 small bridges over waterways; and
- ten watercourse realignments.

Project benefits

A Beaufort bypass will provide the following benefits for the Beaufort community and road network users:

- 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

Planning scope

The Beaufort bypass project involves planning for a new four-lane highway (two lanes in each direction) around the township. The EES process has included investigations to understand current conditions and early design work. Planning investigations have:

- Provided greater clarity to landowners and residents in the investigation area regarding the scope of potential impacts or changes;
- Provided certainty regarding land use planning; and
- Provided certainty for regional investment

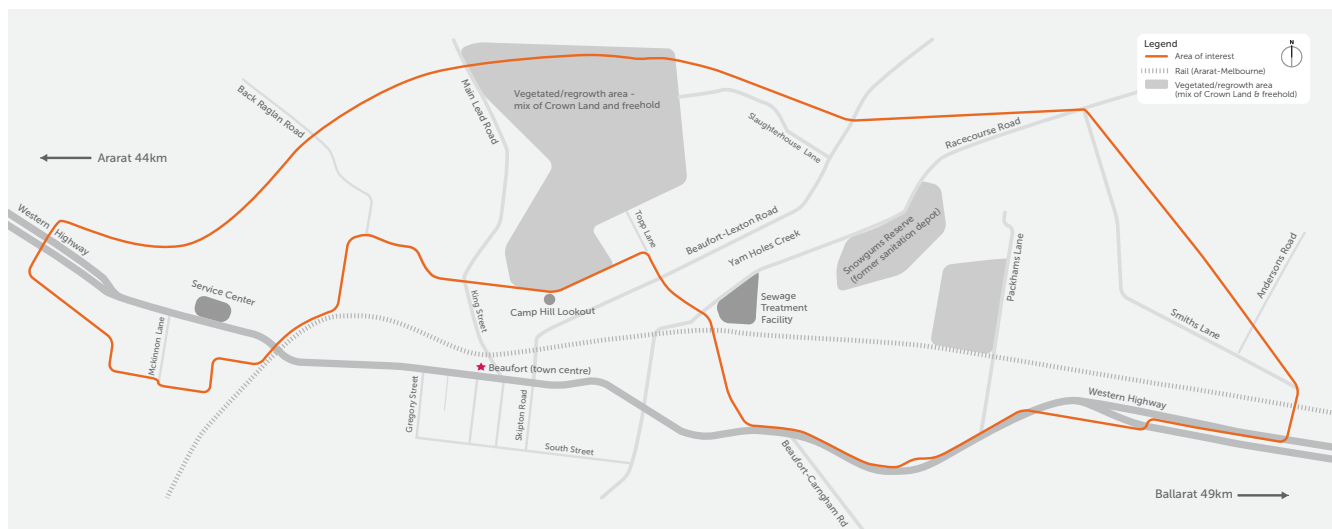


Figure 1 – Beaufort bypass investigation area

EES investigations

RRV has been preparing the EES to meet the Scoping Requirements outlined by the Minister for Planning. The EES Scoping Requirements detail the matters which must be investigated to inform the Minister for Planning's assessment of the Beaufort bypass project.

RRV has been preparing the EES in accordance with the proposed timeframes as outlined on page 8.

When this process is complete, the Minister for Planning will make an assessment which must be considered by subsequent government and statutory decision-makers.

The EES includes extensive field studies and consultation with the public and stakeholders to inform the development of the project and the selection of a bypass route.

EES investigations include the following:

- Traffic assessment;
- Flora and fauna assessment;
- Agricultural assessment;
- Air quality and greenhouse gas assessment;
- Contaminated land assessment;
- Groundwater and hydrology assessments;
- Heritage and cultural heritage assessments;
- Landscape and visual assessment;
- Land use planning assessment;
- Social and economic impact assessments;
- Noise assessment;
- Geotechnical assessment

Technical studies have been undertaken by a team of suitably qualified specialists. The results of these studies and technical investigations, as well as outcomes from consultation activities, will be made publicly available when the EES is released for public exhibition prior to the Minister for Planning's assessment.

Questions, input and feedback from the community and stakeholders are welcome throughout the process.

The Social Impact Assessment will include consultation with specific stakeholders and undertaken in accordance with this consultation program.

