



Newell Highway Upgrade: Coonabarabran Bypass

Socio economic impact assessment

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Division:
Review date:

Executive summary

Background

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) is undertaking planning for an upgrade of the Newell Highway at Coonabarabran in the north west of New South Wales (NSW) (the proposal). Coonabarabran is the largest town located in the Warrumbungle Shire Council local government area (LGA).

The Newell Highway is a major freight route between Victoria and Queensland through regional NSW. This proposal is part of the Newell Highway Upgrade Program (the program). The NSW Government has committed \$500 million into upgrading the Newell Highway under the program which includes numerous upgrades to the Newell Highway over 20 years. At Coonabarabran, the program has identified the priorities to:

- reprioritise the Newell Highway at the intersection with the Oxley Highway
- provide intersection improvements required for adequate high-performance vehicle (HPV) PBS3a access
- remove heavy vehicle through traffic from the main urban commercial centre.

The proposal would complement other projects in the program. The proposal would improve freight productivity and contribute to the overall objectives of the program.

This report assesses the potential socio-economic impacts of the proposal. It will inform the Review of Environmental Factors (REF) currently being prepared under Division 5.1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act).

Existing socio-economic environment

The existing environment is summarised as follows:

- There were 3,290 people living in Coonabarabran in 2016, which accounted for 31.5 per cent of the Warrumbungle Shire LGA. Of these people, there was an older demographic of people in Coonabarabran, with 26.3 per cent of people aged 65 years or older compared to 16.3 per cent of people in NSW. In 2016, 18.6 per cent of the population of Coonabarabran were 14 years or younger, which was slightly higher than the Warrumbungle Shire LGA and NSW.
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population within Coonabarabran was 13.8 per cent in 2016. This was higher than the Warrumbungle Shire LGA with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of 9.8 per cent. Both Coonabarabran and the Warrumbungle Shire LGA had a substantially higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents than NSW at 2.9 per cent.
- In 2016, 5.9 per cent of the Coonabarabran and Warrumbungle Shire LGA population were born overseas, in comparison to NSW with 27.7 per cent of the population born overseas.
- The Warrumbungle Shire LGA's annual population percentage change is currently minus 0.7 per cent per year and is expected to continue to decline in the future, decreasing by a total of around 16 per cent by 2036. This is in comparison to NSW which is anticipated to see a growth of 1.1 per cent per year.

- The unemployment rate was higher in Coonabarabran at 8.7 per cent in 2016, in comparison to the Warrumbungle Shire LGA and NSW, with unemployment rates of 7.9 per cent and 6.3 per cent respectively.
- Employment in health care and social assistance comprised the highest proportion of the work force in Coonabarabran at 16.0 per cent, followed by employment in public administration and safety at 13.6 per cent and education and training at 12.4 per cent. It is possible that the higher levels of employment in particular industries are associated with the location of facilities within Coonabarabran, including the hospital and council chambers.
- The Warrumbungle Shire LGA had the highest portion of the workforce in agriculture, forestry and fishing at 27.6 per cent, followed by employment in health care and social assistance at 12.2 per cent and education and training at 11.5 per cent. The main agricultural industries include sheep and cattle farming and cropping. Within the Warrumbungle Shire LGA, there is a strong dependence on the agricultural sector, providing jobs and resources to the local and regional population.
- The agricultural industry in Coonabarabran is predominantly based on grazing and dryland farming. In 2015-2016, the total gross value of total agriculture production in Coonabarabran was \$154 million (Department of Agriculture, 2019).
- The town centre is a main point of activity in Coonabarabran, comprised of a cluster of businesses, services and facilities. Residents tend to also travel out of Coonabarabran to other towns such as Dubbo, Narrabri and Gunnedah on a weekly or monthly basis for shopping (Murray-Darling Basin Authority, 2016).
- Business and shopper surveys key feedback, included concerns about the future economy of the town including business and tourism impacts, passing trade impacts, impacts on town culture and business activity. Respondents also indicated that the bypass may provide opportunities for re-invention and improvement of the town, longer-term benefits, traffic and parking improvements, as well as safety and amenity benefits.
- The Siding Spring Observatory, Virtual Solar System Drive and Warrumbungle National Park are primary tourist attractions of Coonabarabran and the broader Warrumbungle Shire LGA, contributing to tourist expenditure and town visitation.
- The proposal area is located with agricultural land, comprised of open space with scattered vegetation and some areas of denser vegetation along Castlereagh River.
- In 2016, Coonabarabran had an average of 1.7 vehicles per dwelling, with only 9.3 per cent of dwellings having no motor vehicles. Warrumbungle Shire had the lowest portion of dwellings with no vehicles at 5.9 per cent. The high vehicle ownership may be reflective of the needs of the residents within the Warrumbungle Shire LGA, the reliance on private motor vehicles and the lack of public transport facilities.
- There are no dedicated on-road bicycle facilities in Coonabarabran and limited footpath infrastructure, becoming less frequent and discontinuous travelling out of the centre of town.

More detail about the existing environment is provided in Section 7 of this report.

Impact assessment

Potential impacts of the proposal were assessed based on the sensitivity and magnitude of the impact to determine the level of significance. The potential impacts were categorised and assessed, using other specialist studies and community and stakeholder feedback to develop an overall impact rating. The overall impact rating is a combined rating for each issue category. Table E-0-1 provides a summary of the impact assessment, including the impacts that have a high-moderate to high levels of significance. The complete summary table with negligible, low, moderate and high impacts is in Section 8 of this report.

Table E-0-1 Summary of impact assessment

Issue category	Impact (with mitigation)	Level of significance
Construction impacts		
Property acquisition and adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the proposal would require partial and full acquisitions and adjustments to some land parcels. leases and/or access agreements would also be required during construction which may result in some disturbance to movements within properties as well as access to properties from the road network many property owners in the properties to be acquired have resided in homes for long periods of time (some their whole life). These property owners are likely to experience feelings of loss based on their connection to place and the surrounding environment. 	High
Land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> change in land use from agricultural and rural residential land use to infrastructure land use properties that are severed by the proposal by partial acquisitions may experience restrictions in some current land uses such as agricultural operations and productivity. 	High
Business operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> positive impact on the town's economy through construction worker expenditure and potential increased temporary demand in private room and house rentals to accommodate part of the construction workforce opportunity to source local materials and resources for construction of the new road and associated features where possible noise impacts at accommodation facilities close to the southern intersection, including Wagon Wheel Motel, Matthew Flinders Motor Inn, El Passy Motel, Coachman Rest Motor Lodge the loss of productive/farmable land available during construction including access to dams and sheds on some properties impacts to agricultural properties in regard to movement of cattle and farm machinery between paddocks. 	High-moderate
Amenity and community values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> receivers in the vicinity of the proposal would experience the most impacts to amenity in the form of noise, visual and air quality impacts potential sleep disturbance and moderately intrusive noise impacts, with up to 13 receivers within 175 metres of the proposal predicted to be above the night time noise management level during nightworks 	High-moderate

Issue category	Impact (with mitigation)	Level of significance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> residents up to 1.1 kilometres would be impacted by noise from the proposal, which includes receivers from within the town centre construction would change the nature of land use and views of the landscape, from a quiet and interrupted landscape, to an area of construction vegetation removal for the development of the new road would alter the current landscape of the proposal area, with dwellings in closest proximity to the proposal being impacted most drivers travelling along the existing Newell Highway alignment would be impacted by the proposal by visual impacts to the proposal area including ancillary facilities. 	

Operational impacts

Business operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> potential impacts to businesses that rely on passing trade within the town centre agribusinesses may experience impacts in some productivity due to land acquisitions agricultural businesses would benefit from the proposal through increased productivity and efficiency on a local and regional scale. 	High
Amenity and community values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> impacts to the amenity of the rural landscape as the proposal would introduce a large built structure to the quiet and natural space severance may be experienced by the local community as the new road could be perceived as a barrier increase in road traffic noise level close to receivers, with some facades of houses in line of sight of the road expected to be reduction in noise in the town centre due to the bypass improvements to safety, traffic and parking conditions would improve the amenity of the town the proposal may lead to other opportunities such as reinvention and capitalisation on the amenity changes to improve the town. 	High-moderate

Mitigation measures

Mitigation measures have been included in this report to manage and avoid potential socio-economic impacts during construction and operation. Primarily, consultation with the community, in particular affected property owners and sensitive receivers would be required during all stages of the proposal. Mitigation measures in the short and long term have been provided in Section 9 of this report, including the provision of town signage to promote visiting Coonabarabran.

1 Introduction

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) is undertaking planning for an upgrade of the Newell Highway at Coonabarabran in the north west of New South Wales (NSW). The Newell Highway is a major freight route between Victoria and Queensland through regional NSW. Coonabarabran is located within the Warrumbungle Shire Council local government area (LGA), about 120 kilometres north-east of Dubbo central business district (CBD) and 335 kilometres north-west of Sydney CBD. This work is part of the Newell Highway Upgrade Program.

