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December 2016

Independent investigation conducted into community concerns relating to the Wandong interchange

Report

Minister for Roads and Road Safety

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This report has been prepared by:

RM Consulting Group Pty Ltd (trading as RMCg)

135 Mollison Street, BENDIGO VIC 3550

PO Box 2410, BENDIGO DC VIC 3554

P: (03) 5441 4821

E: rm@rmcg.com.au

W: www.rmcg.com.au

ABN: 73 613 135 247

Offices in Bendigo, Melbourne, Torquay, Warragul and Penguin (Tasmania)

Key Project Contact

Claire Flanagan-Smith

M: 0427 679 044

E: clairef@rmcg.com.au



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Executive summary

In May 2011, the Victorian Government committed to providing a bypass for the townships of Kilmore and Wallan by 2017. A process of planning investigations and consultation ensued and in March 2015 the Western Option was determined as the preferred route by the Victorian State Government. The concept design for this option includes a substantive change to the design and functionality of the existing Wandong interchange.

RMCG was appointed by the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to undertake an independent investigation in response to community objections and concerns about the proposed changes to the Wandong interchange.

During consultation, we heard a range of views, some of which conflicted with those expressed by others. Our report takes all views into account, documents the range of community concerns and makes independent recommendations about how best to address these concerns.

Community context

There has been a strong community reaction to the proposed Western Option. In part, this is fuelled by discontent with previous infrastructure where there has been either poor community consultation or poor infrastructure outcomes, or both. Examples include the Wandong Rail Overpass constructed in 2009 and dubbed the “blue monster” by the local community.

The community is protective of their rural living atmosphere and character, and very aware of strong development pressure in the nearby North Growth Corridor. They are worried that increasing traffic volumes and noise from the Hume Freeway will negatively impact their township. Recent experiences with bushfires, including Black Saturday, also underlies community concern towards the proposal, and they are nervous about impediments to emergency and other vehicle access during an anticipated lengthy construction period.

Combined, these experiences have shaped community sentiment towards new infrastructure and government processes and subsequently many community members are unwilling to trust government agencies or processes.

Consultation

Extensive community and stakeholder consultation was undertaken by RMCG. From April to June 2016, we spoke to over 70 community members. We conducted 26 in-depth, face-to-face interviews with one or more individuals. In addition, we conducted 23 telephone interviews with community members. Interviewees included: the Save Wandong Action Group (SWAG) members, the chair Wandong History Group, the Chair and Secretary Wandong-Heathcote Junction Community Group Inc., engineering and planning staff and the Mayor of Mitchell Shire, Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (Taungurung), the principal and vice principal Wandong Primary School, the owner of Wandong Bus and Coach, and several members of the Community Consultative Group (CCG).

RMCG has met with SWAG members on two occasions, initially in April to hear their concerns about the proposal and then a follow up meeting was held in June 2016 to present the VicRoads response to SWAG's concerns. Following this second meeting, SWAG prepared an additional written response which was submitted to RMCG during August 2016.

Community concerns

Consultation led to the identification of four main areas of community concern, which are summarised beneath and are discussed in detail in the main report.

Impacts to the town

Community members at Wandong-Heathcote Junction are concerned about the impact that the proposed interchange will have on the character of their town. Broadly, their concerns have been identified across four areas:

- Reduced amenity and changed character
- Reduced property values
- Traffic safety and increased noise
- Lights on the interchange

Construction period

Inevitably, there will be a range of impacts affecting the amenity and access for Wandong and Heathcote Junction residents during construction. The main construction impacts will include: impacts on visual amenity, noise and vibration impacts to sensitive receptors (from machinery), air emissions to sensitive receptors (dust and local pollutants from machinery), altered access routes and traffic delays (including potentially hampering emergency vehicle access), land severance and acquisition, and native vegetation removal and earth moving impacts.

The main community concerns relating to the construction period are:

- Length of construction stage and access – specifically, the community is concerned that construction scheduling will blow out (taking 3 to 5 years) and be subject to delays. There is also concern about traffic access restrictions and the heightened risk this may create during bushfire season.
- Impacts of noise and dust on the vulnerable.

Lack of trust

There is a significant gap between the impacts feared by community members and the impacts predicted by VicRoads and other stakeholders. The most persistent cases relate to noise and traffic, where concerned community members do not accept the results of modelling conducted for the Environmental Effects Statement (EES); and fears that a visual impact will be another infrastructure blight on their township.

Decision-making process

Community members expressed concerns about government processes used to make decisions relating to the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass and, more specifically, the Wandong interchange. The primary community concerns relating to the decision-making process include:

- Lack of community consultation
- Land severance and acquisition
- That the EES process was not followed
- Fast rail and rail bridge not considered

Conclusions

The situation at Wandong Heathcote Junction is complex. Much of the community angst is deep-seated and has been exacerbated by discontent with past infrastructure projects and a general distrust of government agencies. Our conclusion is that the following points are central to understanding and responding to the current community concerns:

- **Context is everything.** The community reaction to the proposed new interchange at Wandong must be considered in the context of the history of other infrastructure and infrastructure planning in the area, as well as recent bushfires; and this context should have informed the level of consultation required.
- **Unsuccessful community engagement.** Although VicRoads conducted impressively extensive consultation about the route for the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass study area, decisions affecting the concept design of the interchange at Wandong were made without adequate consultation. The community did not understand the overpass concept until the release of a fly-through video in June 2014, which means that they did not have adequate opportunity for input into the concept design or route selection. VicRoads and other government authorities failed to foresee the reaction the local community might have to a significantly changed interchange. Given the scale of change for the interchange, the Wandong-Heathcote Junction should have been considered in the original EES Consultation Plan and given the opportunity to shape the concept design.
- **An unwanted change.** There is a clear message that community members are concerned about the interchange, specifically impacts to character and amenity, and do not want it as is currently designed near their town. VicRoads is open to considering any feasible improvements to interchange design, but has not conducted community engagement activities to seek input.
- **Construction concerns.** The community is concerned about the impacts of the construction phase including emergency access, general access, dust and noise. VicRoads have established contract specifications that operate to minimise potential construction impacts; the issue is whether the community trusts VicRoads to enforce the contract requirements.
- **The interchange concept should be redesigned collaboratively.** Government agencies must work collaboratively with the community to consider how this major road infrastructure project can benefit Wandong Heathcote Junction. With good design of the interchange, potential negative impacts on town character and community severance are likely to be mitigated.

Recommendations

In designing an interchange at Wandong, the focus of local and state government must be on working with the community to create net positive outcomes for the community of Wandong Heathcote Junction.

The following recommendations are designed to address community concerns about process, design and construction impacts.

Recommendations	Details of recommendation
Recommendation 1: Engage meaningfully with the Wandong-Heathcote Junction community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ VicRoads and local government work together to plan an effective consultation process. ▪ Use the VAGO <i>Public Participation in Government Decision-making: Better Practice Guide</i> to plan future community consultation.
Recommendation 2: Form a stakeholder working group to collaborate on road infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rebuild trust and improve outcomes through engagement at the <i>Collaborate</i> level of the IAP2 spectrum: "Engage with the public on each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and a preferred solution." ▪ Set up a working group to provide advice on traffic management and associated infrastructure; include a cross section of community members including some who are highly concerned.
Recommendation 3: Reconceive the interchange project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ VicRoads and the working group rethink the Wandong interchange to create a project that is focussed on providing net positive impacts for the Wandong-Heathcote Junction community.

Recommendations	Details of recommendation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working group develop a set of design principles, which are informed by the following sub-recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) Investigate ways to better manage through-traffic in Wandong</i> <i>b) Investigate ways to reduce noise impacts</i> <i>c) Investigate ways to improve accessibility and connectivity</i> <i>d) Investigate ways to reduce the construction period</i> <i>e) Work with local media and groups to communicate outcomes</i>
Recommendation 4: Provide regular acquisition information updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ VicRoads conduct immediate follow up discussions with landholders potentially affected by acquisition, followed by regular updates. ▪ Discussions should focus on communicating project progress and reminding landholders of the process and support available.
Recommendation 5: Planning for the Northern Growth Corridor to consider impacts on Wandong-Heathcote Junction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ State planning for future growth in Melbourne's Northern Corridor should also consider potential impacts on Wandong-Heathcote Junction and inform this community about the outcomes of relevant studies.

1 Introduction

1.1 This report

This report is the result of an independent investigation conducted by RM Consulting Group Pty Ltd (RMCG) for The Honourable Luke Donnellan, Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The Minister appointed RMCG to undertake the investigation in response to community objections and concerns about the proposed changes to the Wandong interchange as part of the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass project.

During this investigation, we listened to perspectives of community members, local and state government representatives, considered relevant issues and explored the context in which concerns have arisen. Our consultation uncovered a range of views, some of which conflicted with those expressed by others. This report takes all views into account, presents the current situation objectively to give the Minister a thorough understanding of the community concerns associated with the proposed interchange at Wandong. The report concludes with a series of recommendations to the Minister for addressing community concerns and preventing future issues.

1.2 RM Consulting Group Pty Ltd

Claire Flanagan-Smith, Nigel McGuckian and Jencie McRobert from RMCG have conducted this investigation.

Claire Flanagan-Smith (B.Env.Eng (Hons)) is a Senior Consultant at RMCG with over 10 years' experience working with rural and regional organisations and communities. A qualified environmental engineer, Claire merges a highly developed understanding of human behaviour with a strong grasp for technical considerations. Claire has a thorough knowledge of the region derived from her consulting work, which includes regional strategic planning, and community consultation with local and state government. Claire recently conducted consultation with the Costerfield community and was subsequently elected as independent chair for the Costerfield mine's Environmental Review Committee.

Nigel McGuckian (B.Ag.Sci. (Hons), Dip. Ed, CPAg, MAIAS, MAAAC, MAICD)) is a Senior Fellow at RMCG with over 25 years' experience working with businesses and communities. He has delivered training in governance, group skills and strategic planning. Special fields of expertise include consultation, mediation, social research, education and training and facilitating farmer discussion groups. Nigel managed major consultation processes for the Murray Darling Basin Authority on the impact of purchasing water allocation. Nigel is well regarded within the region for his knowledge of rural communities.

Jencie McRobert (B.Sc., GradDip. Ec.) is a Senior Consultant with over 20 years' experience working with a wide range of groups and organisations in rural and regional communities. Previously Jencie worked with ARRB Group's Sustainable Transport team where she provided consulting and research expertise into projects relating to the environmental impacts of local roads, main roads, highways and freeways in all states of Australia.

2 The Kilmore-Wallan Bypass and the Wandong interchange

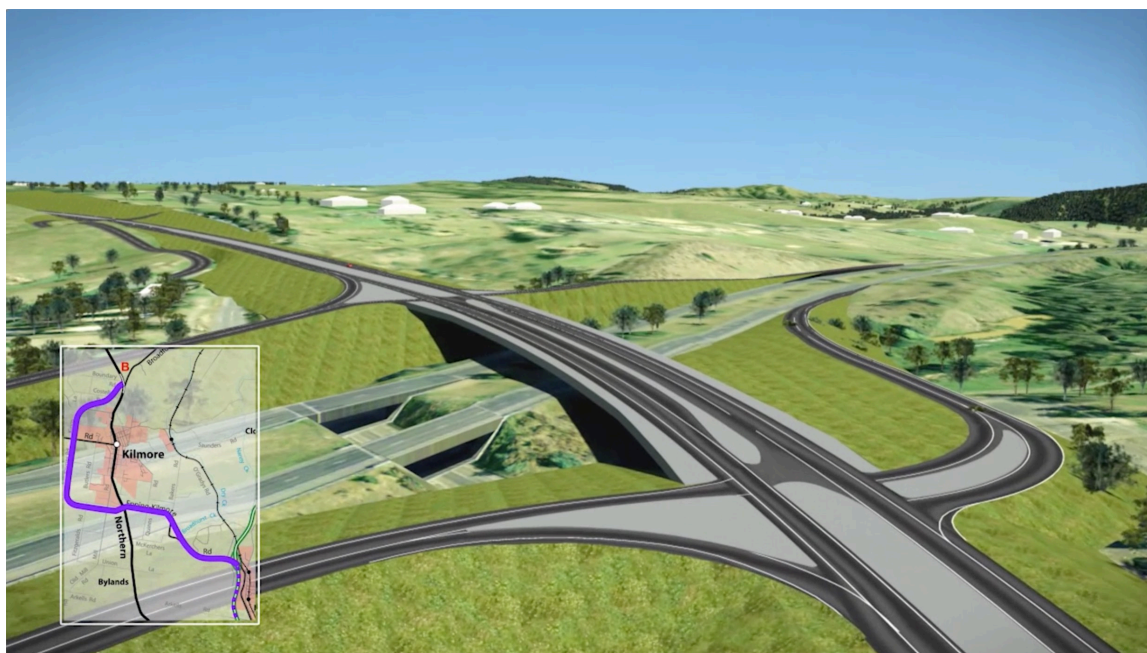
In May 2011, the then Minister for Roads, Terry Mulder, announced that the Victorian State Government was committed to providing a bypass for the townships of Kilmore and Wallan by 2017. In June 2011, Steering Committee comprising Mitchell Shire Council and VicRoads was formed to guide the planning investigation and consultation process. By September of that year a Community Consultative Group (CCG) was formed as an advisory body for the project. The CCG met 13 times to help VicRoads determine suitable route options, inform VicRoads and the Steering Committee of community views, and facilitate community awareness about the project¹.

