



Australian Government



Transport for NSW

# Great Western Highway

East – Katoomba to Blackheath

Review of Environmental Factors – Biodiversity fact sheet

May 2022



Together the Australian and NSW Governments are investing \$2.5 billion towards upgrading the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Blackheath, and between Little Hartley and Lithgow, respectively. The Great Western Highway Upgrade will reduce congestion, deliver safer, more efficient and reliable journeys for those travelling in, around and through the Blue Mountains, and better connect communities in the Central West.

Transport for NSW (Transport) is presenting a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) and concept design for the Katoomba to Blackheath Upgrade for community consultation until to Sunday 19 June 2022. We invite the community and other interested stakeholders to submit feedback to help inform next steps for the proposal.

This fact sheet summarises key points related to Biodiversity chapter in the in the REF and concept design for the Katoomba to Blackheath Upgrade.

To read the complete chapter, refer to Chapter 6, section 3 in the Review of Environmental Factors.

Transport is committed to minimising environmental impacts during construction and delivery of the upgrade. We have carried out extensive biodiversity studies along the Katoomba to Blackheath Upgrade corridor, and our investigations are continuing to make sure we fully understand the flora and fauna in the area.



## Biodiversity assessments

Following background research and habitat suitability assessments, Transport carried out targeted vegetation, flora and fauna field surveys from October to December 2020 and from June and September 2021. These investigations were carried out within the 'proposal area' – which is the area where the design is contained – and also a much larger 'study area' to ensure biodiversity surveys are thorough and far-reaching.

The proposal area and study area is surrounded by native vegetation to the north, north-east, west and south-west and connects in part to the Blue Mountains National Park. Parts of the study area have been previously impacted by historical land clearing, residential and commercial development and existing infrastructure, which has slightly reduced the vegetation connectivity in areas.

There is 68.80 hectares of native vegetation and 15.11 hectares of non-native vegetation within the study area which are rich in Plant Community Types (PCT), such as Sydney Peppermint, Narrow leaved Peppermint and Prickly Tea-Tree.

The proposal and study area are home to several threatened fauna species and one threatened flora species – the Needle Geebung, which were identified during the field studies.

The threatened fauna species include the Pygmy Possum, the Large Bentwing-bat, Little Bentwing-bat, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Greater Broad-Nosed Bat, Eastern Freetail Bat, Yellow-bellied Sheath-tail Bat and the Brown Treecreeper.

In response to the biodiversity impacts identified during both the construction and operational phases of the project, we would include mitigation measures such as the installation of nest boxes and habitat replacement where appropriate.

A Fauna and Flora Management Plan would be developed in the lead up to construction and would form part of the Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP). It would outline actions Transport can take to protect local flora and fauna and may contain additional mitigation measures needed as identified during the detailed design stage.

## Construction impacts

The upgrade would require the removal of 47.56 hectares of native vegetation, up to 15 hectares of which is National Park land which is subject to a revocation process ongoing between Transport and National Parks and Wildlife Services. None of this land is located within the World Heritage listed section of the Blue Mountains National Park. Construction would impact threatened flora and fauna species, mainly through the removal of their foraging and shelter habitat and making it harder for them to get across the widened road corridor.

We have avoided direct impacts to the Blue Mountains Swamp near the twin bridges in the Katoomba to Medlow Bath section by shifting the location of the bridge foundations to sit further away from the swamp. A five metre exclusion zone would also be established around the swamp during construction to ensure work activities occur at a safe distance away. There may still be indirect impacts to around 0.12 hectares of the swamp such as dust, light spill, weed incursion, water run-off or erosion. To avoid this, the bridge design looks at drainage locations to ensure drains are not located over the swamp. The CEMP would also consider further mitigation measures used during construction such as the sediment control, collecting water run-off and managing dust.



Isopogon anemonifolius or 'broad-leaved drumsticks'.



## Fauna habitat and connectivity

The proposal would result in an increased road crossing distance (from about 30 metres to about 100 metres in some locations). This would reduce connectivity across the widened Great Western Highway and increase the risks to local fauna.