More information

To learn more about the EES process and ways the community can contribute can be found on the DELWP website: planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/what-is-the-ees-process-in-victoria

Proposed EES timeframe

2015	Referral 2015 (complete) RRV prepared a referral to the Minister for Planning.
	Ministerial Decision July 2015 (complete) The Minister for Planning determined that an EES is required.
2016	Scoping December 2016 (complete) The Minister for Planning set scoping requirements which determined the scope of EES studies.
	EES preparation Mid 2016 – 2019 (complete) RRV prepared technical studies.
2017/18	Refinement of bypass alignments 2017-2018 (complete) RRV developed refined alignment options based on technical investigations and community feedback.
2019/21	Selection of preferred alignment 2019 (complete) RRV presented its preferred alignment to the community prior to the EES public exhibition process.
	Preparation of EES documents and draft Planning Scheme Amendment 2019-2021 (complete) RRV will prepare the final EES report and draft Planning Scheme Amendment to the Pyrenees Planning Scheme. RRV to submit request to the Minister for Planning to place Beaufort Bypass EES on public exhibition.
2022/23	Public exhibition Early 2022 Public exhibition of the Beaufort Bypass EES. Minister for Planning to determine if an independent advisory panel is required to consider public submissions post exhibition.
	Independent Advisory Panel hearing (if required) Mid 2022 Minister for Planning assesses the recommendations of the Independent Advisory Panel.
	Minister's assessment 2022/23 The Minister for Planning determines the environmental effects and recommends how the project should proceed.
	Planning Scheme Amendment 2022/23 Planning Scheme Amendment submitted to Minister for Planning under section 20(4) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987.
	Minister for Planning's decision on Planning Scheme Amendment 2023 Outcomes of the Planning Scheme Amendment determined.

4. Key messages

Western Highway

- As the principal road link between Melbourne and Adelaide, the Western Highway serves interstate trade between Victoria and South Australia.
- The highway is also the key transport corridor through Victoria's western district, supporting farming, grain production, regional tourism and a range of manufacturing and service activities.
- The Western Highway is one of Victoria's busiest rural highways. Between 6,500 (west of Ballarat) and 23,000 (east of Ballarat) vehicles travel the road each day.
- Traffic is expected to increase in the future, and the Australian and Victorian governments have jointly funded the highway's upgrade between Ballarat and Stawell, with additional funding for Beaufort and Ararat bypass planning.

Beaufort bypass planning

- The Beaufort bypass is not part of the Western Highway Upgrade project or the concurrent planning for an Ararat bypass.
- A Beaufort bypass will complement the Western Highway Upgrade works.
- There is currently no funding for the construction of a bypass.

Project benefits

- A bypass will improve road safety, freight efficiency and town amenity by reducing the number of heavy vehicles travelling through the centre of the township.
- A bypass will make it safer for people travelling through the town's road network.
- The bypass will aid Victoria's overall growth and freight efficiency as the amount of freight on road and rail increases in the future.

Community consultation

- Consultation with stakeholders and the community has been ongoing throughout the Beaufort bypass EES process.
- Consultation is a critical element of the EES process and the Minister for Planning's assessment.
- Consultation during the EES process has given the public the chance to:
 - share local knowledge, views and ideas;
 - help us understand key issues;
 - keep informed on planning progress and outcomes; and
 - inform decisions on preliminary project design.
- Consultation activities have included:
 - public information sessions and workshops to help people understand how the EES process works and how to provide input and feedback;
 - one-on-one meetings with landowners directly impacted by land acquisition;
 - online consultation; and
 - establishing a Public Engagement Group to represent local interest in Beaufort.
- We will keep you updated on the progress of the bypass planning, preliminary project design and outcomes.
- We will continue to speak with directly affected landowners and residents in the bypass study area to understand individual circumstances.
- We will work with directly impacted landowners to minimise impacts as the design progresses.
- We will continue to provide support to stakeholders through project updates and information about the EES process.
- This Consultation Plan does not specifically relate to consultation activities undertaken following the completion of the EES document. However, we will continue to engage with stakeholders and the community as the project progresses.

Investigations

- This project investigated potential impacts that bypass alignments may have on environment, cultural heritage, social, economic, land use planning, agriculture, hydrology, traffic volumes and safety. Visual impacts on the current landscape were also considered.