On 15 April 2013, the Minister for Planning decided that an Environmental Effects Statement (EES) comprising Mitchell Shire Council and VicRoads under the Environment Effects Act 1978 was required for the proposed Kilmore-Wallan Bypass. The EES and Draft Planning Scheme Amendment documentation were available for public comment from 10 June to 21 July 2014.

A combined Inquiry and Advisory Committee was appointed by the Minister for Planning to consider public submissions and the potential environmental effects of the proposed bypass. A Directions Hearing was held on 7 August 2014 and public hearings were held from 27 August to 12 September 2014. The Inquiry and Advisory Committee provided its report to the Minister on 17 November 2014.

In February 2015, the Minister for Planning released his *Assessment under the Environment Effects Act 1978*. In March 2015, the Victorian Government – following consideration of planning investigations – agreed that the Western Option would be the preferred route for the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass. The concept design for the construction of the bypass includes a substantive change to the layout and functionality of the existing Wandong interchange (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Proposed Wandong interchange on the Western Option²



¹ VicRoads (2013)

² VicRoads (2014b)

3 Scope and method of investigation

3.1 The independent facilitators' terms of reference

The terms of reference for the independent facilitators were to run a process that considers the concerns of the community in relation to the proposed upgrade of the existing interchange at Wandong. Considering alternative locations for the interchange was outside the scope of the investigation.

The deliverables of this process are:

- Broad consultation with the Wandong community, including the Wandong and Heathcote Junction Community Group Inc. and the Save Wandong Action Group.
- The preparation of a report that clearly outlines community concerns and provides recommendations for addressing these concerns considering the views of all stakeholders, including community, government, Council and VicRoads.
- The final report will be prepared for consideration by the Minister and made available to the community.

3.2 Independence and approach to the investigation

Independence

The Minister for Roads and Road Safety, via VicRoads, has engaged RMCG to conduct this investigation. RMCG has had no previous professional involvement in the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass project and does not have any private interests in the location. RMCG is committed to working with people to secure outcomes that protect and improve the fabric of regional communities.

Process

Our process involved following tasks:

- Desktop review of background material
- Community consultation (April – August 2016)
 - Face-to-face and phone meetings with community members from Wandong-Heathcote Junction and surrounding districts
 - Two meetings with the Save Wandong Action Group (SWAG) as a group
- Stakeholder agency consultation (April – September 2016)
 - Meetings with VicRoads; the Mayor of Mitchell Shire; planning and engineering staff from Mitchell Shire; the local Member, Jaclyn Symes; Community Consultative Group (CCG) members and traditional owners.
- Preparation of a list of community concerns to provide to SWAG for review (May 2016)
- Provided the VicRoads response to concerns to SWAG (June 2016)
- Analysis of community concerns, processes and guidelines
- Provided written responses to SWAG from VicRoads addressing community concerns (August 2016)
- Consideration of response from SWAG on the VicRoads response (August 2016)
- Follow up meeting with Mitchell Shire Council CEO, Mayor and engineering staff (September 2016)
- Preparation of report for Minister

Community members and stakeholders consulted

The list of people consulted in this investigation began with a list of interested Wandong-Heathcote Junction community members provided to RMCG by VicRoads who had expressed interest or concerns in the proposal over the preceding five years. Other people were added to the list after Labor Member in the Legislative Council for Northern Victoria, Jaclyn Symes sent letters to her electorate inviting those interested to contact RMCG. During consultation, we asked interviewees to suggest additional interested people for RMCG to approach for input.

From April to June 2016, we spoke to over 70 community members. We conducted 26 in-depth, face-to-face interviews with one or more individuals. In addition, we conducted 23 telephone interviews with community members. Interviewees included: SWAG members, the chair Wandong History Group, the Chair and Secretary Wandong-Heathcote Junction Community Group Inc., engineering and planning staff and the Mayor of Mitchell Shire, Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (Taungurung), the principal and vice principal Wandong Primary School, the owner of Wandong Bus and Coach, and several members of the Community Consultative Group.

We conducted a further 23 telephone interviews with community members during May 2016.

RMCG has met with SWAG members on two occasions, initially in April to hear their concerns about the proposal and then a follow up meeting was held in June 2016 to present the VicRoads response to SWAG's concerns. Following this second meeting, SWAG prepared an additional written response which was submitted to RMCG during August 2016.

4 Background

4.1 Kilmore-Wallan Bypass – an overview

The 17km long Western Option would provide a north-south bound traffic corridor west of Kilmore, then generally follow the existing Epping-Kilmore Road and connect to the Hume Freeway at the existing Wandong interchange (Figure 2). The interchange at the Hume Freeway would be upgraded with a new overpass and new ramps (see Figure 4). Effectively this means that the present underpass would be changed to an overpass. Current traffic safety issues at the interchange would be designed out, including reducing the slope for vehicles exiting the freeway, dedicating a lane that would assist trucks to accelerate, and sight distances on the ramp terminals would be improved.

The bypass would then follow the existing Epping-Kilmore Road and connect to the Northern Highway south of Kilmore with a roundabout. Substantive improvement and upgrade of the Epping-Kilmore Road and local access points will occur in the vicinity of Wandong Heathcote Junction. This will mean augmenting the vertical and horizontal geometry leading to a more highly designed road corridor that will meet modern day safety standards. The adjusted alignment would follow a gentler path, echoing the surrounding landforms and would remove several sharp (90-degree) bends. The alignment also includes new connections to Broadhurst Lane, O'Gradys Road and Mathiesons Road (moving west from the interchange) and a new bridge that would provide gentler slopes over the Broadhurst Creek, eliminating the "Big Dipper" and providing a wildlife underpass for animals moving along the creek.

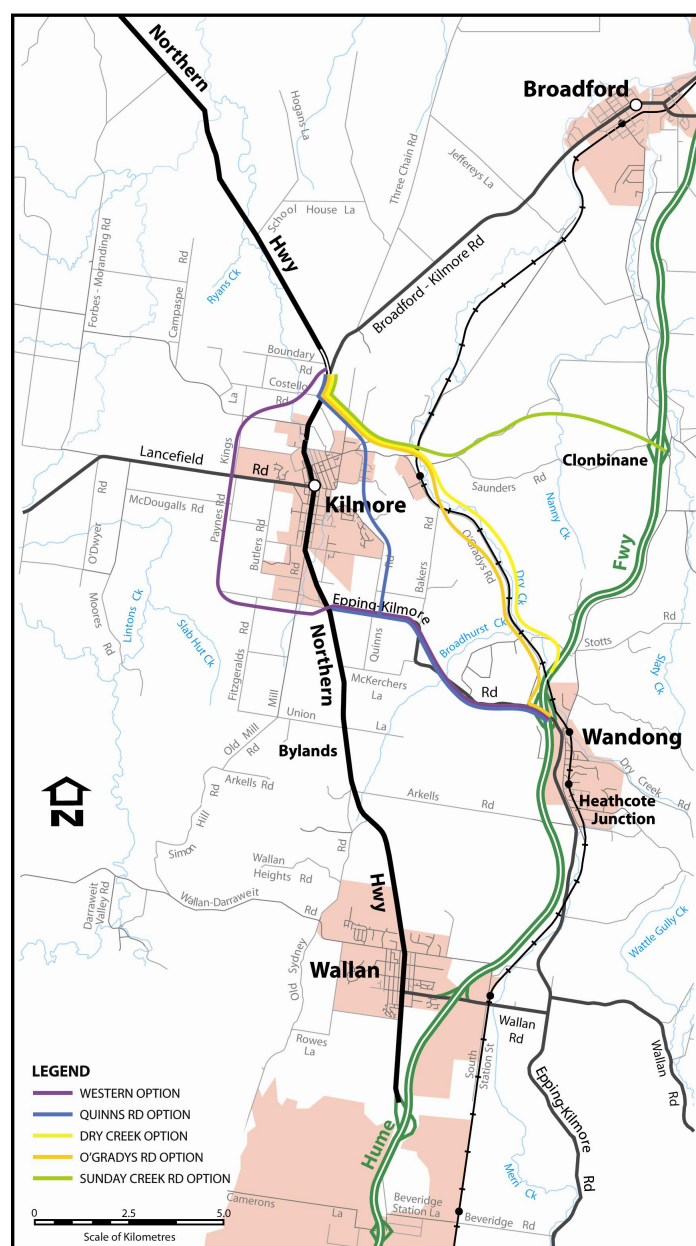


Figure 2: Kilmore-Wallan Bypass options, Western Option in purple³

³ VicRoads (2014a)

4.2 The VicRoads consultation process

VicRoads conducted extensive community consultation about the route for the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass across all affected communities. A detailed timeline of VicRoads led consultation is provided in Appendix 3. A summary of the consultation activities is provided in Table 1. The activities have been divided into pre and post closure of exhibition of the EES document.

Table 1: Summary of VicRoads led consultation activities

Date	Description of activities	Location
Pre EES document exhibition: 9 May 2011 to 21 July 2014		
Sep 2011	Community Consultation Group (CCG) formed	Project area
Nov/Dec 2011	Public information display No. 1 four route options	Wallan & Kilmore
Jan/Feb 2012	Additional Western Option 'shopfront'	Wallan & Kilmore
Apr 2012	First of four briefings with Mitchell Council	Broadford
May 2012	Consultation with affected landowners	Project area
Aug 2012	Public information display No. 2 Five potential route alignments	Kilmore
Feb 2013	Public information display No. 3 Three remaining route alignments	Kilmore
Apr 2013	EES requirements announced by Minister	N/A
May 2013	Final of 13 CCG meetings held	Project area
Mar 2014	EES documentation incl. 'Fly-through' videos of Wandong interchange prepared	N/A
10 Jun 2014	EES document incl. fly-throughs advertised and on public exhibition (30 days)	N/A
21 Jul 2014	EES submissions closed	N/A
Post EES document exhibition: 22 July 2014 to present		
23 Jul 2014	Meeting with Wandong-Heathcote Junction community – to discuss planning & construction aspects of the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass project	Wandong
27 Aug-12 Sep 2014	EES Panel Hearing period	Kilmore
17 Nov 2014	EES Panel Hearing report presented to Minister for assessment	Kilmore
18 Aug 2014	Bus trip inspecting all relevant sites including Wandong interchange	Project area
11 Mar 2015	Panel report & Minister's Assessment document released – Western route announced as preferred option	N/A
1 Oct 2015	Meeting with Wandong and Heathcote Junction Community Group Inc. – to listen and note concerns raised by the group	Wandong
2 Nov 2015	Meeting with Wandong and Heathcote Junction Community Group Inc. – follow up meeting to provide additional information on traffic generation studies and other matters of concern	Wandong
5 Nov 2015	Community 'drop-in' information sessions – provide an update on outcome of EES incl. photo collages providing visual representation of Wandong interchange upgrade	Kilmore & Wandong
8 Nov 2015	Evening community 'drop-in' information session – aimed at Melbourne commuters	Kilmore
9 Nov 2015	Evening community 'drop-in' information session – aimed at Melbourne commuters	Wandong

5 Context

Some historical context helps with understanding the Wandong and Heathcote Junction community's reaction to the proposed interchange. There have been several significant events, both distant past and recent, that could have shaped the community's strong stance on the proposal before them.

The Hume Freeway 1976

The Kilmore and Wallan townships have been "bypassed" once before. A 34km section of modern four-lane Hume Freeway (between Broadford and Wallan) was constructed during the early 1970s, replacing the "old Hume Highway" route. The chosen alignment, which was opened in 1976, was built in very close proximity to the townships of Wandong and Heathcote Junction.

The presence of the Melbourne-Shepparton (via Seymour) railway (effectively bisecting the towns) and the close proximity of the Hume Freeway have both quite distinctively defined the urban form and how the townships have developed over time. Wandong and Heathcote Junction have developed as adjoining towns in the midst of the railway and freeway yet have maintained their own character.

The Hume Freeway and railway have influenced the shape of these towns and the way their communities move through them. The Hume Freeway and railway line (with two train stops less than 2 km apart) are well regarded as valuable assets to the towns. They provide a high level of connectivity to Melbourne and surrounding towns, and afford a key lifestyle opportunity that is highly valued by residents.

On the other hand, the freeway noise has been progressively increasing, due to the rise in heavy vehicle and overall traffic volumes over the past four decades. Unremitting noise is now a pervasive presence in both towns, with the level depending on traffic volumes and wind direction.

Melbourne's growth towards Wandong-Heathcote Junction

The southern part of Mitchell Shire, mainly around Wallan, was brought into Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) in 2010, after it was expanded through Victorian Parliament legislation. Urban development in Melbourne's North Growth Corridor⁴ will extend close to the Wallan township, which will mean investment in improved transport connections linking Wallan and Melbourne's northern suburbs. Additional arterial road connections (to the Hume Freeway and Northern Highway) have been identified that will link Wallan and the North Growth Corridor. These infrastructure projects will also impact on connectivity and traffic to, and through, Wandong Heathcote Junction.

Wandong rail overpass 2009

VicRail constructed a pedestrian bridge in 2009 at a cost of \$1.5m to allow a safe crossing over the railway line, linking the Wandong Primary School and the Wandong shopping precinct (Figure 3). The community doesn't feel that they were properly consulted and has a very poor opinion of the design and utility of the structure. The community wanted a walkway under the tracks and they got what is locally referred to as a "blue monster". This is a stark and constant reminder to the locals about a failed government infrastructure process.

⁴ GGA (2012)



Figure 3: Wandong rail overpass

2009 Black Saturday and 2014 Kilmore-Mickleham bushfires

The Western Bypass option will directly impact several properties that were affected by the 2014 Kilmore-Mickleham bushfires. The earlier 2009 Black Saturday fires also seriously affected the Wandong-Heathcote Junction community when four people died and around 150 homes were destroyed. Residents are understandably especially sensitive to the potential of restricted road access during the construction phase of the proposal. They are genuinely nervous about any impediments to emergency and other vehicle access during the anticipated lengthy construction period.

