



mainroads
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Albany Highway Widening Project - Kojonup South

Response to the Submission (EPBC 2017/7934)

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1 BACKGROUND

Western Australia's Great Southern Region has an unacceptable road safety record, with nearly 800 people killed or seriously injured between 2004 and 2013. Main Roads, using both State and Commonwealth funding, is proposing to widening approximately eleven kilometres of Albany Highway, within the Shire of Kojonup. This section of Albany Highway has a particular poor road crash history, with ten accidents occurring between 2012 and 2016. Five of these were classified as major accidents and a further two required medical attention or hospitalisation.

The shoulder widths of this section of Albany Highway are currently between 0.3 m and 0.6 m, which significantly reduces the ability of a driver to recover of an errant vehicle. According to the Road Safety Management Guideline, increasing the shoulder width from 0.5 m to 2 m should reduce Killed and Seriously Injured numbers by up to 64%.

On 28 July 2017, the proposal to clear native vegetation and widen Albany Highway between 254.9 and 259.8 SLK was determined to be a Controlled Action by the Department of the Environment and Energy (DotEE) due to impacts to Matters of National Environmental Significance. On 16 February 2018, it was determined that the proposal would be assessed by preliminary documentation.

2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to document Main Roads' responses to the comments that were raised during the public consultation period for the project.

3 CONSULTATION

Main Roads undertook public consultation for the widening project during August and September 2018.

The availability of the preliminary documentation for the proposal was advertised in The Western Australian and The Great Southern Weekender.

The preliminary documentation was available from the Main Roads website, the Perth reception of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the Kojonup Library.

3.1.1 Submissions

A single submission was received.

The main areas of concern raised by this submission related to:

- all options not being considered;
- avoiding impacts to the TEC;
- retaining black cockatoo habitat;
- utilisation of offsets; and
- consultation.

Main Roads' responses to the matters raised by the submission are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Main Roads Response To Matters Raised Within Stakeholder Submission