Construction of the bypass is expected to support more efficient and productive movement of freight along the Newell Highway corridor. The bypass is also anticipated to improve regional connectivity, improve road safety in the area and increase travel efficiency for local and regional road users.

1.1 Proposal overview

The proposed Newell Highway Coonabarabran Bypass is a new road east of the existing Newell Highway alignment which runs through the town (the proposal) (Figure 1-1).

Key features of the proposal would include:

- a new two-lane, two-way road, about eight kilometres long to the east of Coonabarabran, between the Newell Highway and Oxley Highway with a posted speed limit of 110 kilometres per hour
- changes to the intersection arrangement of the Newell Highway and Oxley Highway to the north of Coonabarabran
- intersections and local road adjustments at Purlawaugh Road and River Road
- a bridge crossing of the Castlereagh River
- stock culvert under the highway just south of Purlawaugh Road
- property acquisitions and adjustments (including to some property access)
- drainage adjustments and utility relocations
- temporary ancillary facilities during construction including water quality controls, site offices and stockpile sites.

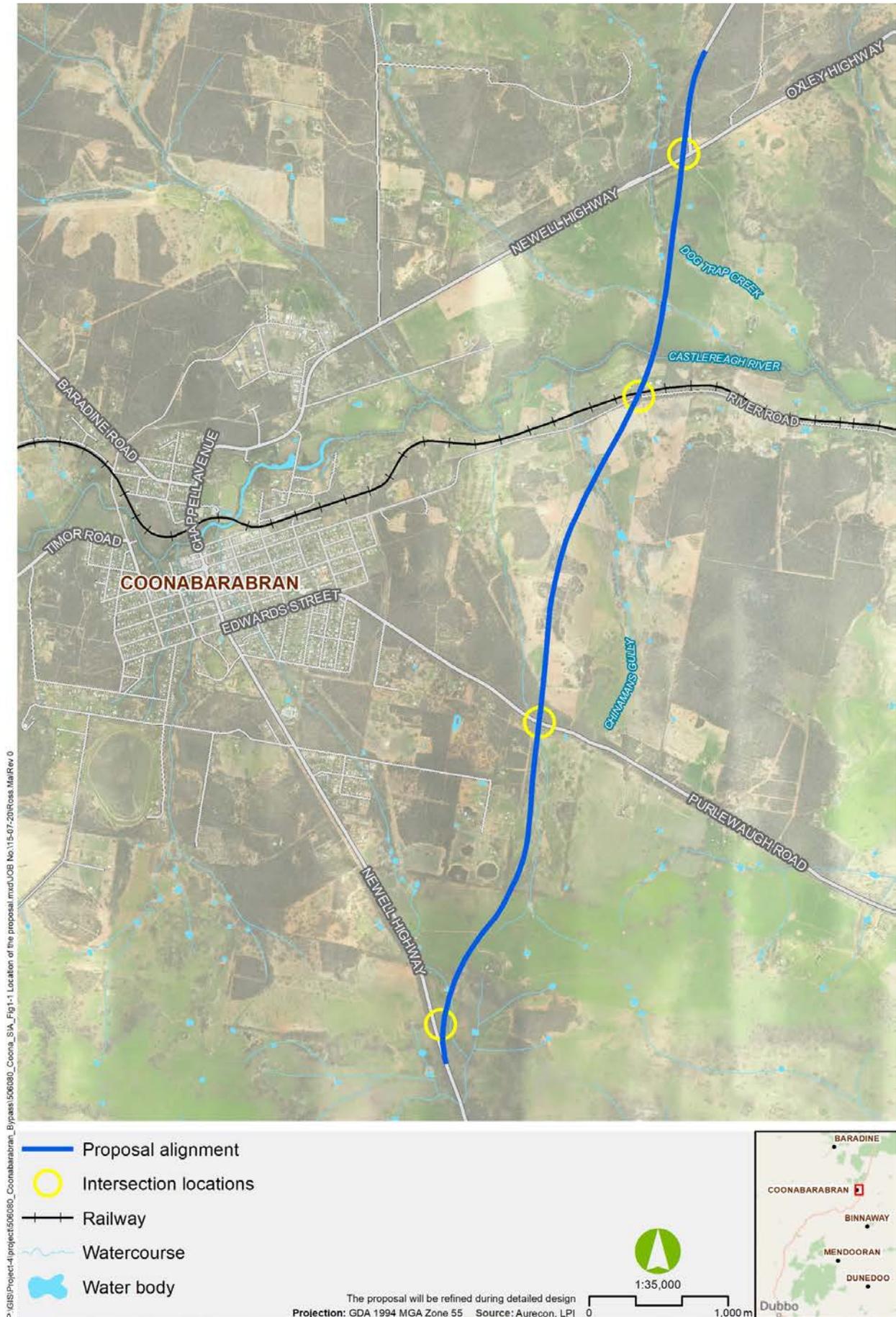


Figure 1-1 Proposal location

1.2 Proposal background

The Newell Highway is the longest highway in NSW, running 1058 kilometres through the State and providing an essential road connection for central western NSW. The highway is a vital transport corridor between Victoria, NSW, and Queensland. It is a crucial route for freight and livestock transporters, tourism operators, caravanners and holiday makers, emergency services, government and business owners.

The NSW Government has committed \$500 million into upgrading the Newell Highway under the Newell Highway Upgrade Program (the program). The program includes numerous upgrades to the Newell Highway over 20 years. At Coonabarabran, the program has identified the priorities to:

- reprioritise the Newell Highway at the intersection with the Oxley Highway
- provide intersection improvements required for adequate high-performance vehicle (HPV) access
- remove heavy vehicle through traffic from the main urban commercial centre.

The proposal would complement other projects in the program. The proposal would improve freight productivity and contribute to the overall objectives of the program.

1.3 Purpose of this report

This report assesses the potential socio-economic impacts of the proposal. It will inform the Review of Environmental Factors (REF) currently being prepared under Division 5.1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act).

This socio-economic impact assessment includes the following scope of works:

- Support the planning and design activities of the proposal including identifying environmental risks, constraints and areas of sensitivity.
- Investigate and discuss impacts as a result of the proposal through assessment and analysis of the existing environment.
- Make recommendations for the avoidance or minimisation of potential impacts in accordance with the relevant environmental assessment requirements of Division 5.1 of the EP&A Act.

1.4 Report structure

The structure of this report is consistent with a 'moderate' level assessment as specified by TfNSW's *EIA-N05 Environmental Impact Assessment Practice Note – Socio-economic Assessment* (TfNSW, 2020). The report is structured as follows:

- Section 1 – introduction outlining the proposal background and purpose of the report.
- Section 2 – proposal description outlining the overall proposal objectives and construction outline.
- Section 3 – methodology identifying the study area, assessment methodology and data sources.
- Section 4 – review of existing bypass studies.
- Section 5 - relevant policy context and planning strategies for the proposal and Coonabarabran.
- Section 6 – community engagement undertaken for the proposal to date.

- Section 7 – description of the existing socio-economic environment including a profile of demographic characteristics, community infrastructure, key industries and businesses and recreational areas.
- Section 8 – potential impacts from the construction and operation of the proposal.
- Section 9 – safeguards and management measures to mitigate impacts during construction and operation of the proposal.

2 Proposal description

2.1 The proposal

As discussed in Section 1, the key features of the proposal would include a new two-lane, two-way road, about eight kilometres long to the east of Coonabarabran, between the Newell Highway and Oxley Highway.

The key features of the proposal are shown in Figure 2-1 to Figure 2-8. More information about the key features of the proposal is discussed in Chapter 3 of the Project REF.