2013 A natural gas pipeline for Wandong-Heathcote Junction

Residents were pleasantly surprised when funding for a natural gas pipeline was announced from the previous State Government's Regional Growth Fund in 2013. This announcement was made after four years of campaigning and residents were initially told that they would have access to the pipeline by 2015. The project is now well underway and expected to be completed by 2017. Some locals were disappointed to find that the gas will not be reticulated to people on the Western side of the Hume.

2012-current Kilmore-Epping Road upgrade and pedestrian access to Wandong Bushfire Memorial Park

Prolonged pavement drainage repairs on a section of the Kilmore-Epping Road caused substantial disruption to customer access and adversely affected commerce in the main shopping precinct. This led to heightened negativity towards VicRoads as the roadworks went on for a period that community members felt was unreasonably long. Coupled with the extreme irritability felt during the lengthy roadworks, residents have been lobbying VicRoads for improved pedestrian access from the shopping centre over the sometimes busy Kilmore-Epping Road to the Wandong Bushfire Memorial Park (opened in 2013) and the adjacent skate park over several years. So far, unsuccessfully.

2016 Wandong-Heathcote Junction 3758 structure planning

Wandong-Heathcote Junction Structure Plan was adopted unanimously by Mitchel Shire Council in August 2016. It provides a vision for community, business and housing needs over the next 20 to 30 years. The Mitchell Shire Council is one of the fastest growing municipalities outside metropolitan Melbourne with an estimated population growth of between 40,000 and 90,000 in the next 20 years. This will bring increased development pressures on local communities. Residents want future housing to respect the character and

amenity of the townships with some prioritising the ‘rural living atmosphere’ over more developed infrastructure.

To provide for modest growth and development of Wandong-Heathcote Junction that enhances its rural township function, recognises the value of the high quality community facilities and enhances safe connectivity between important places and neighbourhoods.

- Wandong-Heathcote Junction Structure Plan vision⁵

Community consultation signified a “general consensus that any proposed development should ensure the town character is retained, and housing follows appropriate design guidelines”⁶. Participants also identified fire risk management as a priority planning consideration.

⁵ CCG (2016)

⁶ CCG (2016)

6 Analysis

6.1 The impact of context

The historical context helps us better understand the opposition of the Wandong and Heathcote Junction community to the proposed change to the Wandong interchange. Residents are indisputably and understandably nervous about impediments to emergency and other vehicle access during an anticipated lengthy construction period given their recent bushfire history. They are protective of their rural living atmosphere and character and very aware of strong development pressure in the nearby North Growth Corridor. These concerns sit in amongst gradually but progressively increasing traffic volumes and omnipresent noise emanating from the Hume Freeway. Residents do not want their local environment negatively impacted by this project.

This context has shaped community sentiment towards new infrastructure and government processes, making it unsurprising that many community members are unwilling to trust government agencies or processes.

6.2 Concerns about the impacts of the interchange on Wandong Heathcote Junction

As shown in Figure 4, the proposed overpass is significantly different to the current underpass shown in Figure 5. Community members at Wandong-Heathcote Junction are concerned about the impact that the proposed interchange will have on their community. The origin of their anger seems to stem from concerns about the visual impact of the interchange and concerns about irreversible changes to the character of their town.

These concerns – along with corresponding government responses – are summarised in the next sections of this report, followed by our analysis of the situation. Appendix 1 contains the detailed community concerns and government responses. They fall into four broad areas of concern:

- Reduced amenity and changed character
- Traffic safety and increased noise
- Reduced property values
- Lights on the interchange

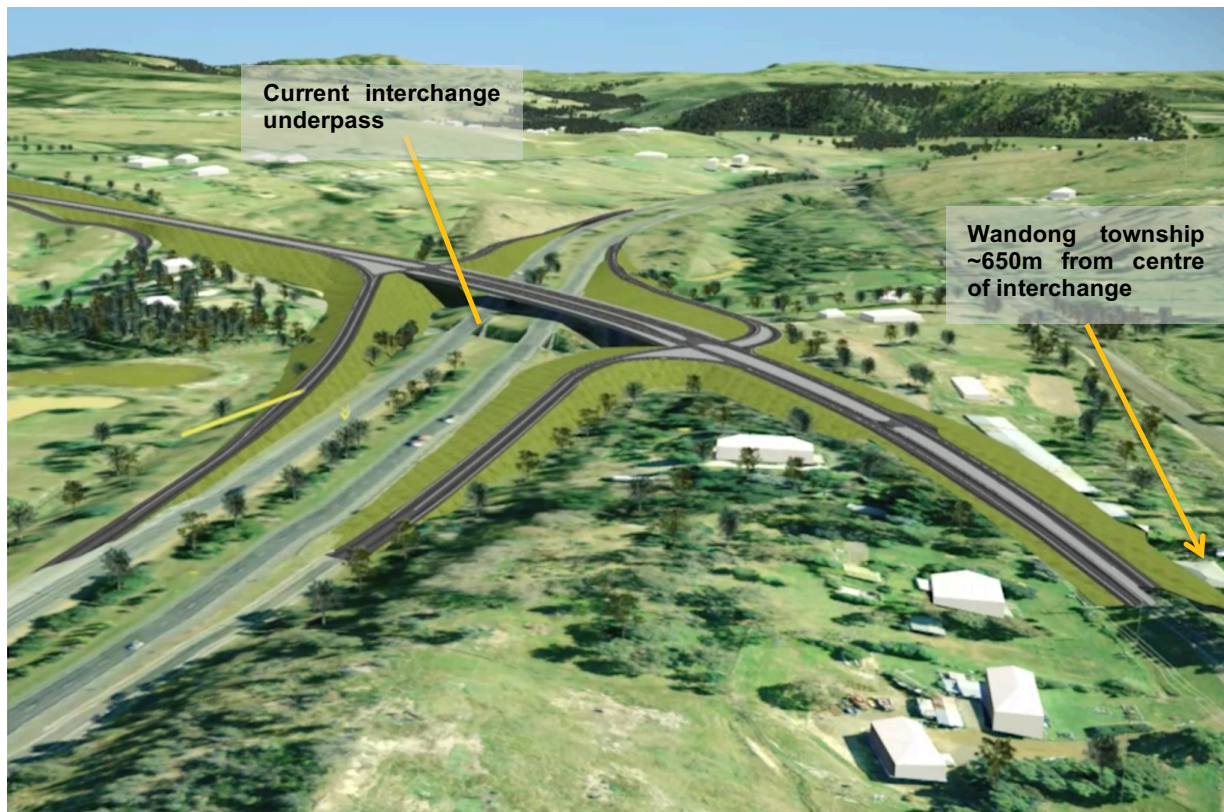


Figure 4: Proposed Wandong interchange, a still from fly-through video made in March 2014⁷

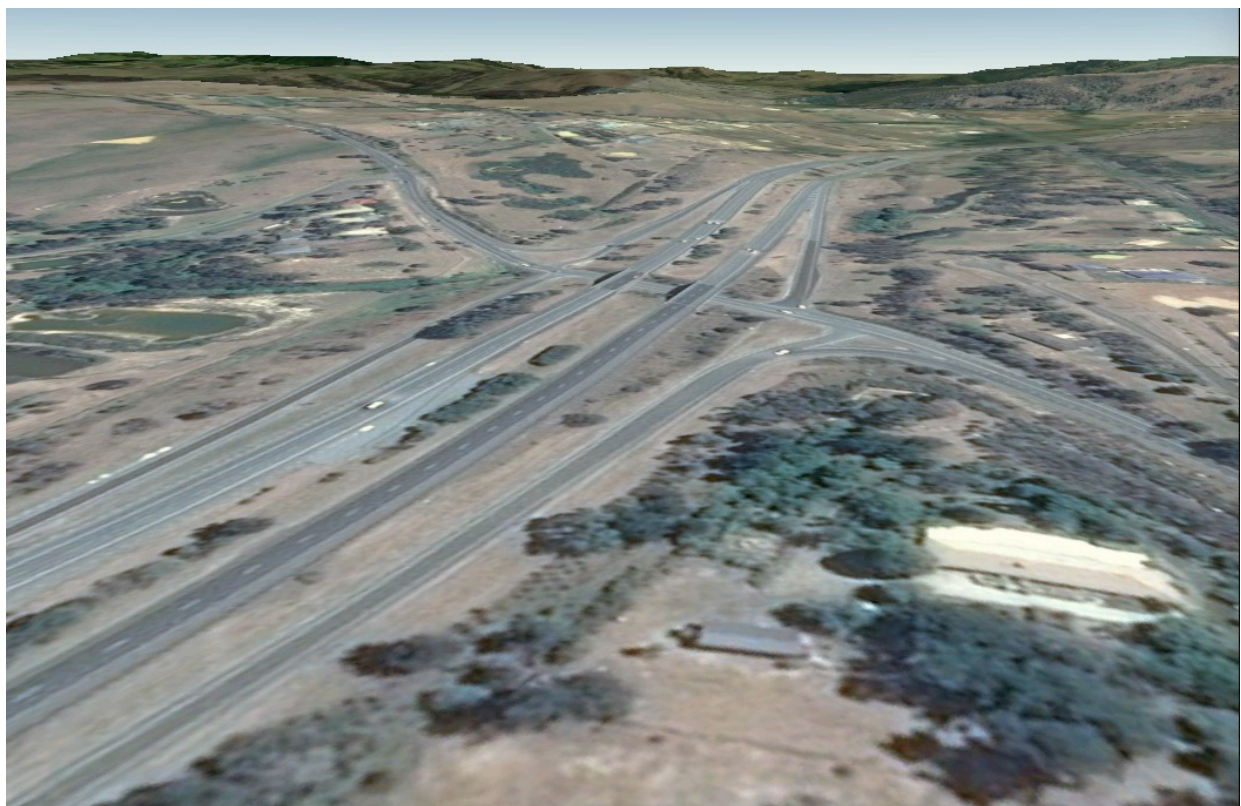


Figure 5: Current Wandong interchange⁸

⁷ VicRoads (2014b)

6.2.1 Amenity and changed character

Community concern	Government response
<p>The community is concerned about reduced town amenity and changed character leading to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Diminished rural character of town b. Degraded visual amenity c. Further loss of community connection - exacerbating already dissected townships due to the freeway and rail line d. Negative impact of constructing a bypass on top of a town. <p>"There is no precedent for this anywhere in Victoria".</p>	<p>VicRoads state that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Physical works will largely be confined to the footprint of existing interchange b. Upgraded structure will be landscaped to fit in with local environment c. There are two opportunities to provide for pedestrian and cyclist access via the existing underpass. d. VicRoads say that they are keen to work with the community to prevent negative outcomes.

Our analysis

Clearly, the footprint and height of the proposed interchange is larger than the current interchange and will have a different appearance.

The community and VicRoads have significantly different opinions about what impact the proposed interchange may have on Wandong Heathcote Junction. VicRoads doesn't accept that there will be a substantive negative impact on the town's amenity. The community doesn't accept the VicRoads analysis and conclusions about the lack of negative impacts on the town's character and amenity.

Evidenced by its name – the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass – the focus of the bypass project has been on improving traffic conditions in Kilmore and Wallan. The stated evaluation objective for Transport Network Performance in the EES was:

To improve road safety, traffic performance and general amenity, particularly in the townships of Kilmore and Wallan, by developing a Northern Highway bypass which will be effective in attracting through traffic, especially heavy vehicles, and provide better connections to the existing local transport network.

To ensure that any future development preserves the high environmental, heritage and landscape qualities of the area and reinforces Wandong-Heathcote Junction's character and identity as a rural lifestyle township with convenient access to surrounding towns and Melbourne.⁹

- Wandong-Heathcote Junction Structure Plan vision¹⁰

The EES documentation contained noticeably little mention of the impacts of the proposal on Wandong Heathcote Junction, despite two out of the three options (Quinns Road and Western) involving the same substantive upgrade to the interchange. This omission was noted by the Minister for Planning, as described in Section 6.5.2, and must be addressed by VicRoads through better design of the interchange.

It is our understanding that no government agency or community representative has investigated how potential positive outcomes (traffic management, pedestrian accessibility) for Wandong-Heathcote Junction could have been incorporated into the decision making process.

⁸ Google Earth image (2016) Accessed 1 August 2016

⁹ VicRoads (2014a) p. iii

¹⁰ Mesh Planning (2016)

In keeping with our conclusions about process in Section 6.4, we believe that it would have been judicious for VicRoads, in collaboration with other government stakeholders (including Mitchell Shire Council), to consider from the beginning how a major road infrastructure project such as this could have benefited Wandong-Heathcote Junction as well as Kilmore and Wallan.

Past road infrastructure projects demonstrate that changes to visual amenity will become less noticeable over time when earthen banks are stable and vegetation is reinstated. Furthermore, when pedestrian and cyclist access is introduced and a much improved main road to Kilmore is up and running, community acceptance of the upgrade may improve. With good design of the interchange, potential negative impacts on town character and community severance will, to some extent, be mitigated.