What happens next

- When the EES is complete the Minister for Planning will release it for public comment.
- The exhibition of the EES will provide you with the opportunity to review the complete documents that explain the methodology, technical results and analysis of a future Beaufort bypass.
- The Minister for Planning will determine if an independent advisory panel is required to consider public submissions.
- The Minister for Planning will assess the environment effects and recommends how the project should proceed.
- The Minister for Planning will then assess the project based on:
 - EES documents; and
 - public submissions.
 - RRV response to submissions
- The Government and statutory decision makers must then consider the Minister's assessment before an amendment can be made to the Pyrenees Planning Scheme.
- For more information about the EES process in Victoria or to view a copy of the Ministerial Guidelines, please visit the DELWP website: <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/what-is-the-ees-process-in-victoria>

Contact details

Call

Regional Roads Victoria on 133 778

Email

beaufortbypass@roads.vic.gov.au to join our email distribution list

Visit

88 Learmonth Road, Wendouree

Website

regionalroads.vic.gov.au - search 'Beaufort bypass planning'

Write

Director
Grampians Region, RRV,
PO Box 580, Ballarat, 3353

5. Previous consultation

Public and stakeholder consultation has been ongoing as part of the broader Western Highway Upgrade project. While focused on the highway upgrade, this consultation has also raised public awareness about the potential for a Beaufort bypass and so identified potential issues and concerns relevant to the Beaufort bypass.

The highway upgrade project required bypass tie-in points to be identified to determine where construction would start and finish at either side of Beaufort.

Engagement for the Beaufort bypass planning has built on previous consultation activities and drawn on the information and feedback gathered through the Western Highway Upgrade project between 2009 and 2013.

Working with other project teams

RRV has worked closely with MRPV to share information and better understand stakeholder interests in the area.

The Western Highway Upgrade project team formed an Environmental Consultation Group in 2015 to give stakeholders and interest groups an opportunity to provide input on environmental issues. A broader community group – the Community Consultation Group – was also formed in 2015, which focuses on all aspects of the highway.

The Beaufort bypass planning team has engaged with these groups during the EES via meetings organised by the Western Highway duplication project.

Key issues relevant to Beaufort

Consultation activities identified a number of interests, expectations and preferred outcomes from the public and key stakeholders.

Stakeholder interests identified include:

- What the EES process is and how it works;
- EES and planning timeframes including the release of alignments and consultation program;

- Current status of planning, including previous work conducted by council;
- Opportunities for the public and stakeholder to influence the location of the bypass alignment;
- How the Beaufort bypass links in with the ongoing Western Highway Upgrade;
- Assessment, approval processes and responsibilities;
- Detailed design including what a bypass will look like and operate such as the number of lanes and speed limits;
- Potential impacts to business and tourism in the township from the loss of passing traffic and any potential future bypass service centres;
- Environmental and heritage sensitivities in the area including indigenous/non-indigenous cultural heritage, flood mitigation and potential for tree removal;
- The experience of tree count discrepancy for the Western Highway Upgrade project EES and what has been learned from that;
- The need for clear communications;
- The likelihood and process of land acquisition for directly affected landowners;
- Potential construction impacts such as noise, dust, roadwork disruption/delays, emergency services access;
- Operational changes such as changes to access, interchange locations, service road locations;
- Land use impacts, particularly with regard to agriculture; and
- Impacts on local amenity post-construction such as noise, and changes to the landscape and local character.

Summary of previous consultation

2011: Investigations to identify tie-in points

- Discussion with Pyrenees Shire Council and targeted stakeholders
- Public information session attended by almost 100 people

2014: Project objectives

- Targeted stakeholder workshop
- Commence workshops and meetings with government agencies, technical stakeholders and project partners (ongoing)

2014: Issues and opportunities

- Commence meetings with landowners, residents, businesses in the investigation area (ongoing)
- Commence site investigations

2015: Funding announcement and update

- Public information session attended by more than 150 people
- Commence distribution of project email, letters to landowners, newsletters, website updates
- Commence project enquiry email address and phone number
- Attendance at Western Highway Upgrade consultation events

2016: Western Highway updates

- Attendance at five public information sessions about the Western Highway Upgrade
- Attendance at four public information sessions about Ararat bypass planning

Summary of EES consultation

2016: Draft Scoping Requirements

- Stakeholders and the community are invited to make a submission to DELWP during the public exhibition period led by DELWP
- Public information session attended by more than 70 people
- Discussions with Pyrenees Shire Council
- First meeting of the Public Engagement Group
- Distribution of project emails, community newsletters, and letters to landowners within the Area of Interest
- Door knocks of businesses in the Beaufort town centre
- Five submissions received to the draft Scoping Requirements