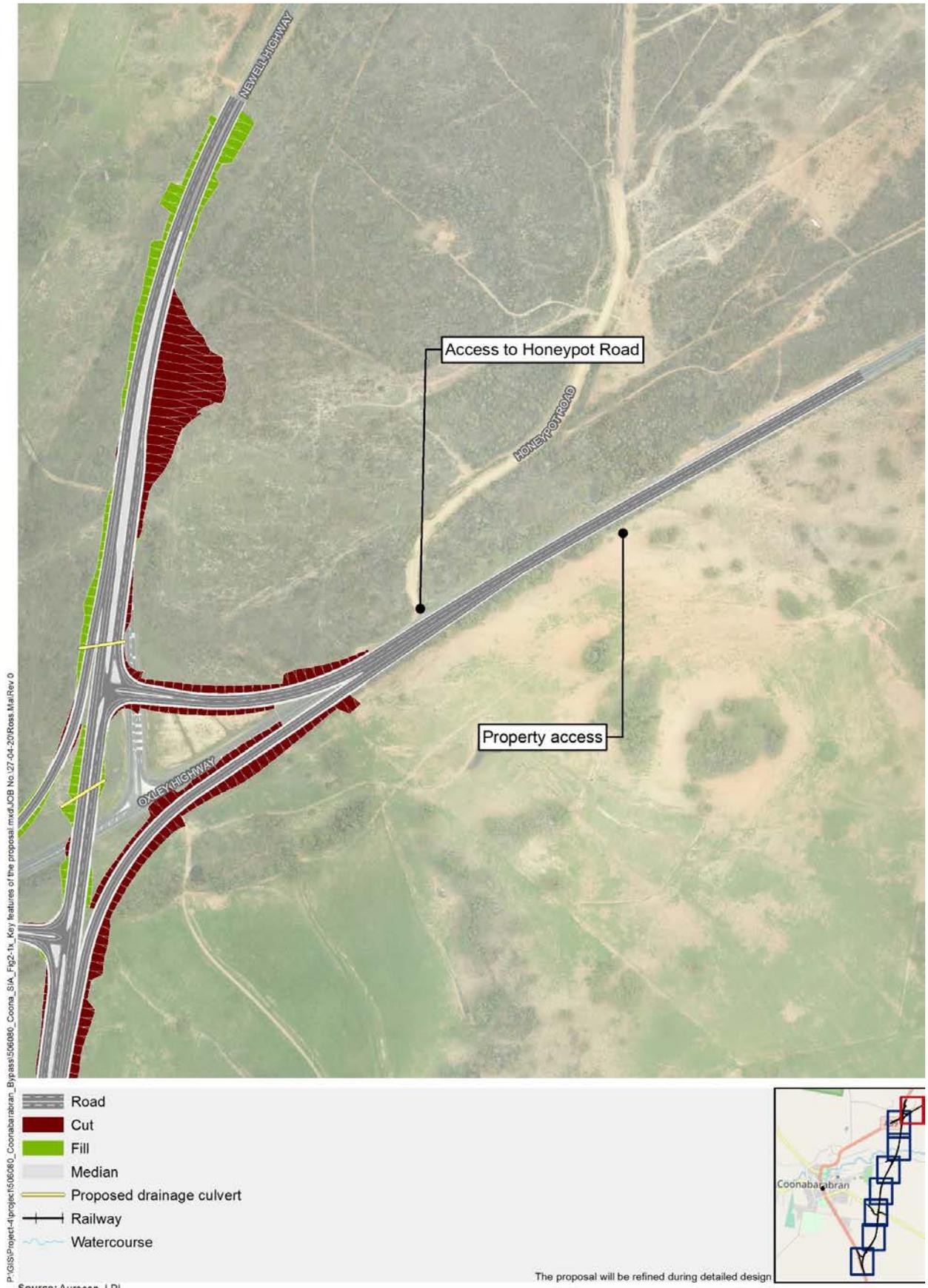
2.2 Proposal objectives

The objectives of the proposal is to:

- Improve travel efficiency for all vehicles, in particular heavy vehicles through Coonabarabran.
- Reduce conflict between freight vehicles, local and through traffic and vulnerable road users.
- Improve amenity for the urban commercial area of Coonabarabran.

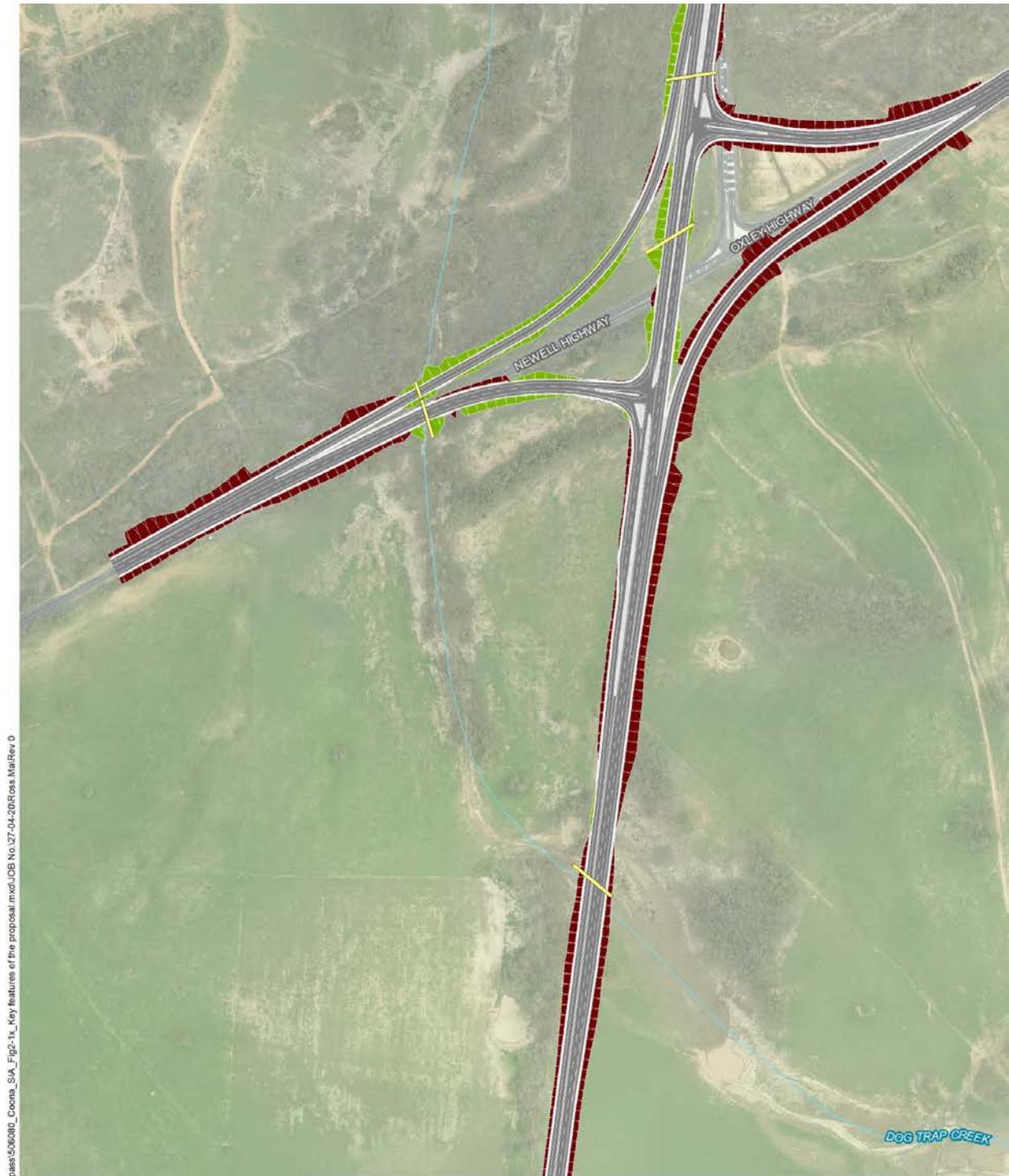
The benefits associated with the development and delivery of this proposal would include:

- Better facilitate access for HPV PBS3a on the Newell Highway from Dubbo to Queensland by avoiding geometrically substandard intersections.
- Reduced vehicle operating costs (VOC) and increases in travel time savings (TTS).



Newell Highway Upgrade Coonabarabran Bypass SIA

Figure 2-1 Key features of the proposal

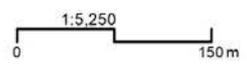


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-  Road
-  Cut
-  Fill
-  Median
-  Proposed drainage culvert
-  Railway
-  Watercourse