6.2.2 Traffic safety and noise

Community concern	Government response
<p>The community is concerned about changed traffic conditions leading to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increased truck traffic, traffic through Wandong and traffic across the interchange itself b. More traffic noise c. Road safety fears including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased truck and other vehicle traffic impacting on skate park/playground/children at school times - Design aspects of interchange: lack of lanes / winter fog / inadequate sightlines 	<p>VicRoads state that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The construction of the overpass will result in a marginal increase in traffic volumes above the increase that is predicted under a 'do nothing' scenario. Traffic modelling indicates an extra 700 vehicles/day (100 trucks) through Wandong by 2031, in addition to the 'do nothing' option¹¹. Across the interchange, modelling indicates an extra 2,000 vehicles/day (300 trucks) from the Kilmore direction in addition to the 'do nothing' option. The preferred route, particularly for trucks into and out of the northern suburbs, will be via the Hume Freeway rather than through Wandong, as it will connect to the Outer Metropolitan Ring road. b. Noise emanating from the interchange will not be significant because volumes will be substantially less than existing freeway generated noise. New embankments on the interchange will provide a physical barrier that will reduce noise levels immediately abutting the interchange. Reduced grades on upgraded Wandong Road and slip lane entrance will reduce heavy braking or accelerating truck noise. c. Traffic studies show only a modest increase in Wandong traffic. Design sightlines meet current required safety standards, protected turning lanes for right turning vehicles meet specifications, added height of upgraded interchange will reduce fog impacts.

Our analysis

Some community members in Wandong-Heathcote Junction are not receptive to the results of the transport modelling. This could be because they do not trust VicRoads or because they are committed to moving the interchange away from Wandong, or both.

VicRoads upholds the veracity of previous traffic modelling but recognises that the community does not accept the results of these studies. They also firmly maintain that current interchange design meets current traffic management and safety standards.

¹¹ "Do nothing" will see an increase of 1,700 vehicles per day on current volumes

VicRoads seems open to considering any feasible improvements to interchange design to mitigate perceived negative impacts, but has not conducted community engagement activities to seek input.

There is potential for any impacts arising from changed traffic conditions (in relation to traffic noise, safety, or volumes), to be effectively managed with smart design in consultation with the community of Wandong Heathcote Junction.

6.2.3 Property values

Community concern	Government response
The community has an expectation that property values in Wandong-Heathcote Junction will be adversely affected by the construction of the proposed interchange.	VicRoads state that there is no evidence that property values will change for the worse and there are no guarantees that values will remain the same VicRoads are willing to assist with incorporating design features that improve Wandong Heathcote Junction

Our analysis

The continued uncertainty about this project is leading to stress and anger amongst many community members, including those who will be directly impacted through land acquisition, as discussed in Section 6.5.3 Land severance and acquisition.

6.2.4 Lights on the interchange

Community concern	Government response
Lights on the interchange The community has a concern about the height of the lighting on top of the interchange. They have queried if the impacts of this lighting on residents has been considered.	VicRoads state that the light poles used for lighting interchanges are typically 11 metres tall. The lights used for this purpose are shielded to control the spillage of light outside the interchange and direct light downwards onto the road surface. The impact of the lighting on adjacent residences would be considered during the detailed design of the proposed upgrade.

Our analysis

The government response shows that there has already been some consideration of the required lighting at the interchange and that the impacts on adjacent residences would be more fully considered during the detailed design stage.

6.3 Concerns about the impacts of the construction period on Wandong Heathcote Junction

There will be a considerable level of disturbance during the construction of the interchange upgrade. Construction impacts are temporary and would typically be managed to minimise the effects on the local community. Notwithstanding there will be a range of impacts affecting amenity and access of Wandong and Heathcote Junction residents during construction. The main construction impacts will include: impacts on visual amenity, noise and vibration impacts to sensitive receptors (from machinery), air emissions to sensitive receptors (dust and local pollutants from machinery), altered access routes and traffic delays (including potentially hampering emergency vehicle access), land severance and acquisition, and native vegetation removal and earth moving impacts.

These concerns, along with corresponding government responses, are summarised in the next sections of this report, followed by our analysis of the situation. Appendix 1 contains the detailed community concerns and government responses. They fall into two broad areas of concern about impacts:

- Length of construction stage and access
- Impacts of noise and dust on the vulnerable

6.3.1 Length of construction stage and access

Concern	Government response to concern
Length of construction period The community is concerned about the length of construction period: specifically, that it might take 3 to 5 years.	Construction of the entire bypass project is expected to take 2.5 to 3 years and this will be staged to minimise impacts. Construction of the interchange itself is predicted to take less than 12 months.
Disruptions to access The community are concerned about <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Traffic delays – especially around school pickup/drop off times. b. Access for emergency vehicles. Noting that the community is particularly sensitive to even temporary restrictions in access due to memory of Black Saturday and more recent Kilmore Mickleham bushfires. 	VicRoads state that disruptions to access are managed through strict requirements placed on contractors to address and control access during the construction period. Contract arrangements for access during construction are outlined in Section 8.6.10 in Chapter 8 of the EES document [extracts shown in Appendix 2 of this report].

Our analysis

The community is suspicious of stated completion times and is concerned that construction scheduling will blow out and be subject to delays. Given recent bushfires in the area, members of the community are justifiably concerned about any restrictions in access to traffic during the fire season.

The community does not trust VicRoads to ensure that their contractors will manage disruptions during construction appropriately or effectively. At the same time, VicRoads maintains that their contractors operate under strict protocols that will properly manage access during construction.

RMCG accepts that VicRoads will have established contract documentation with tight compliance clauses that should ensure that contractors properly manage access during construction. The issue is mostly to do with convincing the community that there will be sufficient enforcement of the contract requirements.

6.3.2 Impacts of noise and dust on the vulnerable

Concern	Government response to concern
<p>Community members are concerned about the impacts of construction on the vulnerable¹² including:</p> <p>a. Air emissions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - construction dust from earthworks - local air pollutants from machinery <p>b. Noise and vibration impacts from construction machinery</p>	<p>VicRoads state that strict requirements are placed on the contractor to:</p> <p>a. Address and control dust during the construction period. Contract arrangements for dust are covered in Chapter 17 of the EES document and Appendix S of the EES Technical Supplements [extracts shown in Appendix 2 of this report].</p> <p>b. Address and control noise during the construction period. Contract arrangements for noise are covered in Chapter 17 of the EES document and Appendix S of the EES Technical Supplements [extracts shown in Appendix 2 of this report].</p>

Our analysis

Once again, RMCG understands that the community does not trust VicRoads, but accepts that VicRoads will have established contract documentation with tight compliance clauses that should ensure that contractors properly manage and mitigate adverse impacts during construction. The issue is mostly to do with convincing the community that there will be sufficient enforcement of the contract requirements.

6.4 Lack of trust preventing agreement about likely impacts

Throughout the consultation on concerns relating to the proposed Wandong interchange, RMCG has noted a significant gap between the impacts feared by community members and the impacts that VicRoads and other stakeholders predict.

The most persistent case is in relation to noise and traffic, where concerned community members do not accept the results of modelling conducted for the EES.

A further example is the visual impact of the interchange, where there is a persistent impression within the community that the new interchange will be “like putting up a 19-metre-high building in Wandong”. While VicRoads point out that the material change – from the surface of the Hume rather than the surface of the existing underpass – is 10 metres, the community’s perception persists. The concerned community members do not accept that the proposed interchange will be anything but another infrastructure blight on their townships.

Exaggerations and distrust of technical analysis persist for the following reasons:

- Community members are worried
- Community members have had disappointing infrastructure results in the past
- Community members do not trust information coming from government agencies, including VicRoads
- Some community members are devoted to moving the interchange to another location.

¹² sensitive receptors = school children, town residents, elderly

6.5 Concerns about the process used to make decisions about the interchange

Community members at Wandong-Heathcote Junction have expressed various concerns about government processes used to make decisions relating to the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass in general, and the Wandong interchange specifically.

As described in Section 2 and Appendix 3, the decision about the preferred Kilmore-Wallan Bypass route was preceded by community consultation and a formal EES. In March 2015, following the February release of the Minister for Planning's assessment under the Environment Effects Act 1978, the Victorian Government confirmed the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass would take the Western Route.

These concerns, along with corresponding government responses, are summarised in the next sections of this report, followed by our analysis of the situation. Appendix 1 contains the detailed community concerns and government responses. They fall into four broad areas of concern about process:

- Lack of community consultation
- The EES process not followed
- Land severance and acquisition
- Fast rail and rail bridge not considered

6.5.1 Adequacy of community consultation

Community concern	Government response
Inadequate time to review the interchange design The community is concerned that it was not given adequate opportunity to review position or design of the proposed Wandong bypass interchange.	VicRoads believe they have carried out a thorough process as described in Appendix 1 and Appendix 3.
Wandong-Heathcote Junction not in Consultation Plan The community is concerned that Wandong-Heathcote Junction was not mentioned or included in the EES Consultation Plan, Kilmore-Wallan Bypass July 2013 (confirmed).	VicRoads agree, but note that efforts were made to consult with people from Wandong-Heathcote Junction through the CCG, as shown in the VicRoads chronology attached.
Interchange design not made clear to community The concept design of interchange was not made clear to the Wandong-Heathcote Junction community until June 2014, when the fly-through video was put on the website. Prior to video release, there was mention of a minor upgrade to Wandong interchange which would be subject to design.	VicRoads confirm that in the early stages of the project (2011-2013), when the CCG were discussing options, it is true that there were no drawings or fly-through options available to illustrate the scale of change at the Wandong interchange. The location of the Wandong bypass interchange as per the current concept design was shown on documents as early August 2012, albeit in plan view. Rollout designs were made available to the CCG and at other community meetings. Fly-throughs were developed in March 2014 and made available with the EES documentation on the website and on CD at the commencement of the formal exhibition of the EES in June 2014.

Our analysis

Throughout this investigation, community members have frequently pointed out that Wandong-Heathcote Junction was not mentioned in the *Kilmore-Wallan Bypass Consultation Plan*. This plan had a communication *Kilmore-Wallan Bypass Consultation Plan* are to "...provide the communities of Kilmore-Wallan with opportunities to be engaged with throughout the EES process".¹³ VicRoads point out that despite this omission, they made considerable efforts to engage with the Wandong-Heathcote Junction community. Community members argue they have not been adequately consulted.

A great deal of this investigation has centred on understanding these opposing views. This was possible once we made a distinction between consultation relating to the *design* of the interchange at Wandong, and consultation on the *route* of the Bypass.

As shown in Section 4.2, VicRoads did extensive consultation about the *route* for the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass, across all affected communities. The VicRoads records indicate that people from Wandong-Heathcote Junction were engaged via public information display, face-to-face meetings with affected landholders and involvement in the CCG. The designs of the route options, including the location of the proposed interchange, were altered following feedback from local community members.

In contrast, consultation about the *design* of the interchange has been minimal. From the evidence presented to us, it appears that VicRoads designed the interchange – its three-dimensional form as distinct from its geographical location – without any consultation with the Wandong-Heathcote Junction community. While this is normal practice for development of a concept design, the scale of change warranted targeted consultation

VicRoads maintain that some consultation took place on the design by tabling concept drawings at a CCG meeting and circulating fly-through videos that showed the scale of the change (as shown in Figure 4). Neither of these methods constitutes effective community engagement. The CCG members were not resourced to discuss design issues with the wider community. Additionally, there are no minutes noting discussions about the design, and no actions asking members to seek community feedback on the designs.

Given that the majority of Wandong-Heathcote Junction residents appear to have been unaware of the scale of change to the interchange until fly-through were circulated in June 2014¹⁴, it is clear that the fly-throughs effectively improved community understanding of the change. However, they were released well after the public information displays without context, justification or a process for feedback. The period for EES submissions closed in July 2014. The scale of change coupled with the timing and the quality of the design materials lead community members to believe that the concept design was the final design. As a result, the fly-throughs triggered community anger rather than engagement about the design.

After the circulation of the fly-throughs the Mayor of Mitchel Shire, Cr Sue Marstaeller, arranged a public meeting in Wandong Hall on 23 July 2014, which was attended by 70-80 community members. Community members were advised that late submissions to Panels Victoria about the EES would be accepted from the Wandong-Heathcote Junction. Several did so, including the Wandong-Heathcote Junction Community Group and the Wandong History Group.

¹³ VicRoads (2013) p.6

¹⁴ The fly-throughs were made by VicRoads in March 2014 and uploaded to the VicRoads website some time later. It seems that the videos did not circulate through the community until they were displayed at the commencement of the formal exhibition of the EES in June 2014.

The selection of the Western Option, ending at Wandong, in March 2015 intensified community concern. Concern about the design turned into concern about the Western Option and community efforts have since focused on changing the route so that the Bypass does not finish at Wandong.

Since then, VicRoads and other stakeholders have put a great deal of effort into engaging with the Wandong-Heathcote Junction community, but they are now necessarily focusing on crisis management, rather constructive engagement.

The Victorian Government's *Public Participation in Government Decision-making: Better practice guide*¹⁵ recognises the value that the community brings to understanding issues and developing solutions. As written in the guide, "Failing to adequately engage the public risks alienating the community and creating negative impacts through poorly informed and implemented decisions."

The guide is based on the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) *Public Participation Spectrum* (see Figure 3), which defines public participation as "the involvement of those affected by a decision in the decision-making process."