2017: Draft bypass route options

- Two community feedback sessions attended by approximately 150 people
- Online consultation for public feedback on route options
- Discussion with Pyrenees Shire Council and targeted stakeholders
- Targeted discussions with more than 20 landowners potentially directly affected by land acquisition (ongoing)
- Meetings with the Public Engagement Group
- Distribution of project email, community newsletters, and letters to landowners within the Area of Interest study area
- Door knocks of businesses in the Beaufort town centre

2018: Refined bypass route options

- Three public community/feedback sessions attended by approximately 150 people
- Update of RRV webpage with new maps and route option information
- Discussions with Pyrenees Shire Council and stakeholders
- Continuation of discussions with more than 30 landowners potentially directly affected by land acquisition
- Meetings with the Public Engagement Group
- Business door knocks, community newsletter, fact sheet and flyer mail outs, project email and media releases

2019: Project update

- Two drop-in sessions to update community on project status and upcoming consultation

2019: Preferred alignment (C2) and next steps

- One-on-one meetings with landowners directly affected by land acquisition
- Meetings with key stakeholders including Registered Aboriginal Party, Pyrenees Shire Council and Public Engagement Group
- Distribution of project email, letters to landowners, newsletters, website update and media release
- Three community information sessions attended by more than 150 people

6. Project stakeholders

Stakeholder interests in project outcomes will vary. People’s attitudes, ideas and perceptions are not static, and individuals will engage and disengage throughout the EES process.

Project stakeholders have received information about the project and invited to contribute feedback. With an emphasis on inclusive engagement, we have made every effort to hear from all community cohorts, individuals and groups with an interest in the project.

Beaufort community profile

The residential community of Beaufort is a major stakeholder. Understanding the demographic characteristics of the Beaufort community has helped us to develop a consultation approach and program that meets the needs and preferences of the local stakeholders.

Beaufort is a town of approximately 1,500 residents* across 636 households. There are 794 private dwellings in Beaufort with an occupancy rate of 85%.

In 2016, the median resident age was 53 years, increasing from 51 years in 2011. The graph below shows that the population of Beaufort is aging significantly, compared to the regional Victorian average.

The community of Beaufort is predominantly born in Australia (80.9%) although this has reduced between 2011 and 2016. Of residents born outside of Australia, most were born in England (representing 3.9% of the total population) or Vietnam (0.8%). The vast majority of residents speak only English at home (88.5%). However, this has reduced since 2011 where 94% of residents spoke only English at home.

In 2016, there were 569 people in the labour force. Of these, 48.3 % were employed full time, 38.3% employed part-time and 5.8% unemployed. The most common occupations in Beaufort included labourers 16.3%, technicians and trades workers 14.0%, community and personal service workers 13.1%, managers 12.5%, and clerical and administrative workers 11.9%.