Source: Aurecon, LPI

The proposal will be refined during detailed design



Projection: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55

Newell Highway Upgrade Coonabarabran Bypass SIA

Figure 2-2 Key features of the proposal

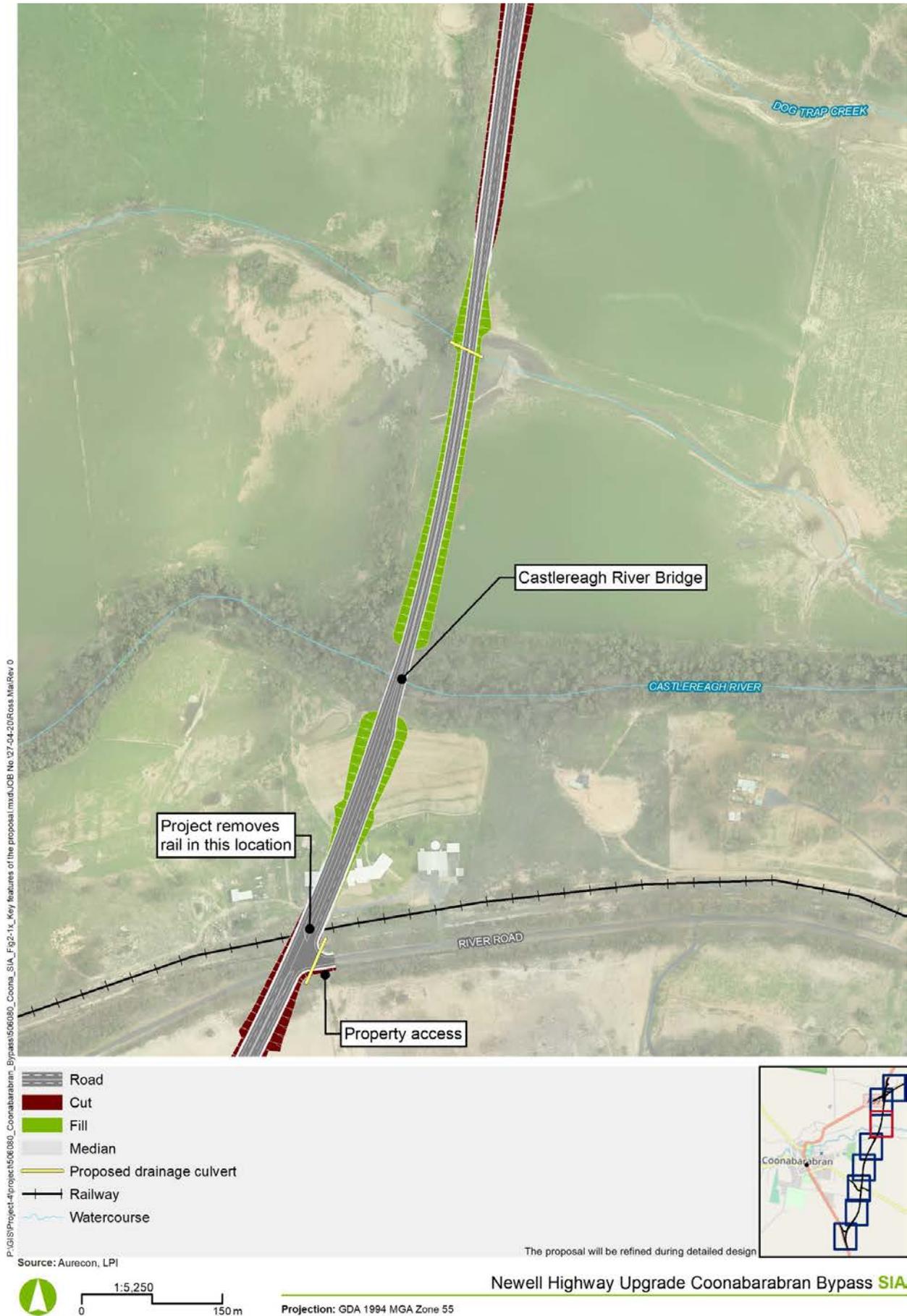


Figure 2-3 Key features of the proposal

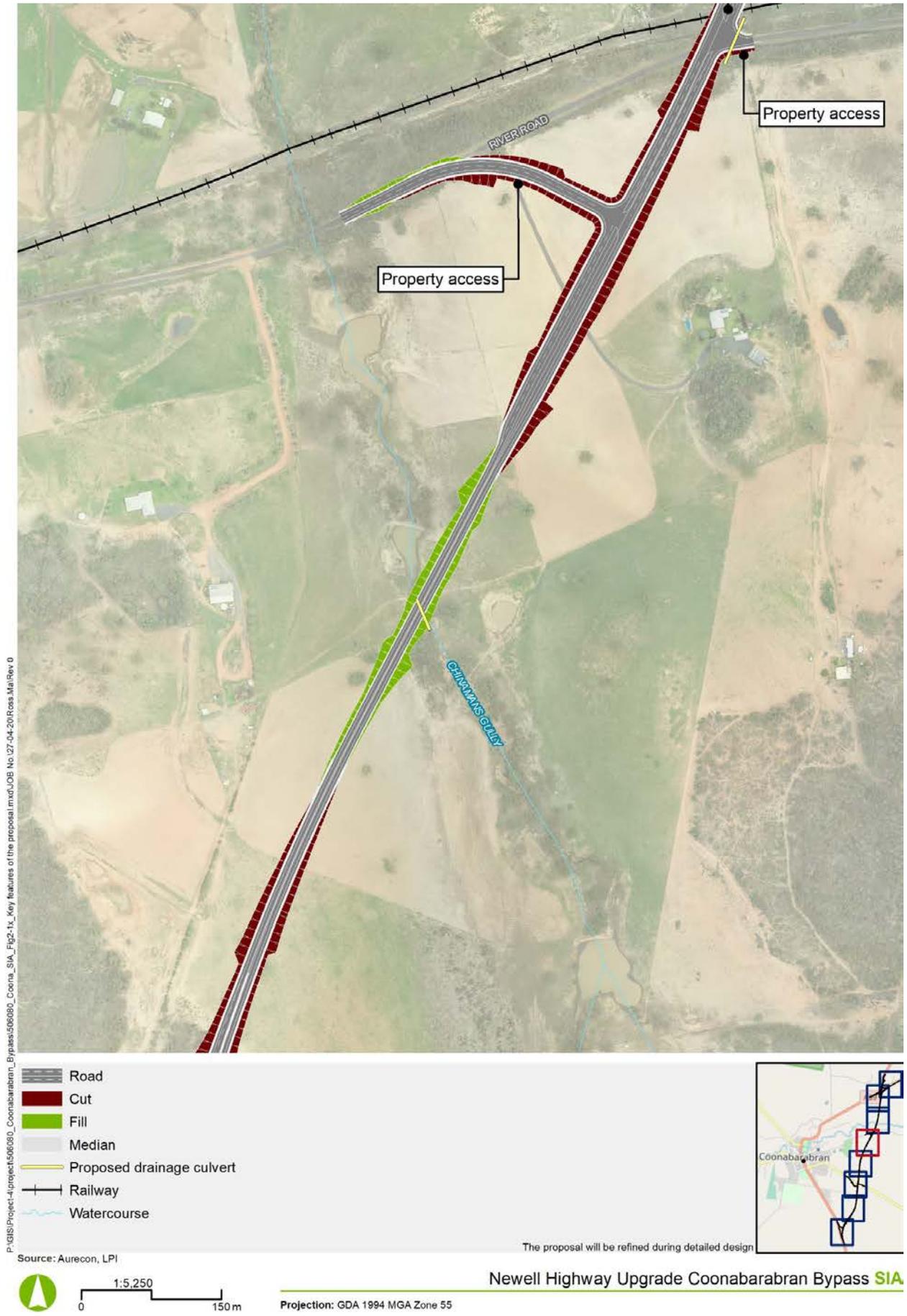


Figure 2-4 Key features of the proposal



Figure 2-5 Key features of the proposal

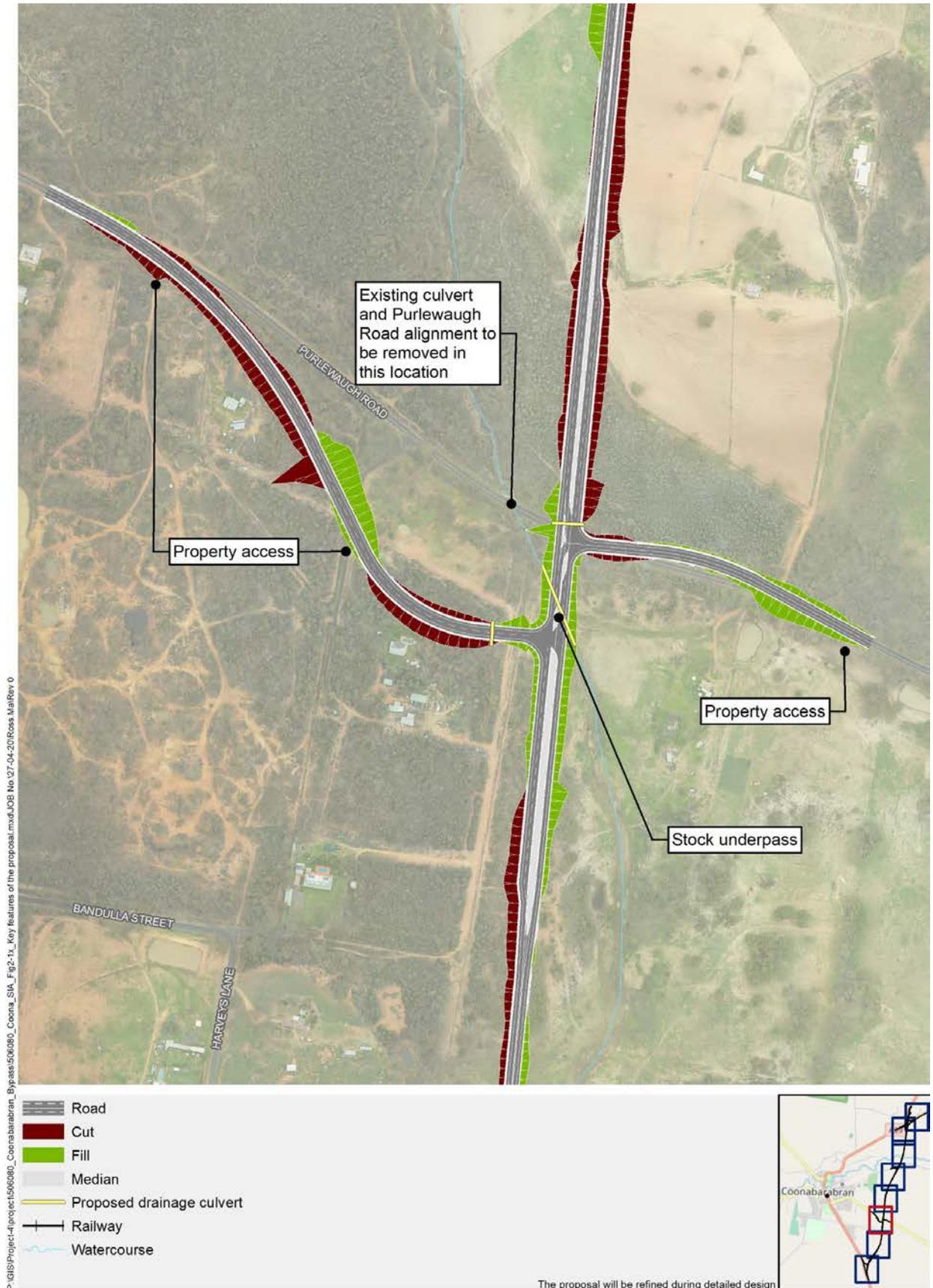