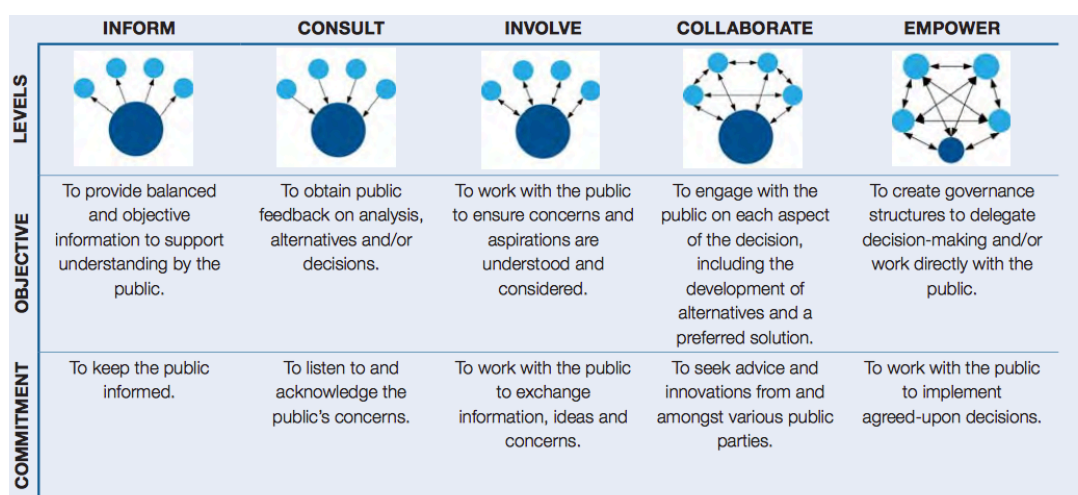


Figure 6: IAP2 levels of public participation¹⁶

In relation to the route of the Bypass, VicRoads engaged the community, including Wandong-Heathcote Junction, at the *Consult* and often *Involve* levels of the IAP2 spectrum.

In relation to the interchange design, VicRoads conducted consultation at the *Inform* level of IAP2.

The decision not to consult with the Wandong-Heathcote Junction about the design of the Wandong interchange before June 2014 appears not to have been a decision at all, but a failure by VicRoads and other government authorities to foresee the reaction that the community might have to a significantly changed interchange. The scale of change at the interchange should have triggered targeted consultation about the design with the Wandong-Heathcote Junction community before and during development of concept designs.

¹⁵ VAGO (2015)

¹⁶ Adapted by VAGO from the International Association for Public Participation's Public Participation Spectrum

6.5.2 The EES process

Community concern	Government response
<p>EES is flawed</p> <p>The community believes that the Bypass EES is flawed, because it does not follow the process prescribed by the Ministerial Guidelines for the preparation of an EES.</p> <p>The community is of the view that a new or amended EES should be conducted to cover impacts on Wandong Heathcote Junction.</p>	<p>Neither DELWP nor the Inquiry Panel, who reviewed the VicRoads compliance with the EES scoping requirements raised any issues as to the compliance with the social requirements of the EES, or about the adequacy of community consultation.</p> <p>The Inquiry Report noted that the provision of pedestrian access across the freeway would have a positive social outcome in reducing the severance of the communities.</p> <p>VicRoads have said that they are willing to work with the community to integrate the proposed interchange upgrade into the landscape to minimise its amenity impacts</p>
<p>No studies at Wandong Heathcote Junction</p> <p>Community members believe that the focus of the EES investigative studies was almost entirely on Wallan and Kilmore. There were no investigative studies of the impacts of the proposed bypass interchange on the physical, ecological, historical & cultural heritage, or social networks of Wandong Heathcote Junction.</p>	<p>VicRoads state that the EES did not focus on the social impact on Wandong-Heathcote Junction because the technical investigations into modelled noise and traffic impacts did not cite any significant changes in terms of traffic and noise impact at Wandong.</p> <p>This is substantiated by the evidence provided by the technical specialist, as per the technical appendices to the EES. The potential for improved access to and across the Hume Freeway was noted. The cultural heritage and biodiversity studies did investigate the study area within the Wandong township, consistent with the whole of the study area.</p>
<p>Not an upgrade but a new structure</p> <p>The new interchange is not an upgrade to the existing interchange, but rather is a new structure, which requires separate consideration in terms of impacts aside from the bypass route.</p>	<p>VicRoads state that the proposed changes are an upgrade as it will replace and supersede the existing interchange as well as improving safety at the interchange, the impacts of which have been considered by the EES, albeit with some further consideration of landscape impacts that the Ministers' assessment has requested be addressed.</p>

Our analysis

In March 2015, the Victorian Government announced that the Western Option had been selected as the route for the bypass.

The Minister for Planning's assessment of the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass EES Inquiry and Advisory Committee report, included the following statements:

The Inquiry notes that the potential impacts from the redesign of the Hume Freeway interchange at Wandong are not fully addressed in the EES. This Assessment considers this to be an omission in the EES and agrees with the Inquiry that the redesign of this interchange should seek to minimise the landscape and visual effects Hume Freeway interchange at Wandong¹⁷.

It is important to note that the Minister did not suggest revisiting the EES, rather he suggested that redesign of the interchange should be undertaken to minimise its landscape and visual impacts.

As far as we have been able to determine, VicRoads have not redesigned the interchange since the Minister for Planning gave this direction, nor has the community asked them to, being strongly focused on moving the interchange away from Wandong rather than improving the design.

¹⁷ Minister for Planning (2015)

6.5.3 Land severance and acquisition

Concern	VicRoads response to concern
Community members are concerned about negative impacts of ongoing uncertainty on those people who face compulsory acquisition; especially those with businesses.	<p>Acquiring properties is subject to funding of the bypass. All owners impacted by the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass are allowed to sell their properties. There are measures to protect the value of those people wanting to sell their properties prior to the project being funded and for those people that have special or hardship circumstances.</p> <p>If the project is funded, compensation will be made on the property value at that time considering the unaffected before value and the property value after the construction project, including the injurious impact of the bypass on the rest of the property.</p> <p>VicRoads has a process for concerned people to talk to acquisition experts. Any landowner that has questions or concerns about the acquisition process should contact VicRoads and they can arrange for their Property Services Officers to assist.</p>

Our analysis

Past road infrastructure projects show that it is usual for a mutual agreement between VicRoads and affected parties to be reached, noting that compulsory acquisition will often cause stress— particularly where there is a lengthy period of uncertainty. Several individuals who will be directly affected reported that VicRoads had not contacted them since their initial discussions held more than two years ago.

Compulsory land acquisition is a normal part of road construction projects, and it is usual that people facing potential compulsory acquisition to feel stressed. In this case, the continued uncertainty about the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass project is adding to the stress and anger amongst many community members, who feel they cannot make decisions about their properties now or in the near future.

6.5.4 Fast rail and rail bridge not considered

Community concern	Government response
<p>Fast train and rail bridge</p> <p>The community is concerned that it is not obvious how or if the route selection has considered the proposed fast train route and required upgrade to rail infrastructure.</p>	<p>VicRoads state that the fast rail route has been considered in the design process. VicRoads liaised with the Federal Department of Infrastructure on the location and potential relationship with the Fast Train proposal.</p> <p>VicRail has not raised future changes to the Broadford Road Rail Bridge in Wandong.</p>

Our analysis

The government response shows that there has been some consideration of the multimodal transport options.

7 Overall conclusions

The situation at Wandong Heathcote Junction is complex. Much of the community angst is deep-seated and has been exacerbated by discontent with past infrastructure projects and a general distrust of government agencies. Our conclusion is that the following points are central to understanding and responding to the current community concerns.

Context is everything

The community reaction to the proposed new interchange at Wandong must be considered in the context of the history of other infrastructure and infrastructure planning in the area, as well as recent bushfires.

The *Wandong-Heathcote Junction 3758* structure planning project by Mitchell Shire Council helped community members to clarify their vision for development in the area. Given that they wanted to prioritise the rural living atmosphere, it is unsurprising that community members feel they should have been better consulted about the interchange.

Additionally, a history of poor infrastructure outcomes for the Wandong-Heathcote Junction community (for example, the proximity of the Hume Freeway; and the prominent, blue rail bridge) has led to widespread community distrust of new projects and government agencies.

Consideration of this context should have influenced the level of consultation undertaken in the Wandong-Heathcote Junction community.

Unsuccessful community engagement

Although VicRoads conducted impressively extensive consultation about the route for the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass study area, decisions affecting the concept design of the interchange at Wandong were made without adequate consultation.

The community did not understand the overpass concept, which is significantly different to the current underpass, until the release of a fly-through video in June 2014. This means that the Wandong-Heathcote Junction community did not have adequate opportunity for input into the concept design, nor did they have adequate time to comprehend and react to the concept design of the interchange before the government considered route options.

VicRoads and other government authorities failed to foresee the reaction the local community might have to a significantly changed interchange, and therefore misjudged the need to adequately consult with the Wandong-Heathcote Junction community about the design. Given the scale of change for the interchange, the Wandong-Heathcote Junction should have been considered in the original EES Consultation Plan and given the opportunity to shape the concept design.

An unwanted change, as designed

The concerns expressed by SWAG are a good representation of the concerns of other community members. There is a clear message that community members are concerned about the interchange and many do not want it as is currently designed near their town.

The community are concerned that the scale of change will damage the rural amenity and aesthetics of their township, leading to discordant noise from truck brakes, safety issues, loss of community connection, visual impacts and reduced property values.

Clearly, the footprint and height of the proposed interchange is larger than the current interchange and will have a different appearance. Despite this, the EES documentation contained little mention of the impacts of the proposal on Wandong Heathcote Junction, despite two out of the three options (Quinns Road and Western) involving the same substantive upgrade to the interchange.

Because they see the concept design as fixed and objectionable, the community consider that the best solution to their concerns is to move the interchange away from Wandong. The highly concerned members, including SWAG, refuse to consider other design options for the interchange.

VicRoads is open to considering any feasible improvements to the interchange design, but has not conducted community engagement activities to seek input.

While the concerns of other community members match the concerns expressed by SWAG, not everyone we spoke to shares the SWAG perspective that the interchange must be moved. Some were willing to consider changes to the concept design.

RMCG is confident that there is potential for impacts arising from a changed interchange to be effectively managed with smart design, so long as the redesign is conducted collaboratively with the community of Wandong Heathcote Junction.

Construction concerns can be addressed

The community is concerned about the impacts of the construction phase including emergency access, general access, dust and noise.

RMCG accepts that VicRoads will have established contract documentation with tight compliance clauses that should ensure that contractors properly manage access during construction. The issue is whether the community trusts VicRoads to enforce the contract requirements.

Interchange should be redesigned collaboratively

Evidenced by its name – the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass project – the focus of the bypass project has been on improving traffic conditions in Kilmore and Wallan.

In his assessment of the *Kilmore-Wallan Bypass EES Inquiry and Advisory Committee report*, the Minister for Planning did not suggest revisiting the EES, but did agree that redesign of the interchange should be undertaken to minimise its landscape and visual impacts.

VicRoads have not redesigned the interchange since the Minister for Planning gave this direction, nor has the community asked them to, with SWAG and some community members strongly focused on moving the interchange away from Wandong rather than improving the design.

As far as we know, no government agency or community representative has investigated how potential positive outcomes for Wandong-Heathcote Junction could have been incorporated into the decision making process.

Government agencies must work collaboratively with the community to consider how this major road infrastructure project can benefit Wandong Heathcote Junction. With good design of the interchange, potential negative impacts on town character and community severance are likely to be mitigated.

8 Summary of recommendations

In designing an interchange at Wandong, the focus of local and state government must be on working with the community to create net positive outcomes for the community of Wandong Heathcote Junction.

The following recommendations are designed to address community concerns about process, design and construction impacts.

Recommendation 1: Engage meaningfully with Wandong-Heathcote Junction community

We recommend that VicRoads and local government work together to plan an effective consultation process with the Wandong-Heathcote Junction community. The process in the VAGO *Public Participation in Government Decision-making: Better Practice Guide* is one that should be conducted at the initial concept planning stage of all projects. The process helps agencies to think methodically about the context for every community likely to be impacted by a project and how the project can maximise benefits beyond the initial project brief. We recommend VicRoads and local government use the process to plan future consultation with this community in relation to the bypass and interchange.

Recommendation 2: Form a stakeholder working group to collaborate on road infrastructure

Given the need to rebuild trust and improve outcomes in Wandong Heathcote Junction, we recommend that VicRoads conduct consultation about the redesign of the interchange at the *Collaborate* level of the IAP2 spectrum: “Engage with the public on each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and a preferred solution”

Designed and run properly, collaborative consultation will lead to better solutions and build trust. There is an opportunity through the design of the interchange and other traffic and infrastructure works to maintain the rural lifestyle at Wandong Heathcote Junction.

We recommend that Mitchell Shire set up a working group with State government resourcing. The working group should provide advice on traffic management and associated infrastructure in Wandong-Heathcote Junction and include a cross section of community members, including some who are highly concerned.

Recommendation 3: Reconceive the interchange project

We recommend that VicRoads and the working group rethink the Wandong interchange to create a project that is focussed on providing net positive impacts for the Wandong-Heathcote Junction community. We recommend that the working group begin by developing a set of design principles, which should be informed by the following sub recommendations.

Recommendation 3.a: Investigate ways to better manage through traffic in Wandong

In order to ensure that the construction of a new interchange at Wandong creates net positive outcomes for Wandong Heathcote Junction, we recommend that the working group work with VicRoads traffic designers to investigate ways to better manage through traffic in Wandong Heathcote Junction. Depending on the design principles developed by the working group, this may involve encouraging traffic to flow around rather than through the Wandong Township, potentially creating a bypass of this town. Alternatively, it may lead to measures that emphasise pedestrian and local traffic access over through traffic.

Recommendation 3.b: Investigate ways to reduce noise impacts

In consideration of community concerns relating to changes in traffic noise, we recommend that the working group should investigate ways to reduce noise in Wandong Heathcote Junction. The group should aim to reduce existing noise coming from the Hume Freeway as well as minimise potential noise from traffic coming across the interchange.