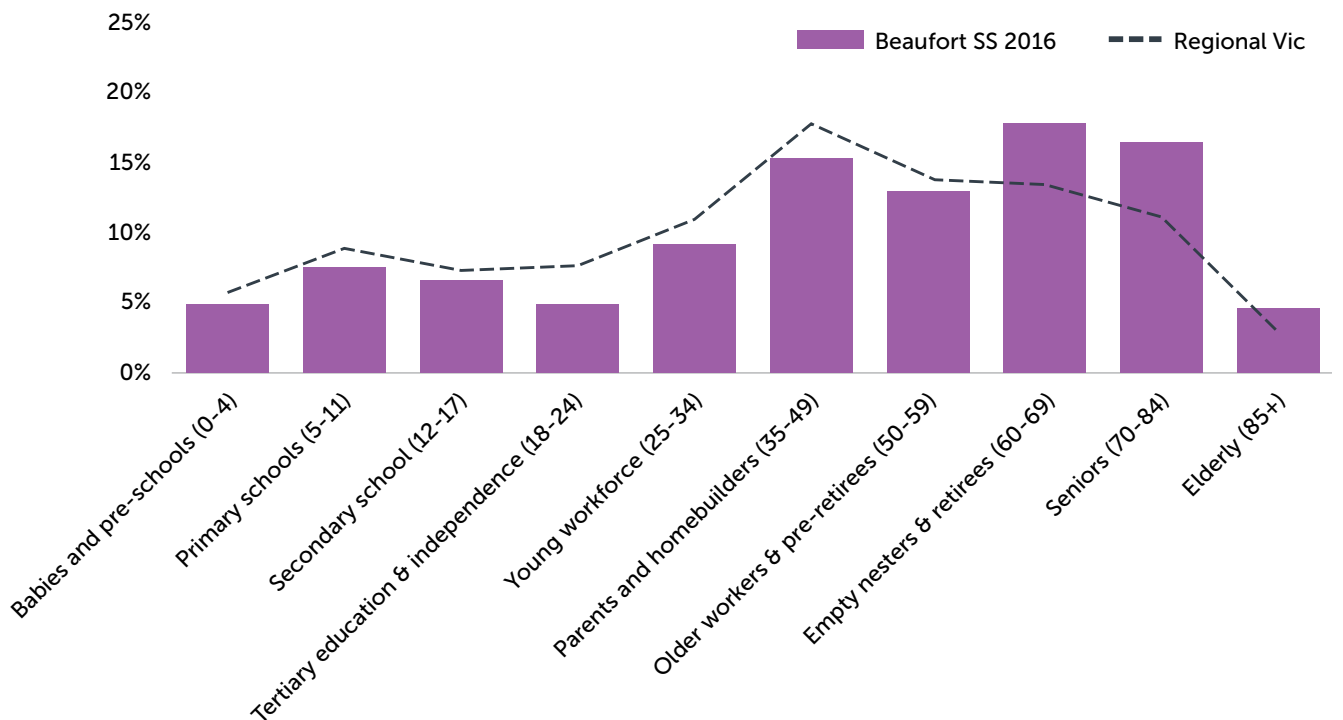


Figure 2 – Beaufort community age profile 2016 *Beaufort State Suburb 2016. ABS Census code: SSC20180

Stakeholder identification

Beaufort bypass planning has attracted interest from a variety of stakeholders with a range of interests, perceptions and expectations.

Described below is a broad list of stakeholder types that were identified for the Beaufort bypass EES. Stakeholders were identified with input from various sources including:

- RRV's existing information from the regional office and Western Highway Upgrade project
- Consultation with local government to determine individuals and groups affected, taking into account land use and social planning policies and proposals
- Input from the community at public information sessions and in response to other forms of communication

Stakeholders were broadly grouped according to their likely interest and involvement in the project. Stakeholder lists have been reviewed and updated throughout the project and new groups were identified and included as required.

Public Engagement Group

A Public Engagement Group was convened from September 2016 to represent local interests in Beaufort and provide a further avenue for feedback to the EES process.

The group comprises 12 members. The project consulted with Pyrenees Shire Council on the format and membership of the group, which includes a range of segments of the local population such as:

- Local businesses
- Residents
- Local schools
- Service clubs, faith organisations and sporting clubs
- Environment group
- Registered Aboriginal Party

The group has shared the community's views and ideas, provided local knowledge and experience, and raised project awareness to assist the principal consultant's work when undertaking investigations.

Nominations were invited through the project website and promoted through council's networks. Nominations closed in July 2016, and the group was appointed in August 2016. Terms of Reference for the Public Engagement Group were jointly signed-off at the group's first meeting.

Registered Aboriginal Party

The preparation of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan is required under section 49 of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 as part of any EES.

This process involved targeted consultation with the local Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) who is responsible for providing advice on heritage places and objects and for the evaluation and approval of Cultural Heritage Management Plans.

Technical Reference Group

In accordance with the requirements of the Environment Effects Act, a Technical Reference Group (TRG) was established by DELWP on behalf of the Minister for Planning. The TRG advised DELWP and RRV throughout the EES process, particularly on the Scoping Requirements and preparation of the EES.

The TRG was chaired by DELWP and includes representatives from 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, Central Highlands Water, and First Peoples - State Relations.

Approach to stakeholders

During the early stages of planning, the project team identified and engaged with stakeholders who reside, own land or own businesses in the study area.

The project expanded stakeholder participation during project development to encourage and gather input and feedback from a range of stakeholders including residents, business owners/operators, special interest groups, transport groups, commuters, emergency services and industry groups.

The consultation program utilised existing stakeholder connections to raise awareness of bypass planning, project status and encouraged participation in the EES engagement program to understand individual and group interests.

Engagement with government decision-makers has been ongoing throughout the project phases.