Figure 2-6 Key features of the proposal

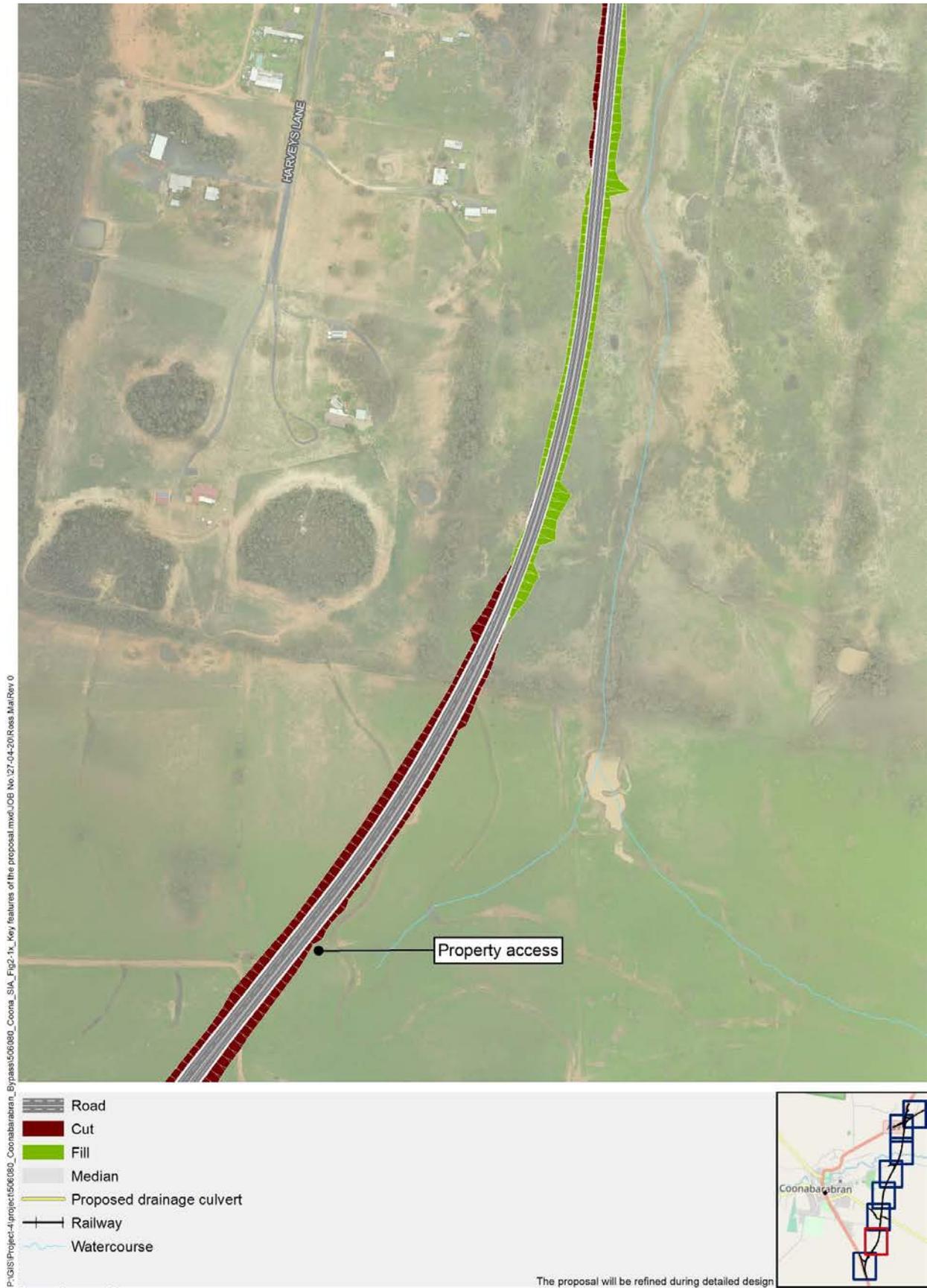


Figure 2-7 Key features of the proposal

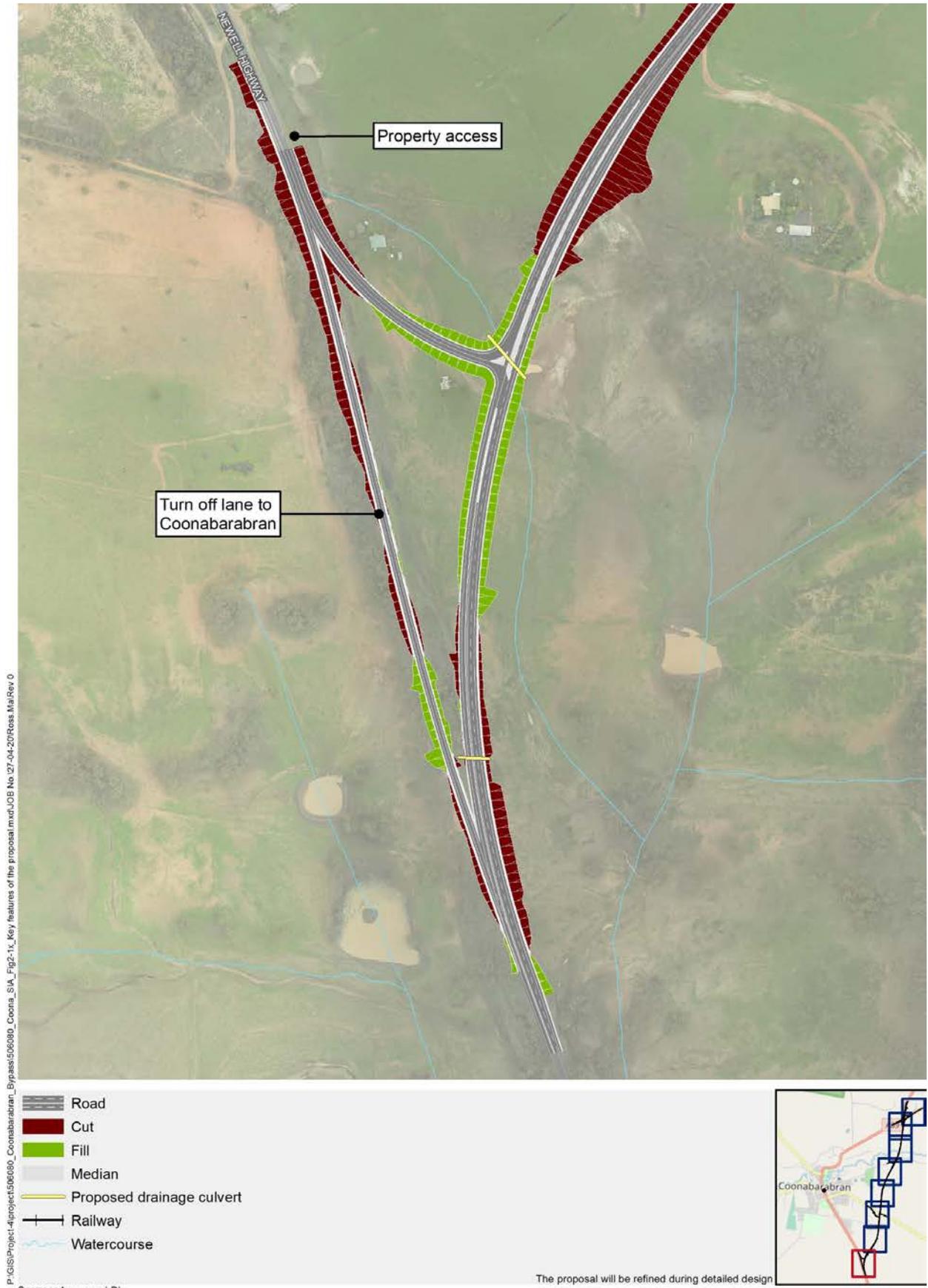


Figure 2-8 Key features of the proposal

2.3 Construction

2.3.1 Construction activities

The proposal would include the following stages of construction:

- site establishment
- earthworks
- drainage and utilities works
- culvert and bridge construction
- pavement works
- landscaping and finishing works.