Recommendation 3.c: Investigate ways to improve accessibility and connectivity

In consideration of community concerns relating to accessibility and connectivity, we recommend that the working group investigates ways to improve pedestrian and bicycle accessibility across Wandong. This could involve things like: keeping the current underpass interchange open for pedestrians and bikes; providing bicycle lanes and footpath access from Wandong station across the Hume Freeway through to the Broadhurst Lane extension; and improving pedestrian connections, particularly across arterial roads and from the school to the shopping centre and memorial park.

Recommendation 3.d: Investigate ways to reduce construction period

In consideration of community concerns about construction impacts on access during the fire season, we recommend that the working group investigates ways to reduce the construction period. VicRoads estimate that construction will take less than 12 months. Further reducing the construction period may require overnight and/or weekend work. The working group should investigate and weigh up options and the options should be discussed with the wider community before any changes to normal construction practices are made.

Recommendation 3.e: Work with local media and groups to communicate outcomes

We recommend that VicRoads and/or the working groups work closely with the local media and community groups to communicate with the community. The wider community must be actively kept abreast of the consultation process and the recommendations of the working group. As a first step, we recommend that the Minister make this report public and circulate it to all stakeholders who contributed to the investigation.

Recommendation 4: Provide regular acquisition information updates

VicRoads has well-established acquisition processes, but not all of those affected by this project fully understand the processes. Others require reassurance that nothing has changed during this period of delay. To counter the uncertainty created by delays, we recommend that VicRoads conduct immediate follow-up discussions with landholders potentially affected by acquisition, followed by regular updates. These discussions should focus on communicating the progress of the project, and reminding landholders of the process and support available.

Recommendation 5: Planning for the Northern Growth Corridor to consider impacts on Wandong Heathcote Junction

We recommend that State Government planning for future growth in Melbourne's Northern Corridor also consider potential impacts on Wandong-Heathcote Junction and inform this community (via the stakeholder working group, for example) about the outcomes of all relevant studies.

References

CCG (2016) *Wandong and Heathcote Junction 3758 Project: Stage 2 Consultation feedback summary*. Prepared for Mitchell Shire Council by Capire Consulting Group Pty. Ltd., Carlton, Victoria

GAA (2012) *Growth Corridor Plans: Managing Melbourne's growth*. Growth Areas Authority, Melbourne, Victoria, Accessed online <https://vpa.vic.gov.au/wp-content/Assets/Files/GCP%20-%20Chapter%206%20South-East%20Corridor%20Plan.pdf>

Minister for Planning (2015) *Kilmore-Wallan Bypass, Assessment under Environment Effects Act 1978*

Mesh Planning (2016) *Wandong- Heathcote Junction Structure Plan: Strengthening the future*, prepared by Mesh Planning for Mitchell Shire Council, Accessed online <http://engagingmitchellshire.com/wandong-heathcote-junction-structure-plan>

VAGO (2015) *Public Participation in Government Decision-making: Better practice guide*. Victorian Auditor General's Office, Melbourne, Victoria, Accessed online <http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/publications/20150130-Public-Participation-BPG/20150130-Public-Participation-BPG.pdf>

VicRoads (2013) *Environmental Effects Statement Consultation Plan: Kilmore-Wallan Bypass*

VicRoads (2014a) *Kilmore-Wallan Bypass Environmental Effects Statement (EES)*

VicRoads (2014b) *Kilmore-Wallan Bypass fly-through video*

Appendix 1: Summary of community concerns and VicRoads responses

The following table summarises the concerns that were expressed by community members to RMCG during the course of our consultation. The list of concerns was reviewed by SWAG in April 2016 to ensure that the concerns of the community, as understood by the group, were correctly recorded. RMCG then sent the concerns to VicRoads for their response. The Minister for Roads and Road Safety released the VicRoads responses to SWAG in July 2016, giving SWAG the opportunity to give final input to RMCG before our draft report was written.

The concerns we have heard from the community fall into three broad categories:

- Concerns about the process used to make the decision about the interchange
- Concerns about the impacts of the bypass interchange on Wandong Heathcote Junction
- Concerns about the impacts of the construction of the bypass interchange on Wandong Heathcote Junction.

Alongside the list of community concerns is a response from VicRoads to each concern.

	Community Concerns	VicRoads Responses
1	PROCESS	
1a	<p>Community members state that the evidence on hand shows that the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass EES is flawed, and therefore illegal, because it does not demonstrate due diligent process as prescribed by the Environment Effects Act (1978):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EES consultation did not consult with the Wandong Community about the interchange, as distinct from the bypass options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The community consultative group (CCG) last met Jan 2013, so there is a perception that it was concluded too early. The CCG was not given an opportunity to review position or design of the proposed Wandong bypass interchange. 	<p><i>Note: VicRoads provided minutes from the CCG that showed the final meeting was held in May 2013.</i></p> <p>It is important to note that concept design for all options evolved over the course of planning investigations, and were altered to reflect feedback from the Community, CCG, specialist studies, and ability to meet technical standards.</p> <p>In the chronology of events, shop fronts for determining a suitable location and alignment for a Western Option were held in January and February 2012. Preliminary concept plans were developed from this feedback by May 2012. The revised grading of Wandong Road and the overpass was incorporated as part of the development of this concept. At this time, it was also decided to adopt a common concept design for both the Western Option and the Quinns Road Option between the Hume Freeway and the Northern Highway.</p> <p>At CCG meeting No.8 on 7 June 2012, VicRoads presented concept plans that show the overpass proposal that was adopted for the final EES concept. Whilst the interchange concept is not specifically noted in the minutes, the concept plans were discussed with the CCG members in detail using large-scale plots including targeted discussion on any design changes that were incorporated into the concepts. These concepts were then used as the basis for discussion with affected land users and exhibited in August 2012. The plans with the same concept proposal were again reviewed at meeting No. 12 on 24 January 2013 prior to the public information display on 31 January 2013</p>
1b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wandong-Heathcote Junction was not mentioned or included in EES Consultation Plan, Kilmore-Wallan Bypass July 2013 (confirmed) 	Agreed, however, efforts were made to consult with people from Wandong-Heathcote Junction through the CCG and as shown in the VicRoads chronology attached.
1c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The design of interchange was not made clear to the Wandong-Heathcote Junction community until June 2014 (when the fly-through video was put on the website; after the preferred route had been nominated by the then State Government). 	VicRoads outlined the iterative process whereby designs are worked up and decisions made (see Appendix 2 for chronology). For the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass project, initial options were developed in consultation with members of the wider community. In December 2011, the Minister for Roads requested that a Western Option be included in the planning investigations. These were reduced to three options for which a full EES was conducted from June 2013.
1d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior to video release there was mention of a “minor upgrade” to Wandong interchange which is subject to design 	<p>In the early stages of the project, 2011-2013, when the CCG were discussing options, it is true that there were no drawings of fly-through options available to illustrate the scale of change at the Wandong interchange.</p> <p>However, the Wandong bypass interchange as currently designed was shown on documents as early August 2012, albeit in plan view. Copies of the preliminary concept were displayed at a public information session and also made available on VicRoads website. The concept plans were again displayed in January 2013.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rollout concept designs made available to CCG (as per response in 1a) and other community meetings Fly throughs were developed in March 2014 and made available with the EES documentation on the website and on CD at the commencement of the formal exhibition of the EES in June 2014. <p>The EES submission closing date was July 2014.</p> <p>The selection of the preferred route was not made until March 2015.</p>
1e	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ministerial Guidelines for the preparation of an EES were not followed for the Wandong-Heathcote Junction vicinity as they were followed for Wallan and Kilmore. Specifically, the guidelines state (p.16) that an EES should provide an assessment of a project's potential effects on physical systems, ecological systems, and human communities - including their interactions. 	<p>The administration of the EES process is the responsibility of the Minister for Planning and delegated responsibility; in this case this is the Environment Assessment Unit of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). VicRoads, as the proponent for the project, was responsible for undertaking planning activities to meet the requirements of the EES as required by the Minister.</p> <p>VicRoads prepared detailed planning investigations into the five bypass options.</p> <p>Following consideration of the impacts and benefits of the five options, VicRoads selects three options for further consideration and assessment.</p> <p>In January 2013, the three options were then referred to the Minister for Planning under the guidelines of the Environment Effect Act to determine what form of project assessment would be required.</p> <p>In April 2013, the Minister for Planning determined that the project would require an EES given the significance of potential impacts.</p>

	Community Concerns	VicRoads Responses
		<p>In making this determination, the Minister also released a set of scoping requirements that needed to be addressed by the EES. DELWP made the draft scoping requirements available for public comment, and following submissions the scoping requirements were finalised in October 2013.</p> <p>In June 2013, DELWP also convened a Technical Reference Group (TRG) made up of key government agencies, including Mitchell Council, to review the preparation of the EES documentation.</p> <p>VicRoads then prepared the EES to meet the scoping requirements set out by the Minister and the review provided by the TRG.</p> <p>Following the compilation of the EES document, the document was submitted to DELWP for final approval (EES document compliance with the scoping requirements) prior to formally exhibiting the document.</p> <p>As laid out in Appendix 3, following approval by the Minister, the EES document was advertised and formally exhibited in June for 30 working days. During this period the community were invited to make submissions on the EES. All submissions were made directly to DELWP.</p> <p>130 submissions were received during the formal exhibition of the EES, including submissions from the Wandong-Heathcote Junction Community Group Inc. and the Wandong History Group.</p> <p>DELWP also contacted submitters as to whether they wanted to make verbal representation to the Inquiry Panel at the Inquiry Hearings.</p> <p>In addition to the EES information on VicRoads website, VicRoads held a public information display in Kilmore to provide information about the project and how to make a submission during the exhibition period.</p> <p>DELWP convened an independent Inquiry Panel (Panels Victoria under Minister for Planning) to review the EES document and consider submissions made during the exhibition of the EES.</p> <p>The Inquiry Panel held a directions hearing in Kilmore on 7 August 2014 to confirm procedural arrangements for the Inquiry Hearings and to advise VicRoads what further information and expert witness statements would be required for the hearing.</p> <p>The Inquiry hearings were held between 27 August and 12 September 2014. These included submissions from VicRoads, specialists, expert witnesses, Mitchell Shire Council and their expert witnesses, Goulburn Valley Water and their expert witness, and individual submitters.</p> <p>The Wandong-Heathcote Junction Community Group Inc. and the Wandong History Group also made submissions to the hearings.</p> <p>Following the hearing, the Inquiry Panel prepared its report, including recommendations, for the Minister for Planning's Assessment on 17 November 2014.</p> <p>On 11 March 2015, the Minister for Planning released his assessment, together with the Inquiry Panel report, advising that the agreed option for a bypass of Kilmore and Wallan was the Western Option.</p> <p>It should be noted that neither DELWP nor the Inquiry Panel (who reviewed VicRoads compliance with the EES scoping requirements) raised any issues as to the compliance of the EES with the social requirements, nor the adequacy of community consultation.</p> <p>The Inquiry Report noted that the provision of pedestrian access across the freeway would have a positive social outcome in reducing severance.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Inquiry Panel noted on Page 35 of its report that:</p> <p><i>The upgrade of the Wandong Interchange and the Epping-Kilmore Road between Wandong and the Northern Highway is a major benefit of the Quinns Road and the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass.</i></p> <p>In reference to landscape and visual impacts, the Inquiry Panel (in reviewing a submission made by the Wandong History Group regarding potential impacts to the heritage property at 770 Wandong Road and other heritage sites) identified by the group in response to amendment C56 (separate study) noted that:</p> <p><i>"...particular attention should be paid to these concerns in detailed design for the Wandong Interchange and in monitoring of excavation work".</i></p>