Table 1 - stakeholder groups

Project decision makers	
Australian Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Environment • Infrastructure Australia • Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development
Victorian Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Premier and Cabinet • Department of Transport (formerly Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources) • Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning • Cabinet/Policy Strategy Budget Committee/ Expenditure Review Sub-Committee
Statutory assessment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victorian Minister for Planning (environmental assessment and planning approval) • Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Department of the Environment • Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (environmental assessment and planning approval)
Legislative decision makers	<p>Includes Ministers, Agencies or statutory bodies responsible for public works, or administering relevant approvals legislation, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority • Southern Rural Water • Central Highlands Water • First Peoples - State Relations

Australian government

Federal Members of Parliament

Victorian government

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning	Central Highlands Water
Emergency Services (police, ambulance, CFA, SES)	Parks Victoria
First Peoples - State Relations	Environment Protection Authority Victoria
V/Line	Public Transport Victoria
Local Members of Parliament	VicTrack

Project partners

Principal consultant

Project advisors

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (Impact Assessment team and Biodiversity team)

Technical reference group (TRG)

Members from government agencies, local government and statutory authorities make up the TRG. The TRG includes 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, Central Highlands Water, and First Peoples - State Relations.

Technical stakeholders and asset owners

Telecommunication carriers	Energy networks
Emergency Services	Rail authorities (V/Line/VicTrack)
Water networks	

Directly and indirectly affected

Landowners	Business owners
Residents	Special interest groups
Property developers	Freight transport operators
Transport network users	Schools and school communities

Broader public

Beaufort bypass Public Engagement Group	Industry groups
Western Highway Environmental Consultation Group	Resident associations and other public groups
Western Highway Community Consultation Group	Local sporting associations
Social service providers	Local schools
Local residents	Local service clubs, faith organisations and sporting clubs
Local chamber of commerce	Victorian Farmers Federation
Local businesses	
Tourism groups	
Environment and Landcare groups	

Media

Local and metropolitan newspapers	Television
Radio	Social media/online media

7. Consultation approach

The consultation approach was developed to provide stakeholders and the community with opportunities to share local knowledge, provide input on key issues and concerns, and to stay informed about planning progress and outcomes.

Effective and timely consultation was critical to ensure that stakeholder input and feedback was sought at appropriate project milestones to inform project decision making. The engagement approach ensured that the expectations of the public and stakeholders were managed regarding the level of influence and involvement they had throughout the EES process. Clear and consistent messaging about the EES process and the consultation program was essential to establish shared understanding about the parameters of consultation.

Ensuring that interactions were transparent and responsive helped stakeholders understand how feedback had been used and how they could provide input in a way that was most valuable for project decision making.

The consultation program includes a range of engagement activities throughout the EES process.

Consultation program and activities

The consultation program for the EES was designed in four phases to reflect the EES process and project milestones.

Table 2 on page 19 outlines each EES phase and summarises the consultation milestones and activities in coordination with project timeframes.

Phase 1 consultation activities

Phase 1 included early engagement to raise awareness about the project, the planning process and opportunities to provide input and feedback throughout the EES.

Phase 2 consultation activities

This phase is the most intensive engagement period as investigations are undertaken to inform the preliminary design and to identify issues, impacts and opportunities.

The consultation program in Phase 2 was critical to the identification, assessment and development of mitigation measures as part of the Social Impact Assessment which will inform the EES.

Phase 2 included four rounds of public consultation managed by RRV. Each of these four rounds of consultation included project updates and advertising to notify the local community of upcoming information sessions.

Table 3 on page 20 outlines how project milestones and consultation activities were advertised and supported through project updates and various communications materials.

Phase 3 and 4 consultation activities

Additional engagement activities will take place as required by the formal exhibition of EES and the assessment process during Phase 3.

In Phase 3, the EES is released for public comment at which time the public can make written submissions about the project.

During Phase 4, decisions on the EES and PSA amendments required will be made. The assessment on environmental effects of the project will be issued to RRV and statutory decision makers, as well as made publicly available on DELWP website. RRV will update the Beaufort bypass project webpage at this stage.

Phases 3 and 4 will follow a statutory consultation process with prescribed structures and activities.

RRV will continue to assist stakeholders during these phases to understand the EES findings and navigate the public submission process.

Role of the principal consultant

The principal consultant WSP was appointed in August 2016 to manage the EES process in collaboration with RRV.

The EES is a complex planning process which involves detailed technical studies and impact assessments on key criteria to determine the potential impacts of a bypass.

The findings of these technical investigations were used to determine the preferred alignment:

- air quality
- biodiversity and habitat
- aboriginal cultural heritage
- historic heritage
- regional economy
- groundwater
- landscape and visual amenity
- noise and vibration
- planning and land use
- social planning
- soils and geology
- surface water and hydrology
- traffic and transport

The principal consultant worked with RRV to deliver the community and stakeholder consultation program in accordance with this Consultation Plan. The principal consultant was responsible for:

- Ensuring that stakeholders and the community were well informed and understood the process
- Ensuring that feedback was accurately recorded to inform the EES process
- 'Closing the loop' by providing timely and transparent responses to stakeholders and the community

How input and feedback will be used

Input and feedback received has helped the project team understand key issues during the preparation of the EES and informed the project's preliminary design process.