The construction activities for the proposal are discussed in more detail in the Project REF.

2.3.2 Construction hours and duration

Construction of the proposal is expected to take about 18 months to complete, however the exact timing of the start of construction would be determined as the proposal progresses.

Majority of construction would be undertaken during standard construction hours, which are:

- Monday to Friday: 7am to 6pm
- Saturday: 8am to 1pm
- Sunday and public holidays: No work.

It is expected that some work would be required outside of standard hours. Typical work activities that are required to be undertaken outside standard hours would include:

- changes to traffic management arrangements
- construction of tie-ins encompassing utility, drainage and road surfacing works
- transport of oversize materials and equipment to and from the construction area
- large concrete pours.

All construction would be undertaken in accordance with the *Construction Noise and Vibration Guidelines* (Roads and Maritime Services, 2016) and the *Interim Construction Noise Guideline* (Department of Environment and Climate Change, 2009). Works would also consider the *Dark Sky Planning Guideline* (Department of Planning and Environment, 2006).

2.3.3 Proposed ancillary facilities

Ancillary facilities would be required to support construction including:

- site compounds that incorporate site offices, car parking, sheds, workshops and storage
- areas for the delivery and storage of prefabricated items
- concrete and asphalt batch plants

- sediment basins
- stockpiles for materials, spoil and mulch.

There are four facilities that are being considered for the works. Details of these sites are summarised in Table 2-1 and their locations are shown in Figure 2-9.

Table 2-1 Proposed ancillary facilities

Feature	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4
Location	North-east of the Newell Highway / Oxley Highway intersection	North-east of the proposed bridge over Castlereagh River	South-west of the proposed River Road intersection	North of the proposed southern intersection with the Newell Highway
Existing site description	The site is in the existing road reserve comprising grassland, cleared of trees	The site is in a paddock, cleared of trees. It is about 100 metres north of Castlereagh River	The site is in a paddock, cleared of trees. It is about 140 metres east of Chinamans Gully	The site is in a paddock, cleared of trees
Potential use	Satellite compound including offices, sheds, storage and parking	Bridge compound including offices, sheds, storage, parking, delivery and storage of bridge structures and stockpiling of materials, spoil and mulch	Stockpiling compound including parking, delivery and storage and stockpiling of materials, spoil and mulch	Main compound site including offices, sheds, storage, parking, delivery and storage of structures, stockpiling of materials, spoil and mulch, concrete batch plants
Approximate area	1.4 hectares	3.8 hectares	1.5 hectares	4.2 hectares
Existing land ownership	Public	Private	Private	Private

The ancillary facilities would be securely fenced with temporary fencing. Signage would be erected advising the general public of access restrictions. Upon completion of the construction works, temporary ancillary facilities, construction areas and stockpiles would be removed, the sites cleared of all rubbish and materials and rehabilitated in consultation with landowners.

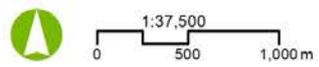


- The design
- Proposed ancillary facility
- +— Railway

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Source: Aurecon, LPI

The proposal will be refined during detailed design



Projection: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55

Newell Highway Upgrade Coonabarabran Bypass SIA

Figure 2-9 Proposed ancillary facilities

3 Methodology

3.1 Assessment methodology

This socio-economic impact assessment is in accordance with the 'moderate' level of assessment, in the *Environmental Impact Assessment Practice Note – Socio-economic Assessment (EIA-N05)* (TfNSW, 2020a). The moderate level of assessment is used as it reflects the scale and magnitude of potential impacts to the socio-economic environment. The assessment includes:

- Review of statutory planning and legislative requirements, including a review of existing State and local government strategies relevant to the social and economic environment of the study area.
- Description of the existing socio-economic environment of the study area to establish the baseline, including:
 - Review of local policies and strategies, including the *Warrumbungle Shire Community Strategic Plan (Reviewed) 2017-2032* (Warrumbungle Shire Council, 2012).
 - Analysis of key population and demographic indicators, including data from the *Census of Population and Housing* (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016) and the Community Profile and Economic Profile presented on the Warrumbungle Shire Council website.
 - Analysis of data and information on local business and industry, employment and income, and dwelling characteristics.
 - Review of existing social infrastructure and community features near to the proposal, including recreation uses, educational facilities, places of worship, public transport and walking and cycling facilities.
- Identification and assessment of the potential socio-economic impacts of the proposal's construction and operation on local amenity, social infrastructure and access.
- Measures to manage or mitigate potential impacts on the socio-economic environment and maximise potential benefits of the proposal.

The *Economic Evaluation of Town Bypasses – Review of Literature* (Roads and Maritime Services, 2011) summarises the potential impacts associated with other bypass projects. The literature review explores three key areas of impacts associated with highway bypasses, including economic, social and community impacts. These themes as well as other perceived issues and opportunities associated with the introduction of the bypass are discussed in detail in Section 4.2 and 7.2.4 of this report.

A business and shopper survey was undertaken in Coonabarabran as part of the proposal. The details and findings are provided in the *Newell Highway Upgrade, Coonabarabran, Business and Shopper Survey Report* (Aurecon, 2020) in Appendix A. A summary of the results is included in Section 7.2.4 of this report to assess impacts to the town shopping centre.

3.2 Study area

For the purposes of this report, the study area is the suburb of Coonabarabran. This area is classified as a state suburb in the ABS *Census of Population and Housing*, which encompasses the broader Coonabarabran area, not just the town centre. This allows a better representation of the area surrounding the proposal. The study area is shown in Figure 3-1 and is discussed in more detail in Section 7.3.

Coonabarabran is located within the Warrumbungle Shire LGA in regional NSW. The Warrumbungle Shire LGA hosts a range of townships and small villages across its 12,380 square kilometre area (Warrumbungle Shire Council, 2012). Coonabarabran is the largest town centre in the LGA, providing facilities, businesses and services to surrounding areas.

The proposal area is the location of the proposed bypass and its associated features. The proposal area is located in the eastern section of the study area.

3.3 Data sources

Information used to inform the socio-economic assessment is from the following sources:

- Environmental Impact Assessment Practice Note on Socio-economic Assessment (EIA-N05) (TfNSW, 2020a)
- Census of Population and Housing (ABS, 2016)
- Warrumbungle Shire LGA reports and strategies (listed in Section 5.2)
- NSW Government strategic planning reports and plans
- NSW Department of Planning and Environment population and dwelling projections (Department of Planning and Environment, 2016).
- Newell Highway Upgrade Coonabarabran Bypass, Business and Shopper Survey Report (Aurecon, 2020)
- Specialist reports prepared to support the REF, including:
 - Newell Highway Upgrade, Coonabarabran, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Report (SCAPE, 2020)
 - Newell Highway Bypass, Coonabarabran, Noise and Vibration Assessment (TfNSW, 2020b)
 - Newell Highway Bypass, Coonabarabran, Traffic and Transport Assessment Report (TfNSW 2020c).