	Community Concerns	VicRoads Responses
		<p>The Inquiry Panel, in acknowledging the presentation of significant views for landscape and visual impacts, noted that:</p> <p><i>A visualisation of the effect on the Wandong of the proposed overpass across the Hume Freeway would have also been useful.</i></p> <p>The Minister for Planning in his assessment of the Inquiry Panel report:</p> <p><i>The redesign (upgrade) of the Hume Freeway interchange at Wandong should be undertaken to minimise its landscape and visual impacts.</i></p> <p>VicRoads is willing to work with the community to integrate the proposed interchange upgrade into the landscape to minimise its amenity impacts.</p>
1f	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The focus of the EES investigative studies was almost entirely on Wallan and Kilmore. There were no investigative studies on the impacts of the proposed bypass interchange on the physical, ecological, historical & cultural heritage, or social networks of Wandong Heathcote Junction. 	<p>The EES did not focus on the social impact on Wandong-Heathcote Junction because the technical investigations into modelled noise and traffic impacts did not cite any significant changes in terms of traffic and noise impact at Wandong. This is substantiated by the evidence provided by the technical specialist, as per the technical appendices to the EES. The potential for improved access to and across the Hume Freeway was noted. The cultural heritage and biodiversity studies did investigate the study area within the Wandong township, consistent with the whole of the study area.</p>
1g	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new interchange is not an upgrade to the existing interchange, but rather is a new structure, which requires separate consideration in terms of impacts aside from the bypass route. 	<p>It is the view of VicRoads that the proposed changes are an upgrade, as they will replace and supersede the existing interchange as well as improving safety at the interchange, the impacts of which have been considered by the EES; albeit some further consideration of landscape impacts that the Ministers' assessment has requested be addressed.</p>
1h	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is not obvious how, or if, the route selection has considered the proposed fast train route and required upgrade to rail infrastructure (absurd to not be planning for road and rail concurrently) 	<p>VicRoads states that the fast rail route has been considered in the design process. VicRoads liaised with the Federal Department of Infrastructure on the location and potential relationship with the Fast Train proposal. Whilst VicRoads has considered the Fast Rail project in its development of the bypass options, they are separate studies and there will be no direct interaction between the two transport modes as the proposed rail stations are not located near the study area for the bypass.</p> <p>VicRail has not raised future changes to the Broadford Road Rail Bridge in Wandong.</p>
	IMPACTS POST CONSTRUCTION	
2a	<p>That the bypass will have a net negative impact on the fabric of the community of Wandong Heathcote Junction, which will ruin the neighbourhood character and liveability of the town</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diminishment of rural character of the town – concerns that the proposed changes to the interchange will have so many negative impacts that it will destroy the rural character and village aesthetics of the town. 	<p>VicRoads wants to do what it can to leave Wandong-Heathcote Junction a better place than it was before. VicRoads is willing to consider improvements to the Epping-Kilmore Road within the town centre that will have positive outcomes for safety and amenity. The bulk of the physical works would be confined to a similar area as that taken for the current interchange.</p>
2b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community connection – The bypass interchange will totally disconnect the western and eastern sides of Wandong township during construction and operation. There is no provision of access for pedestrians, cyclists, parents with prams etc. Some community members consider that it is an absurdity to construct a major bypass interchange through a township. 	<p>VicRoads is keen to work with the community to establish ways to use the existing underpass to maintain pedestrian and bicycle connections between the east and west sides of the town.</p> <p>The existing interchange does not provide any facilities for pedestrian movements across the freeway. As part of the bypass project, VicRoads will provide for pedestrian and cycle movement across the freeway. There are two opportunities that could be considered that will be determined in consultation with the Mitchell Council and the Wandong community. These opportunities are utilising the existing freeway underpass or a separate facility on the proposed freeway overpass bridge.</p>
2c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noise – changed traffic conditions e.g. heavy vehicle noise / braking due to steep gradients & increased traffic volumes. The elevation of this proposed structure will vastly increase the amount of noise transmission into the town. 	<p>The main noise generator in the area is the traffic volume on the Hume Freeway, particularly the volume of heavy vehicles. As part of the specialist studies, noise modelling was undertaken for the projected volume of traffic on the Western Option. Currently, properties immediately abutting the existing interchange are directly exposed to the Hume Freeway traffic as the existing ramps slope down below the level of the freeway. The new embankments on the interchange will provide a physical barrier that will reduce the noise levels for properties immediately abutting the existing interchange.</p> <p>The traffic going over the new interchange will not add significant noise to the area because the predicted traffic volume increase on the bypass section of Wandong Road will be far lower than the corresponding traffic volumes on the Hume Freeway, hence the resultant noise levels will be significantly less than those generated by the Hume Freeway.</p> <p>In addition to this the grades on Wandong Road to the east of freeway will be reduced to around 3% and the Hume Freeway northbound exit ramp will have a slip lane entrance to Wandong Road, which will significantly reduce noise associated with heavy braking or accelerating up steep grades.</p>

	Community Concerns	VicRoads Responses
2d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visual amenity – high multi-pronged flyover structure will destroy the rural character of the Wandong-Heathcote Junction village. 	<p>The profile of the overpass would be kept to the minimum height required. The upgrade would be landscaped to integrate the earthworks into local landscape.</p> <p>Views of the proposed upgrade would be visible from properties to the west of the freeway and some properties immediately east of the current interchange. It will not be visible from the main Wandong township due to the intervening landform.</p> <p>The proposed interchange would be consistent in height and similar in appearance to many of the existing overpasses along the Hume Freeway.</p>
2e	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safety 	<p>VicRoads notes that there is a significant crash history at the current interchange, which can be accessed on Crash Stats, (which records all injury and casualty crashes).</p> <p>In the last five years there has been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One fatality crash on the Hume Freeway between the interchange ramps ▪ One serious injury crash on the Wandong Road intersection with interchange ramp ▪ One serious injury crash on the interchange ramp ▪ Two other injury crashes on the intersection with the interchange ramps ▪ A number of unreported property only damage crashes – of which local tow truck drivers can provide further evidence. <p>The 3% grade on the interchange is accessible for CFA vehicles. Jim Forge (VicRoads employee and CFA member) discussed these concerns with community members and is confident there is no issue with the designed grades.</p>
2f	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased traffic volumes and changed traffic conditions in Wandong, e.g. increased through traffic along Wandong-Kilmore Road that runs between the residential and commercial part of town and the skateboard park and playground. Children will be at high risk. 	<p>VicRoads has cited traffic studies that show that there will already be an increase in traffic through the township associated with growth in the north-east of Melbourne and Kilmore, aside from any traffic growth resulting from the proposed bypass. This information was provided in the exhibition data presented at the community information sessions and in technical Appendix A. In that report there are traffic volume plots in Appendix E.</p> <p>The 2011 traffic volume recorded in the Wandong township was around 3,000 vehicles per day. By 2031 this volume is predicted to grow to around 4,700 vehicles per day without the bypass. With the bypass in place and better road conditions along the Epping-Kilmore Road, this volume is predicted to increase to around 5,400 vehicles per day, or an increase of around 700 vehicles per day when compared to the 'do nothing' scenario.</p> <p>It is expected that the preferred route for vehicles accessing from north of Wandong to the northern suburbs of Melbourne will continue to be the Hume Freeway as this has a significantly better travel time and freeway conditions in comparison to the Epping-Kilmore Road, south of Wandong. The construction of the Outer Metropolitan Ring road will provide further incentive for trucks from the northern suburbs to get on the Hume Freeway south of Wallan. In This is reflected in the modelling which shows that even with improvements to Wandong Road between Kilmore and Wandong, that the Hume Freeway will be the more attractive route for access to the northern suburbs.</p> <p>The traffic modelling undertaken for the project utilised traffic predictions from the Melbourne Integrated Traffic Model (MITM) as well as comprehensive population growth figures established in consultation with Mitchell Shire Council and the Metropolitan Planning Authority.</p> <p>VicRoads understands that the community does not accept the results of these studies, but upholds the veracity of the work.</p>
2g	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of lanes on the interchange. 	<p>VicRoads says that the concept design is similar to designs on other interchanges along the Hume Fwy and other freeways. Protected turning lanes would be provided to safely store turning vehicles out of the main through lanes until they can safely complete their turns. VicRoads does not expect trucks to store across median separators as this would lead to excessive road widths and can actually introduce other safety related issues. If traffic volume increases to a point where available gaps in approaching traffic are diminished, then other measures such as traffic controls on the interchange ramp entry and exits could be considered to help right turning vehicles.</p> <p>Additionally, independent auditors will conduct Road Safety Audits during the full design stage, pre-construction and post construction.</p>
2h	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Winter fog across the interchange will impact significantly on visibility for five months of the year. 	<p>This has not been reported as a safety issue at the existing interchange. It is considered that elevating the road over the freeway will limit the potential for colder denser air to be trapped as is the situation with the existing underpass depression.</p>

	Community Concerns	VicRoads Responses
2i	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designed sightlines for interchange are inadequate and dangerous. 	The design sight distances used for the current design are in accordance with the required safety standards.
2j	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VicRoads failed to take the opportunity to improve Wandong-Heathcote Junction by moving the interchange to a better location. 	<p>See response to 1c&d.</p> <p>This opportunity was taken following the consideration of community feedback when determining a suitable alignment for the Western Option. An option that followed the Northern Highway from Gehreys Lane to Arkells Lane and then run along Arkells Lane to the Hume Freeway was considered. It was found that this option would not attract any additional traffic, would duplicate existing road infrastructure (Epping-Kilmore Road), and would have a higher overall maintenance requirement.</p>
2k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There should have been planning and evaluative discussions with the community about redesigning the interchange to improve safety and accommodate both local traffic (incl. pedestrians, cyclists because west side residents can only access Wandong by car at the moment) and vehicles (heavy and passenger) heading east out to Whittlesea and beyond. 	The concept designs were made available to the public at exhibitions and on the web site. They were reviewed in more detail at the CCG meetings. VicRoads received little or no comment from either the community or CCG during the planning investigation phase. The concept plans make provision for shared cycling and pedestrian facilities across the freeway, the final details of which will be determined in consultation with the Mitchell Shire Council and the community.
2m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic – Impact of increased truck traffic through Wandong, further contribution to school traffic problems. 	See response to 2f
2n	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property values - reduced property values 	VicRoads cannot guarantee property values will remain the same, given the number of factors at play. VicRoads cannot see any evidence that the interchange will reduce property values. However, VicRoads is willing to work with the residents of Wandong-Heathcote Junction to make changes that will benefit the town.
	IMPACTS DURING CONSTRUCTION	
3a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> L period – That the construction period will be long, estimated to be 3 to 5 years. 	While the construction of the entire bypass may take around 2.5 to 3 years, work along the route of the bypass will be staged to minimise construction impacts. The construction of the interchange itself is predicted to take less than 12 months.
3b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dust – dust generation will be significant during the construction period from the huge amount of earth works required for the new bypass interchange, and combustion emissions of oxides and dioxides from heavy construction machinery and heavy vehicular traffic during construction and beyond will impact on health, including the health of the children at local school 	Strict requirements are placed on contractors to address and control dust during the construction period. Contract arrangements for dust are covered in Chapter 17 of the EES document and Appendix S of the EES Technical Supplements (on CD copy provided). Extract provided in Appendix 2.
3c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access for emergency vehicles will be impeded to various extents depending on stage of construction (a repeat of Black Saturday conditions is in community's constant awareness) 	Strict requirements are placed on contractors to address and control access during the construction period. Contract arrangements for access during construction are outlined in Section 8.6.10 in Chapter 8 of the EES document. Extract provided in Appendix 2.
3d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic delays, especially school access – Access during school drop-offs will be difficult and pickups given x % passenger vehicles come from outside the town x% of these come from Wandong Road direction 	As per 3c
3e	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction noise – impacts on school children, reduction in local quality of life. 	Strict requirements are placed on contractors to address and control noise during the construction period. Contract arrangements for noise are covered in Chapter 17 of the EES document and Appendix S of the EES Technical Supplements (on CD copy provided). Extract provided in Appendix 2.

	Community Concerns	VicRoads Responses
4a	<p>OTHER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Ongoing uncertainty has had a negative impact on those people who face compulsory acquisition, who run businesses, and local schools.	<p>VicRoads appreciates the impacts of uncertainty. Acquiring properties is subject to funding of the bypass. All owners impacted by the Western Option are allowed to sell their properties. There are measures to protect the value of those people wanting to sell their properties prior to the project being funded and for those people that have special or hardship circumstances.</p> <p>If the project is funded, compensation will be made on the property value at that time, and will consider the unaffected before value and the property value after the construction project, including the injurious impact of the bypass on the rest of the property.</p> <p>Nearly all VicRoads acquisition is acquired through agreement, rather than by compulsory acquisition.</p> <p>There is a process for concerned people to talk to acquisition experts. Any landowner that has questions or concerns about the acquisition process should contact VicRoads and we can arrange for our Property Services officers to assist.</p>
4b	<ul style="list-style-type: none">How tall will the lighting on top of the interchange be? Have the impacts of this lighting on residents been considered?	<p>The light poles used for lighting interchanges are typically 11 metres tall. The lights used for this purpose are shielded to control the spillage of light outside the interchange and direct light downwards onto the road surface. The impact of the lighting on adjacent residences would be considered during the detailed design of the proposed upgrade.</p>
4c	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Can VicRoads make a distinction in their response to traffic concerns so that it addresses both traffic through Wandong and increased traffic across the interchange?	<p>The traffic modelling for the Western Option predicts that in 2031 there would be a total of 6,200 vehicles per day, including 600 trucks per day, an increase of 2,000 vehicles per day, including 300 trucks per day compared to the 'do nothing' scenario for traffic on Wandong Road approaching the interchange from the Kilmore direction. For traffic through the Wandong township, it is predicted that in 2031 there would be a total of 5,400 vehicles per day, including 600 trucks per day, an increase of 700 vehicles per day, including 100 trucks per day compared to the 'do nothing' scenario.</p>
4d	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Where, in response to concerns about "2b. Community connection", VicRoads says "There are two opportunities that could be considered that will be determined in consultation with the Mitchell Council and the Wandong community." SWAG would like to know what this consultation would look like in practice, given that they do not think consultation has been done very well in the past.	<p>VicRoads is willing to consider either of the two proposals. The consultation would include direct discussion with the local community seeking comments on the different options for pedestrian access. This feedback would be discussed with Mitchell Shire Council to facilitate the best option. This decision would be communicated back to the community, including more detailed design proposals as these are developed.</p>

Appendix 2: Extracts referred to in the VicRoads response

3B: DUST MANAGEMENT

“Contract arrangements for dust are covered in Chapter 17 of the EES document and Appendix S of the EES Technical Supplements (on CD copy provided).”

Chapter 17 & Appendix S

(a) General

All work under the Contract shall comply with the following requirements:

- emissions of odorous substances or particulates shall not create or be likely to create objectionable conditions for the public;
- materials of any type shall not be disposed of through burning;
- material that may create a hazard or nuisance dust shall be covered during transport; and
- dust generated from road construction activities shall not create a hazard or nuisance to the public, shall not disperse from the site or across roadways, nor interfere with crops, stock or dust-sensitive receptors.

(b) Plant and Equipment

All work under the Contract shall comply with the following requirements:

- Emissions of visible smoke to the atmosphere from construction plant and equipment shall not be for periods greater than 10 consecutive seconds;
- where practicable all heavy duty diesel engines must be fitted with Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) and diesel particulate filters.