Aspect	Response to Submission																					
<p>All possible options have not been considered</p>	<p>Main Roads has a responsibility and expectation from Federal and State government, along with the public, to ensure road users are safe on the state road network. Main Roads has made a dedicated effort to reduce clearing wherever possible while achieving minimum safety requirements along this dangerous stretch of Albany Highway.</p> <p>For this project, Main Roads has considered all suitable engineering options during concept and preliminary design and believes it has developed a project with the least impacts reasonably possible, while still delivering the minimum required safety standards for road users. A comparison of the environmental impacts of the initial design with that of the amended design is detailed below in Table 2.</p> <p>Table 2 Summary of project impacts</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="548 552 1751 799"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="548 552 1070 603">Aspect</th> <th data-bbox="1075 552 1393 603">Initial Design</th> <th data-bbox="1397 552 1751 603">Amended Design</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="548 606 1070 641">TEC</td> <td data-bbox="1075 606 1393 641">0.71 ha</td> <td data-bbox="1397 606 1751 641">0.035 ha</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="548 644 1070 679">Suitable hollows in breeding trees</td> <td data-bbox="1075 644 1393 679">6</td> <td data-bbox="1397 644 1751 679">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="548 683 1070 718">Unsuitable hollows in breeding trees</td> <td data-bbox="1075 683 1393 718">9</td> <td data-bbox="1397 683 1751 718">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="548 721 1070 756">Potential breeding trees</td> <td data-bbox="1075 721 1393 756">427</td> <td data-bbox="1397 721 1751 756">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="548 759 1070 794">Foraging habitat</td> <td data-bbox="1075 759 1393 794">8.03 ha</td> <td data-bbox="1397 759 1751 794">5.5 ha</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="548 798 1070 833">Overall clearing</td> <td data-bbox="1075 798 1393 833">8.03 ha</td> <td data-bbox="1397 798 1751 833">5.5 ha</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Safety Barriers</p> <p>In addition to the supply, installation and ongoing management costs associated with crash barriers, barriers are not generally used for lengthy sections of busy highways as it eliminates safe areas to pull over.</p> <p>Barriers are often used to protect significant trees located in the safety clear zone. These are generally short sections where the tree is within 9 m of the traffic lane. In this instance Main Roads was able to install safety barriers to avoid clearing 15 significant trees and at least 95% of the identified Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) at an additional cost to the project of approximately \$500,000. Main Roads will attempt to totally avoid the TEC, however cannot confirm until demarcated on site.</p> <p>Reducing Speed Limits</p> <p>A reduction in speed limit will have a significant negative impact on the freight efficiency of the State’s road network and is not consistent with State and Commonwealth transportation policies, nor broader community expectations.</p> <p>The shoulder widths of this section of this road are currently only 0.3 m to 0.6 m which significantly reduces the likelihood of driver recovery of an errant vehicle. A reduction of speed by 20%, with current shoulder widths is unlikely to reduce Killed and Seriously Injured numbers to an acceptable level, compared to the 64% reduction which should be observed through construction of the proposed shoulder widening.</p> <p>The proposed design for this upgrade has balanced protection of key environmental values while significantly improving road user safety.</p>	Aspect	Initial Design	Amended Design	TEC	0.71 ha	0.035 ha	Suitable hollows in breeding trees	6	0	Unsuitable hollows in breeding trees	9	0	Potential breeding trees	427	0	Foraging habitat	8.03 ha	5.5 ha	Overall clearing	8.03 ha	5.5 ha
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<p>Impacts to the TEC must be avoided</p>	<p>Project activities may require the removal of up to only 0.035 ha of a total of 3.4 ha of TEC identified within the survey area. Clearing of the TEC was reduced from 1 ha down to 0.035 ha through redesign at a significant cost to the project (an additional 10% to the project cost). It is hoped that through minor changes to design during construction that the full extent of the TEC could be avoided, though it cannot be confirmed at this stage in the design.</p> <p>The value of this TEC from a conservation perspective is limited due to the narrow corridor and edge effects from both the road network and agricultural land. As such the understory is heavily infested with weed species, which constitutes a significant portion of vegetation to be removed. Trees will be pruned where possible to achieve design requirements which may further reduce the clearing requirement of the TEC.</p>						
<p>Retention of black cockatoo habitat</p>	<p>The project area was largely in degraded condition, with understory very sparse or absent. The project area was assessed as containing poor foraging habitat for Black Cockatoo species, with areas of better quality habitat within the local area present. A summary of vegetation condition of proposed vegetation to be cleared is shown in Table 3.</p> <p>Table 3 Condition and Area of vegetation to be cleared for Project</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="510 608 1413 671"> <thead> <tr> <th>Good Condition</th> <th>Good/Degraded</th> <th>Degraded</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>0.018</td> <td>0.836</td> <td>4.604</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The installation of cockatoo signage in this area is not appropriate given the area does not support important habitat nor is known as an area that experiences high Black Cockatoos road mortality. Main Roads supports the installation of fauna protection signage where it is beneficial (overuse of such signage has the potential to cause driver complacency towards such signage).</p> <p>The shedding of water from the road surface is a primary objective for any road designed for Main Roads. Drains for the project have been designed to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safe for road users; • adequately manage the water from the road surface; and • minimise the clearing required. 	Good Condition	Good/Degraded	Degraded	0.018	0.836	4.604
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<p>Utilisation of Offsets</p>	<p>Main Roads has utilised the Department of the Environment and Energy’s Offset Calculator, which is widely recognised as an appropriate tool for the calculation of offsets and is in accordance with the State and Commonwealth Offset policies.</p> <p>The proposed offset involves the provision of funds to the Western Australian Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER). Additional funds for the management of offset sites is not required by the DWER fund and therefore are not included as a component of the offset proposal.</p>						
<p>Consultation</p>	<p>Main Roads will continue to consult with all relevant stakeholders (local government, transportation, safety and environmental groups) as it continues to provide a sustainable and safe road network. Main Roads proactively engages with its key stakeholders through these established forums and processes.</p>						