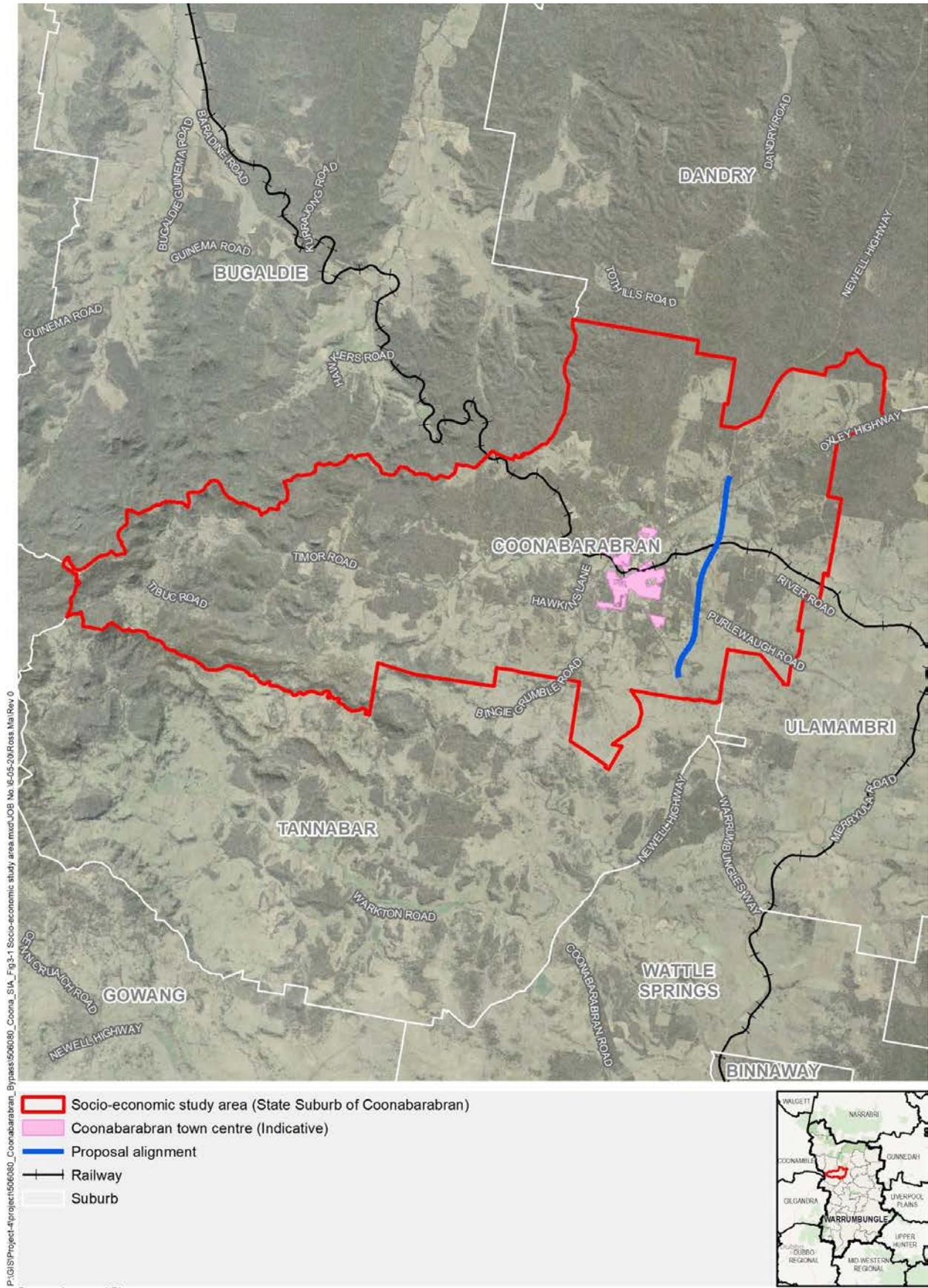


Figure 3-1 Socio-economic study area

4 Review of existing bypass studies

4.1 Introduction

To inform the potential economic effects on the community and businesses in the study area, a review of previous studies relating to road projects bypassing towns was carried out.

This section summarises previous literature reviews and working papers to capture themes on the different factors and impacts associated with town bypass projects. The studies and working papers reviewed include:

- The Effects on Small Towns of Being Bypassed by a Highway: A Case Study of Berrima and Mittagong, Working paper 11 (Bureau of Transport and Communications Economics, 1994)
- The Karuah Highway Bypass, Economic and Social Impacts: The 5 Year Report (Urban Regional Planning Program - University of Sydney, 2009)
- *Evaluation of the Economic Impacts of Bypass Roads on Country Towns: Final Report* (Roads and Maritime Services (formerly NSW Road and Traffic Authority) & University of Sydney, 2012)
- Economic Evaluation of Town Bypasses – Review of Literature (Roads and Maritime Services, 2011)
- Foxground and Berry Bypass Princess Highway Upgrade: Socio-economic Impact Assessment (NSW Roads and Maritime Services, 2012)
- Singleton Bypass: Socio-economic Impact Assessment (Roads and Maritime Services, 2019)
- *Tourist Signposting* (NSW Roads and Maritime Services, 2012)
- Bypassed Towns Signage Trial Evaluation Report (Roads and Maritime, 2018).

The review of publications discussed in the preceding list are summarised in Appendix B. A summary of key themes and issues are summarised in Section 4.2.

4.2 Key themes and issues relevant for Coonabarabran

Based on the review of the working papers and studies summarised in Appendix B, the following section summarises common themes and issues that would be relevant to Coonabarabran. Although previous studies have different variables including location, timing, town size and town characteristics, they can be useful in understanding positive and negative impacts of highway bypasses on bypassed towns.

- Business reliance on passing trade – A common theme in bypass literature and case studies is highway businesses and their dependence on travellers for passing trade. Accommodation and cafes/restaurants are identified as feeling the effects of bypasses most. Mixed results post bypass were identified in the studies investigated. Some businesses suffered in the short term, becoming more successful in the medium and long term. Other businesses needed to reduce costs through unemployment, with some businesses closing within the first year of the bypass opening. Many of these closures were associated with declining economies, lack of spending and passing trade.

- Pre-bypass conditions - Existing conditions in a town can contribute to how a bypass may impact the community. The social and economic position of a town post-bypass can be reliant on key demographics pre-bypass including population size, economy status, town centre establishment, industry focus and employment rates.
- Adaptability and customer focus - Case studies have also identified that bypasses can result in new opportunities for businesses. New businesses have been seen to open in town centres in the years following a bypass, taking advantage of the amenity improvements in the environment without large vehicles through traffic, less noise and safer town centres. Other existing businesses have looked to adapt to the changes in the environment, altering their customer focus, entering niche markets and investing promotional activities to bring people to town.
- Remoteness, attraction and distances to larger centres – Towns closer to larger centres have been shown to be more resilient once they have been bypassed. For towns that are more remote, their success appears to be based on their ability to function as an independent economic entity (or ‘destination’ town). Well defined towns, with key features that encourage tourism and expenditure have been seen to be more successful based on their appeal to visitors.
- Active leadership and collaboration – Investment and planning across communities, stakeholders and local governments has proven to be vital to bypassed towns. Expenditure in streetscape infrastructure, tourism events and community initiatives are required to continue to strengthen towns following the introduction of a bypass.
- Post bypass conditions – In bypassed towns, the town environment has been described as quieter, with greater active transport opportunities, perceived as safer and more aesthetically pleasing for the local community. Population increases and town expenditure has also been experienced in some areas, as people are attracted to the quieter lifestyle that bypassed towns offer.
- Signage initiatives have been developed by TfNSW and local communities to encourage drivers to visit towns bypassed by highway upgrades. Case studies that have identified the value in signage to promote and attract people to towns, with results demonstrating that signage can have a positive financial impact on businesses and patronage. There are a number of considerations required prior to the development and installation of town signage that can be crucial factors to their success. Consultation with the community and council is a key factor in understanding optimal location and design features of signage. In addition, safety, efficiency and informative signage must also be considered when developing signage.

5 Policy context

5.1 NSW strategic planning

The NSW strategic planning documents provided in the following section identify a consistent strategic direction that aligns with the proposal. The plans identify that transport is an important part of economic progression in rural NSW, including the upgrade and improvement of major transport routes such as the Newell Highway. Safety is a key priority in NSW strategic planning, with a focus on communities, local and regional travel. The health, access and social wellbeing is also mentioned in some of these plans, explaining the importance of strengthening communities. Improving the efficiency and productivity of the NSW road network is also discussed, promoting interstate connectivity, freight movements and access for all road users.

5.1.1 NSW 2021: A plan to make NSW number one

The NSW Government's *NSW 2021: A plan to make NSW number one (NSW 2021)* (NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) 2011) sets goals and identifies actions in five key areas:

- rebuild the economy
- return quality services
- renovate infrastructure
- strengthen our local environment and communities
- restore accountability to government.

NSW 2021 is a 10-year plan that aims to bring together government, community and business to respond to the challenges and opportunities. The plan aims to deliver strategic infrastructure projects and better coordinate different transport modes to provide clean, reliable, safe, efficient and integrated transport services. Of the 32 goals identified in *NSW 2021*, two goals align most closely with the benefits of the proposal. These include 'improve road safety' and 'invest in critical infrastructure'. As mentioned in Section 1.4 of this report, the proposal aims to enhance road safety and upgrade the Newell Highway to improve travel efficiency for local and regional road users.

As a key piece of road infrastructure, the upgrade of the Newell Highway forms part of a broader program of works that would achieve connectivity on a national level (connection through NSW from Victoria to Queensland borders). This is discussed further in Section 7.3.3. In addition, one of the key targets for investing in critical infrastructure includes the investment in regional infrastructure.

5.1.2 Infrastructure Priority List: Project and Initiative Summaries 2020

Infrastructure Australia released the *Infrastructure Priority List: Project and Initiative Summaries 2020* in February 2020. The list was developed to direct Australia's governments to the projects and initiatives that will deliver infrastructure services across all sectors. Each proposal is assessed for inclusion on the list using an assessment framework that investigates the risks and opportunities of each proposal.

The Newell Highway Upgrade is included as a priority initiative in the list, identified as a critical link for regional producers that is expected to grow strongly in the future. The constrained efficiency of the route, congestion, flooding, deteriorating pavement and lack of overtaking opportunities is discussed.

The construction of a bypass at Coonabarabran is identified in the list as a proposed initiative to improve one of the many sections of the highway that requires upgrading. The proposal aligns with the priority list, as part of the Newell Highway Upgrade. The proposal would improve connectivity for the local and regional network, including the many agricultural businesses that would use this route for business operations.