(c) Monitoring

(i) General

Monitoring shall comply with the following requirements:

- insoluble solids from any air quality monitoring station, as measured by a dust deposit gauge in accordance with the requirements of AS 3580.10.1, shall not exceed 4 g/m²/month or 2 g/m²/month above the background measurement, whichever is the lesser;
- directional dust gauges that comply with the equipment requirements of AS 2724.5 shall be installed alongside each air quality monitoring station. Directional dust gauges shall be orientated such that one of the collecting cylinders is directed towards the construction activities;
- directional dust shall be measured as insoluble solids in accordance with AS3580.10.1 for each of the four collecting cylinders. Directional dust gravimetric results shall be expressed as the percentage of the total directional dust gauge catch for each cylinder;
- dust deposition and directional dust monitoring shall be supplemented with continuous monitoring using a portable laser light scattering instrument, or equivalent,

to allow changes to dust control measures if the PM10 1 hour average concentration exceeds 120 µg/m³;

- no less than ##(edit as appropriate):one/two/three/other portable laser light scattering instruments shall be operational daily while undertaking construction activities;
- portable laser light scattering instrument(s) shall provide a visible and logged alarm and SMS notification if the 1 hour average criterion of 120 µg/m³ is exceeded;
- the portable light scattering instrument shall be calibrated and maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions with calibration and maintenance records retained and made available to the Superintendent upon request. Daily records shall include checks of instrument zero and flow rate.

(ii) Location of Monitoring Equipment

Dust deposit gauges and directional dust gauges shall be established in accordance with the requirements of AS 3580.1.1.

One dust deposit gauge shall be installed and maintained as a background reference station. The reference station shall be in close proximity to the site, but unaffected by works under the Contract.

No less than ##(edit as appropriate):two/four/six/other monitoring stations shall be located where roadworks are likely to have the greatest impact on adjacent properties or create nuisance/inconvenience to the public.

The location of portable laser light scattering instrument(s) shall be adaptive to changes in wind direction or construction activity.

Portable laser light scattering instrument(s) shall be located downwind of road construction activities or adjacent to a sensitive receptor when in proximity to the works.

All monitoring stations to be located such that they are secure from vandalism and tampering at all times.

(iii) Results

Results of dust deposition and directional dust monitoring shall be submitted to the Superintendent within 24 hours of receipt from the laboratory.

Daily results of continuous monitoring including the location(s) of the instrument shall be made available upon request.

A daily visual assessment of the site for airborne dust and vehicle emissions shall be undertaken at locations where works are being carried out and records maintained of these inspections.

Hourly wind speed and wind direction data that correlates to the site location shall be obtained and maintained in the Contractor's records and made available to the Superintendent upon request.

(iv) Timing

Sampling frequency for dust deposition and directional dust is based on the risk of generation of nuisance dust and is season dependent. Dust deposition and directional

dust sampling frequency shall comply with Table 177.C1.01.

Table 177.C1.01

Period	Sampling Frequency
November to March	14 day consecutive period
April to October	30 day consecutive period

3C: TRAFFIC ACCESS MANAGEMENT

“Arrangements for access during construction are outlined in Section 8.6.10 in Chapter 8 of the EES document.”

Section 8.6.10

“...In accordance with VicRoads policy, construction vehicles and machinery would be restricted to arterial and main roads wherever possible. The use of the local road network would be determined in consultation and agreement with Mitchell Shire Council. Except where agreed with Council, construction vehicles would typically utilise purpose- built access tracks along the alignment. These access tracks would be restricted to avoid environmentally sensitive areas (which would in turn be fenced off to prevent construction access) that are identified within the construction footprint. The volume of construction traffic would ultimately depend on the program and staging of construction sections. An increased rate of construction would result in higher traffic volumes on the network each day but over a shorter overall period. The sequencing of construction phases would depend on the contractor's works program, construction methodology, the time of year, the part of the Project and the approved option.

“...An accurate estimate of construction traffic generation cannot be made until a program and staging of construction has been developed. However, the construction of similar projects typically generates the greatest traffic volumes during the earthworks and pavement construction phases, and generally less traffic volumes at other times. These two phases could be expected to generate in the order of 100 – 150 truck trips per day across the workday. Less than 100 light vehicle trips per day would be expected to be generated by worksite contractors accessing the site, typically during early morning and late-afternoon periods.

“Based on the above, at its peak, the construction of the Project would be typically expected to generate in the order of 250 vehicle trips per day, including 150 heavy vehicles.

“It is not anticipated that night work would be required, although this would be considered where it may reduce the impact on the public and local community.

“It is conservatively assumed that 30% of light vehicle construction traffic occurs during the peak hours, associated with worksite employees arriving and departing the site. Similarly, it is conservatively assumed that 15% of heavy vehicle traffic occurs in the peak hours, associated with an even distribution of truck movements across the workday. It is also conservatively assumed that the construction peak hours would coincide with the peak hours on the local road network. It is therefore estimated that the construction activities may

generate up to 43 vehicle trips in peak hours, including 13 heavy vehicles.

"The additional construction traffic is not anticipated to have an unmanageable impact on the operation of the local road network. More significant impacts are likely to result from temporary changes to road environments and localised speed reductions.

"Traffic management would be undertaken in accordance with established VicRoads practices, the Worksite Safety Traffic Management Code of Practice and the Road Management Act 2004. Typically, this would include installation of traffic barriers along the alignment to separate the construction work area from passing traffic as appropriate, a reduction in speed (nominally to 60km/h or 80km/h, or lower if justified at a locality) and other routine traffic management measures.

"Traffic Management Plans would be prepared to provide details of the traffic management to be implemented during construction to minimise impacts and maintain traffic flow on the surrounding road network. This would include details of all traffic management measures and any specific routes that construction traffic and local traffic would follow, if required, to minimise the overall impact on the public and local community. Details of the staging of the works have not been finalised, and would be dependent on a number of factors including the final design adopted, the staging and breakdown of construction contracts/packages, and the actual works ultimately required."

3E: NOISE MANAGEMENT

Chapter 17 & Appendix S

"All work under the Contract shall comply with the following requirements:

- hours of work shall be between 7am and 6pm weekdays and Saturday
- construction vehicles and equipment shall have appropriate measures fitted and be effectively maintained to minimise engine noise
- noisy equipment shall be enclosed where possible
- establishment of temporary noise attenuation barriers where appropriate
- scheduling noisy work practices (eg pile driving) to minimise likelihood of community annoyance
- use of smart movement alarms for vehicles particularly when working in proximity to noise sensitive receptors or where working outside normal hours."

Appendix 3: Timeline of consultation

Date	Event	Further Info
9 May 2011	Announcement of study	Announcement by Minister for Roads that government is committed to providing bypass by 2017, officially starting planning investigations
June 2011	Steering Committee formed	Comprised Council and VicRoads representatives to guide the planning investigation and consultation process
September 2011	Community Consultation Group formed	Comprised local community, business, emergency services, council and DPCD representatives to provide vehicle to gather and disseminate community feedback. It was an advisory body, not a decision making body.
November/December 2011	Public Display No 1	Held over two days at Wallan and Kilmore. This was attended by over 600 people. The purpose of the display was to summarise previous investigations and outline the four alignments along three general corridors that have been identified for further detailed investigation. Options to be investigated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunday Creek Road • Dry Creek • O'Gradys Road • Quinns Road Return date for feedback sheets – 16 December 2011 151 responses received
13 December 2011	Ministerial announcement	Minister for Roads announces that the planning investigations will include consideration of a bypass option to the west of Kilmore.
January/February 2012	Western Option - 'Shopfront'	Held over two weeks in Kilmore and Wallan. Attended by approx. 300 people. The shopfront was arranged in response to community feedback from the December 2011 display for a Kilmore-Wallan Bypass to be considered. VicRoads gathered information that would help to determine a suitable alignment for further detailed investigation. Return date for feedback sheets – No date set 129 responses received
16 April 2012	Minister announces Western Option	The route of the Western Option that was developed following community consultation is announced.
April 2012 to September 2013	Briefings to Mitchell Shire Council	Four briefings provided during this time to council on the planning study and its progress
May 2012	Consultation commenced with affected landowners	Letters forwarded to all potentially affected landowners with invitation for individual on site meetings. Over 100 individual face-to-face interviews have been conducted as well as numerous written, phone and email advice.
August 2012	Public Information Display No 2	Held over 14 to 17 August 2012 in Kilmore. Approximately 300 people attended the display. The display presented findings and progress into detailed planning investigations for the five alignment options,

Date	Event	Further Info
		including refinements that have been made to alignments out of feedback from specialist studies, community and CCG. First part of the display was for landowners only to allow for better opportunity for potentially impacted landowners to obtain information they needed. Return date for feedback sheets – 31 August 2012 126 responses received
21 January 2013	Minister announcement of reduction in number of options	Minister for Roads announces that the planning investigations will now focus on the Quinns Road, Dry Creek and Kilmore-Wallan Bypass. O'Gradys Road and Sunday Creek Road options would not be considered further.
February 2013	Public Information Display No 3	Held over three days between 30 January and 1 February 2013 in Kilmore. Attended by over 470 people. The display presented final details of the planning investigations and final concept drawings for each of the five options. Based on the study findings it outlined the three options that would be taken to the planning assessment and approval phase of the study. The three options were; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quinns Road • Dry Creek • Western Return date for feedback sheets – 15 February 2013 109 responses received
April 2013	Minister Announcement of EES	Minister releases reasons for EES and Draft Scoping requirements
May 2013	CCG final meeting	13 meetings held in period from September 2011 to May 2013
June 2013	Technical Reference Group	TRG convened by DPCD meets for first time. TRG purpose to guide and review preparation of EES documents
March 2014	Fly-throughs developed	Fly throughs were developed in March 2014 and made available with the EES documentation on the web site and on CD at the commencement of the formal exhibition of the EES in June 2014.
6 June 2014	Early works package	Minister for Roads announces early construction of the roundabout at the intersection of the Northern Highway and Broadford-Kilmore Road
10 June 2014	EES document exhibition - including video of Wandong interchange design	Following approval from DPCD the EES documents are formally exhibited. The EES document is advertised and placed on formal exhibition for period of 30 business days concluding on 21 July 2014. Submissions are addressed directly to Panels Victoria. A total of 130 submissions are received including one from Wandong and Heathcote Junction Community Group Inc. and one from the Wandong History Group.
18 and 19 June 2014	EES public display	Provided information about the EES process and how to make a submission

Date	Event	Further Info
23 July 2014	Public Meeting Wandong Hall	<p>Meeting with Wandong Community arranged by Cr. Sue Marstaeller following comments by Sue that the community had not been consulted. Meeting time offered by VicRoads in advance of closing time for EES submissions – however meeting was unable to be held until 23 July 2014, just after the submission closure date, 21 July 2014. The Panel Inquiry accepted late submissions.</p> <p>Meeting was attended by 70-80 community members.</p> <p>The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the planning and construction aspects for the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass. Common points of discussion related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the route for the 3 options being considered (and why). connection of the 3 options at the Hume Freeway at Wandong investigations covered in the planning and the EES process community interests including traffic noise, construction timings, local access and potential impacts on property, and consultation processes, including local media, information displays, shopfronts, project bulletins, letters to all directly impacted landowners inviting a meeting with VicRoads, Council briefings, the role of the Community Consultative Group (CCG) - of which Cr M was Council representative as Mayor, and the Project Steering Group (which comprised senior officers of Mitchell Shire Council)
7 August 2014	EES Directions Hearing	Panel members set the procedures for panel hearings. Meeting held at Kilmore
27 August to 12 September 2014	EES Panel Hearing	Held at Kilmore, including a site inspection by bus on 28 August
17 November 2014	EES Panel Report	Report made available to the Minister for Planning for his assessment
11 March 2015	Minister for Planning assessment	Public release of Panel report and Assessment document – advising agreed option is Western Option
1 October 2015	Meeting with the Wandong and Heathcote Junction Community Group Inc.	Meeting was held to listen and note concerns raised by the group. An undertaking was made for a follow up meeting to provide information relating to the concerns raised by the group.
2 November 2015	Meeting with the Wandong and Heathcote Junction Community Group Inc.	Meeting was to follow up on earlier meeting and provide information. Photo collages, traffic generation charts were developed to provide information in greater detail at the meeting
5 November 2015	Community drop in sessions	<p>Morning session at Kilmore and afternoon session at Wandong</p> <p>Approx. 75 community members attended the two sessions.</p> <p>The sessions were to provide an update on the EES outcome and answer any questions the community may have. Photo collages were produced to provide a visual representation of the proposed interchange upgrade</p>

Date	Event	Further Info
8 November 2015	Community drop in session	Evening session at Kilmore to provide access for those people working in Melbourne to attend. Approx. 20 people attended. More detailed information was provided to help the community understand potential impacts.
9 November 2015	Community drop in session	Evening session at Wandong, presenting further information. Approx. 70 people attended the session.
15 December 2015	Meeting with Liberal Member for Warrandyte	Wandong and Heathcote Junction Community Group Inc. met with Liberal member for Warrandyte, Mr Ryan Smith. VicRoads were not asked to attend.
15 December 2015	Meeting with Mitchell Shire Council	Community members met with council officers and Councillors. VicRoads were not asked to attend.
21 December 2015	Meeting with Minister	Members of the Save Wandong Action Group met with the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Luke Donnellan and local member Jaclyn Symes. As an outcome of meeting, the Minister agreed to undertake an independent assessment of the community's concerns prior to determining a course of action.
March 2016	Early works	Construction commenced on construction of roundabout at intersection of the Northern Highway and Broadford-Kilmore Road. Project is due for completion in March 2017.