To counter this, we have carried out significant assessments for identified threatened species to examine whether vegetation removal associated with the proposal would impact threatened biota.

There are 231 hollow bearing trees in the study area and up to 207 of them have the potential to be directly impacted. The size of the hollows ranged from five to 30 centimetres and have been observed to be home to Rainbow Lorikeets and Sulphur-Crested Cockatoos. Eighteen are thought to be nest trees for Gang-Gang Cockatoos. We will look for ways to reduce these impacts wherever possible and practical during the finalisation of the design, which happens after the REF. Additional mitigation measures are also laid out in the Fauna and Flora Management Plan used during construction.

To manage potential impacts for fauna, during detailed design we will consider the merits of fauna crossing structures at appropriate locations, such as underpasses, glider poles or underpasses. These can help to mitigate the impacts that the upgrade could have on habitat connectivity and fauna movement, including fauna crossing structures (underpasses/glider poles/overpasses) to mitigate the potential impact of a reduction in habitat connectivity and fauna movement as part of the upgrade.

## National Parks and Wildlife engagement

We are working closely with National Parks and Wildlife to determine what revocation outcomes might work best for them as part of our biodiversity mitigation strategy and National Park and Wildlife Revocation Plan.

To read more about National Parks and Wildlife's policy, visit [www.dpie.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au) and search *Revocation, recategorisation and road adjustment policy* | NSW Environment, Energy and Science



Ecologist undertaking a vegetation survey transect.



Eastern Pygmy Possum.

## What is an REF?

Transport has legal obligations to assess and mitigate impacts that may result from a proposed activity. An REF details these legal obligations, and the environmental impacts and proposed mitigation measures of a project.

## What is a concept design?

A concept design is developed in sufficient detail to allow an assessment of likely environmental, social and economic impacts so stakeholders can provide feedback. It may change based on feedback received.

### View the REF and concept design

You can view the Katoomba to Blackheath REF and concept design:

- online in our virtual consultation room at **nswroads.work/gwheastconsult**
- As a printed copy at one of these locations:
  - Katoomba Library
  - Katoomba Council Headquarters (foyer)
  - Glenbrook Customer Service Counter
  - Blaxland Library

### Speak to the project team

We will hold a mixture of online and face-to-face information sessions.

We recommend that you view the REF and concept design before you speak with the team or make a submission.

#### Online

##### General sessions:

- **Monday 23 May** 6.30pm – 8pm
- **Thursday 9 June** 6.30pm – 8pm

##### Targeted sessions:

##### Biodiversity and water quality:

- **Tuesday 31 May** 6.30pm – 8pm

##### Localised impacts during and after construction:

- **Monday 6 June** 6.30pm – 8pm

### Face-to-face sessions

1. Seminar Room, Katoomba Cultural Centre  
**Wednesday 25 May** 4.30pm – 8pm

- Aboriginal stakeholder engagement session 4.30pm – 6pm

- General session 6pm – 8pm

Location: 30–32 Parke Street, Katoomba

2. Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre  
**Saturday 4 June** 10am – 12pm

Location: 41 Gardiner Crescent, Blackheath

Register for a consultation session at

**nswroads.work/gwheastconsult**

Bookings are essential for all sessions.

Face-to-face sessions will be held pending COVID restrictions.

Contact us on **1800 953 777** or

**gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au** to have a phone consultation if you prefer.

### How to make a formal submission

We welcome all feedback on the Katoomba to Blackheath Upgrade. To have your input formally considered, and receive a response in the Submissions Report, use our online submission form at

**nswroads.work/gwheastconsult**, email us at **gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au**, or mail a printed submission to: **Transport for NSW Katoomba to Blackheath (East) REF Submission PO Box 334, Parkes NSW 2870**

## Contact us

Sign up for our eNewsletter online at **nswroads.work/gwhd** and you'll never miss a project update. Follow us on Facebook – search 'NSW Roads'.



**nswroads.work/gwheastconsult**



**gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au**



**1800 953 777**



**Great Western Highway  
Upgrade Program**

**PO Box 334, Parkes NSW 2870**



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