Consultation feedback helped the planning team identify what changes could be made to the project, specialist studies and potential alignments and what mitigation measures or improvements could be developed.

A consultation report will form part of the EES document and provide an overview of key themes raised during consultation and detail how feedback has been incorporated into the project.

Table 2 - Summary of consultation approach and project timeframes

Phase	Timeframe	EES milestones and activities	Consultation objectives	Consultation outcomes
Phase 1 Early engagement Led by RRV	Completed 2015 – early 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare referral application • Identify investigation area • Commence specialist studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the Beaufort bypass planning process • Raise project awareness • Inform stakeholders and community about options to provide input into the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback used to inform the EES referral process triggering the requirement for an EES • Preliminary understanding of potential issues, sensitivities and opportunities • Feedback provided to principal consultant to inform Phase 2
Phase 2 Preparation of the EES Led by RRV	Completed 2016 – 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MILESTONE: Draft EES Scoping Requirements advertised (Led by DELWP) • Interim milestone – present outcome of preliminary investigations and draft bypass route alignment options • Interim milestone – present refined investigations and refined bypass route alignment options • MILESTONE: Release of investigation findings summary and nominated preferred bypass alignment option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MILESTONE: Present scoping requirements • Prepare EES engagement program • Continue to raise project awareness • Raise awareness of the EES process • Inform about the EES process and opportunities for stakeholders to provide input • Convene Public Engagement Group • Receive feedback on local issues and opportunities to inform design options and Social Impact Assessment • MILESTONE: Receive feedback on issues identified and alignment options • Report back to stakeholders and the community to share summary of EES findings, preferred alignment and next steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback informs the EES reporting and findings • Feedback informs design and refinement of alignment options • Stakeholders and community understand the EES process and are positioned to provide input into the subsequent phases of engagement • Engagement reports published on project website at key milestones
Phase 3 Public exhibition	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MILESTONE: EES findings prepared for public exhibition • Consider EES submissions • Present to EES inquiry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MILESTONE: Presentation of completed EES • Invitation for written submissions and formal feedback from the public as part of a statutory submission process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submissions to be considered by the Minister for Planning in assessment of the EES
Phase 4 Planning approval process	Following assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare amendment to the Pyrenees Planning Scheme • Seek adoption of amendment • MILESTONE: Panel hearing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MILESTONE: Statutory exhibition as part of the Planning Scheme Amendment process • Inform of the outcome of the assessment process and next steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback considered by planning decision making authorities

Table 3 - Phase 2 consultation activities

Phase	Consultation
<p>Information sessions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least two public information sessions were held in Beaufort during each phase of consultation. • Project team and principal consultants were in attendance to explain information and answer enquiries. • Session materials included posters, fact sheets/project updates, maps, graphics, montages, video animation and feedback forms. • There were opportunities to provide input/feedback.
<p>Project website</p> <p>https://regionalroads.vic.gov.au/map/western-improvements/beaufort-bypass</p> <p>*The following webpage was operational until the formation of Regional Roads Victoria in 2018 (https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/planning-and-projects/regional-road-projects/western-highway-upgrades/beaufort-bypass-planning)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was hosted on VicRoads/RRV project page. • Provided static project information, updated at project and consultation milestones. • Hub for project information and links to external government websites as required. • Included project enquiry email account and contact phone numbers.
<p>Engage VicRoads Online consultation platform</p> <p>https://engage.RRV.vic.gov.au/beaufortbypass</p> <p>*Following the public consultation in February/March 2018, this page was archived. Feedback was used to help inform planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted stakeholders who wanted to provide feedback via online channels, review information or stay up-to-date on progress. • Project information was accompanied, where required, with maps, graphics, surveys, feedback/discussion boxes, and forums to encourage input. • Feedback collected was visible to all users. • Updated during each round of consultation. • Archive of consultation summary fact sheet.
<p>Key stakeholder engagement</p>	<p>Ongoing briefings, meetings and workshops with key stakeholders included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project partners • Technical stakeholders • Planning decision-makers • Technical Reference Group • Public Engagement Group • Special interest groups
<p>Landowner engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence and meetings with landowners in investigation area. <p>Arranged at project milestones and as requested/required.</p>
<p>Reporting back</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Closing the loop' with participants and stakeholders to summarise feedback collected and how issues were addressed. • Information bulletin/email to project subscribers and media releases. • Consultation summaries were available on Engage VicRoads online platform. • Were provided at project milestones.
<p>Promotion of information sessions, project updates and opportunities for feedback/input</p>	<p>All planned public activities were advertised in the local area through a variety of platforms including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising in print media • Distributed project update via email to subscribers • Facebook advertising • Promotion through Pyrenees Shire Council's community networks • Flyers/postcards in local businesses, public spaces and community facilities • Media releases • Advertising signage

8. Recording and reporting

Data and feedback received through consultation activities are collected and stored in a project stakeholder database to ensure stakeholder input is on record and available to all members of the project team. Information stored includes records of phone calls, meetings, emails, letters, feedback forms and any other means of correspondence.

The stakeholder database is a secure database, and all information collected is stored and managed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014.

After public consultation activities where feedback is submitted, a summary report has been prepared and made available to stakeholders. This summary report includes an overview of the number of people attending public sessions, key themes discussed and feedback received. Reports will not include details of individuals or specific conversations.

RRV has provided updates to the TRG outlining consultation activities and outcomes. The updates included an explanation of how stakeholder input was considered and addressed during the development of the EES.

The Public Engagement Group received updates on project decisions including a summary of feedback received through each public activity and how this feedback influenced project decisions.

The effectiveness of communications and consultation activities in achieving the objectives set out in this plan were determined through a number of measures including: numbers participating in consultation activities such as public information sessions, use of feedback forms, and response to website and email updates.

Review and evaluation

Consultation needs will typically evolve throughout the lifespan of a project. This consultation program was designed to adapt as new information became available and with the changing needs of stakeholders.

The consultation program was reviewed during Phase 2 of this project and amended as required. This review considered whether stakeholder lists were complete and accurate and if tools and techniques were effective. The review also considered stakeholder preferences and any feedback received regarding the consultation process.

DELWP and the TRG provided advice in the preparation and implementation of this Consultation Plan, as well as its review at key project milestones.

Table 4 - Evaluation framework

Objective	Example measures
To inform stakeholders and the community about the project and EES process, and to raise awareness of the project's purpose, benefits, and relationship to the broader Western Highway Upgrade.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of people attending public events Feedback themes, and how these change over time Number of new additions to project databases including, enquiries and subscriptions for project updates Number and frequency of stakeholder meetings
Expand upon feedback received through previous consultation activities and gather further information from community and stakeholders that will be used to identify issues and potential impacts and use local knowledge to inform the EES process, design, specialist studies and assessment of alignment options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant stakeholders identified for engagement and amendments to stakeholder lists Number and frequency of stakeholder meetings Evaluation and feedback forms provided at events
To respond to stakeholder feedback including concerns about possible issues and describe how these have been considered in the design process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and nature of enquiries and complaints Response time to community or stakeholder request or enquiries Number and frequency of stakeholder meetings

Appendix A - IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum is a widely used tool designed to assist with planning public engagement activities for major projects.

The following table adapts the IAP2 spectrum to be specifically relevant to the Beaufort bypass EES.

The Spectrum has been used as a guide during engagement and consultation activities for the Beaufort bypass EES.

IAP2 Spectrum adapted to Beaufort bypass EES

	Inform	Consult	Involve
Definition	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/ or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.
Objective	To provide balanced and objective information to support understanding by the public.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work with the public to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.
Commitment	To keep the public informed.	To listen to and acknowledge the public's concerns.	To work with the public to exchange information, ideas and concerns.
Stakeholders	General public and stakeholders that have an interest in Western Highway upgrades and bypass planning, including decision makers, Federal Government, State Government, project partners, Technical Reference Group, technical stakeholders, directly and indirectly affected stakeholders, the broader public and media.	Project partners, directly and indirectly affected stakeholders, Technical Reference Group, technical stakeholders and the broader public.	Project partners, Technical Reference Group, technical stakeholders, directly impacted landowners and stakeholders, indirectly impacted landowners and stakeholders and the broader public.
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letters Media releases and reports, advertising Social media, project website, emails Fact sheets and information bulletins Information displays Maps, montages and video animation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information sessions, briefings Workshops, feedback forms Meetings/conversations, presentations Online engagement project reports Reports following community engagement Public exhibition (written submissions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public engagement/ advisory groups, feedback forms Information sessions, workshops Online engagement Public exhibition (written submissions) Meetings/conversations



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