5.1.3 Future Transport Strategy 2056

In March 2018, the NSW Government released the *Future Transport Strategy 2056*. The *Future Transport Strategy 2056* was developed in preparation of changes to the transport system in NSW over the next 40 years. The strategy recognises transport as an enabler of economic and social activity, contributing to long term economic, social and environmental outcomes.

The strategy promotes the role that transport plays land use, tourism and economic development of towns and cities. It also explores social inclusion and the liveability of communities, focusing on how transport planning can positively impact communities and social infrastructure. For the community of Coonabarabran, tourism and economic development are important factors to the businesses and residents.

The *Future Transport Strategy 2056* states that the progressive review of roads and road space can achieve better outcomes for the existing road network. In particular, the plan identifies a Safe System Approach. This approach aims to achieve greater separation of major traffic flows to support higher performance and safety with freight bypasses of major regional centres (TfNSW, 2018a). The proposal promotes the objective of the Safe System Approach as the upgrade to the Newell Highway would create a bypass of Coonabarabran, improving safety and poor efficiency of the existing network. The upgrade of the Newell Highway is discussed in the Strategy with regard to future planning for the freight network and upgrades across different areas of the highway in next ten years (between 2018 and 2028).

The following sections summarises the sub-plans that support the *Future Transport Strategy 2056*.

Regional NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan

The *Regional NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan* (RNSIP) (TfNSW, 2018b) was developed as a supporting plan of the Future Transport Strategy 2056. The RNSIP provides planning strategies for each region of regional NSW, with a focus on customers, communities and industry. The Plan states that as greater NSW continues to grow, regional cities would require stronger links to other regional and capital cities. Regional growth is expected to occur mainly in the Hunter, Central Coast and Illawarra regions, whereas inland regions and cities are expected to see flat or declining populations (TfNSW, 2018b). The RNSIP classifies the study area between two geographical classifications of remoteness. Coonabarabran is categorised as an 'outer regional' to 'remote' regional town. The Plan acknowledges that those who live in areas that are remote often have to travel relatively longer distances to access services and infrastructure and the impact that remoteness has on lifestyle and transport modes/services (TfNSW, 2018b). In response to this, the RNSIP provides a 40 year vision for transport in regional NSW to develop a connected radial network of transport across NSW. The study area is located within the Central West and Orana Region. The four goals identified in the Plan for the Central West Orana region include:

- the most diverse regional economy in NSW
- a stronger, healthier environment and diverse heritage
- quality freight, transport and infrastructure networks

- dynamic, vibrant and healthy communities.

The Plan also refers to Newell Highway and opportunities for improved movement of freight and relief for local road networks. Through the focus on ‘movement corridors’ such as the Newell Highway, improvements can be made between regions and strategic centres. The proposal aligns with the objectives of the Plan as the highway upgrade would aim to create benefits including safety, travel efficiency and productivity. The movement of freight on the Newell Highway is a key feature of the proposal, which is discussed extensively in the RNSIP. The large agricultural business community of Coonabarabran is also expected to benefit from the more productive and safe movement of freight along the Newell Highway.

Freight and Ports Plan

The *Freight and Ports Plan* (FPP) replaces the NSW *Freight and Ports Strategy* (FPS). It supports the *Future Transport Strategy 2056* and provides a framework to guide decisions and investments in the freight and logistics network, with the aim of delivering a transport network that allows for the efficient movement of goods to markets (TfNSW, 2018c).

The FPP explores the need to accommodate population growth and increases in capacity. It identifies the need to improve the road network to achieve safety and efficiency as NSW continues to grow. Safety and efficiency of the road network in Coonabarabran is a key focus of this proposal. The FPP discusses projects that have been undertaken to support freight precincts, terminals and key freight routes, including the Newell Highway. The expected growth over the next 20 years would require the upgrade of and planning around key routes such as the Newell Highway. The flood prone nature of the Newell Highway is also considered in the Strategy but not discussed extensively.

The proposal would aim to address one of the primary goals in the FPP, ‘to deliver new infrastructure to increase road freight capacity and improve safety. The proposal would upgrade the Newell Highway to accommodate freight movements and improve safety, as well as improve access to and from major regional facilities.

Tourism and Transport Plan

As part of the *Future Transport Strategy 2056*, the *Tourism and Transport Plan* provides a framework for customer outcomes for visitors and initiatives over ten years (TfNSW, 2018d). Customer outcomes listed in the plan are as follows:

- enhancing the visitor experience
- greater access to more of NSW
- making transport the attraction
- a seamless experience.

Extensive customer and stakeholder engagement was undertaken to develop the plan and identify priorities in NSW. Feedback was provided on the need to cater for visitors to inland rural and regional NSW from the Great Dividing Range to the west.

The plan used the Newell Highway as an example of upgrades required on major road infrastructure, with more rest stops and signage for visitors. The proposal would seek to improve efficiency of travel along the Newell Highway. The plan states that transport can play a major role in growing regional tourism by providing new and more convenient ways to travel to and around regional attractions. The proposal would meet this objective through the proposed upgrades to the Newell Highway at Coonabarabran, reducing travel time and improving efficiency.

5.1.4 Building Momentum - State Infrastructure Strategy 2018 - 2038

The *State Infrastructure Strategy* (SIS) (2018) is a 20-year infrastructure plan for the NSW government. It makes recommendations for each of NSW's key infrastructure sectors and provides information about place-based approaches to infrastructure planning.

The SIS discusses the NSW Government's investment in north-south routes and leading improvement programs such as the Princes and Newell Highways. It discusses Roads and Maritime Services' progressive corridor planning program (which is discussed for the Newell Highway in Section 5.1.6 in this document) and ways to overcome physical challenges and network restrictions. As part of the 'Sector based infrastructure directions – Transport', the need to develop freight and service networks by improving road access for goods and services to local, national and global markets and to address existing inefficiencies and pinch points is recommended. This would align with the proposal which would seek to improve connectivity and efficiency for freight vehicles along the Newell Highway.

5.1.5 Road Safety Plan – Towards Zero

TfNSW released the final *Road Safety Plan - Towards Zero* in February 2018. The Plan was released by the NSW Government to improve road safety, with a state priority of reducing road fatalities by 30 per cent by 2021 (TfNSW, 2018e). The plan outlines priority areas for action, with the most relevant to the proposal being 'saving lives on country roads'. This initiative aims at improving road safety infrastructure including targeting high-risk roads and behaviours. The plan also discusses the increased number of people in NSW resulting in more trucks, pedestrians and bicycle riders. With this in mind, roads and road infrastructure needs to be developed in consideration of a safe shared place for everyone. Though not specifically mentioned in the plan, the Newell Highway through Coonabarabran accommodates heavy vehicles, cars and pedestrians, particularly in the town centre. By upgrading the Newell Highway at Coonabarabran and providing a bypass, this could reduce the risk of potential incidents and create a safer environment for all road users. The Plan acknowledges the role that roads play in regional NSW, linking people and goods to regional and economic centres.

5.1.6 Newell Highway Corridor Strategy

The *Newell Highway Corridor Strategy* (2015) outlines the NSW Government's plan to manage the Newell Highway (A39) over a 20-year timeframe. The Newell Highway is the longest highway in NSW running from Tocumwal on the Victorian border to Goondiwindi on the Queensland border. It is 1058 kilometres in length and passes through 15 local government areas (TfNSW, 2015).

As a major interstate connection, the highway is expected to almost double over the next 20 years in freight productivity. The strategy discusses the objectives, current and future performance of the highway and how the corridor will be managed in the long term.

The strategy discusses the key issues along the corridor at present, which include:

- Restricted access for vehicles such as 26 metre B-doubles, which are allowed along majority of its entire length and access for B-triples, double road trains and AB-triples (36.5 metres) which is restricted to certain sections.
- Significant pavement condition issues and structural deficiencies in some areas.

Increasing freight demand will impact journey reliability and timing, increase maintenance costs and reduce safety. Therefore, upgrades and improvements are required along the highway. The Strategy provides solutions and initiatives to improve the Newell Highway, including town bypasses. With the increasing number of vehicles, localised congestion, traffic delays and noise pollution, bypasses provide a solution through improved travel within towns, reductions in the delay for freight vehicles and improved road safety by reducing conflict points between local and through traffic. Coonabarabran is identified as 'medium term' in the Strategy's town bypass priorities over the next 20 years. This strategy identifies the existing issues that are currently experienced in Coonabarabran. The strategy discusses the potential to improve the amenity of the towns located along the Newell Highway, such as Coonabarabran.

5.1.7 Central West Regional Transport Plan

The *Central West Regional Transport Plan* (2013) outlines specific actions to address the challenges of the Central West region. This region is a major agricultural, industrial and commercial region. It is rich in natural resources and spans the Central Tablelands and plains. The region faces the following challenges:

- slowly growing population
- ageing population
- employment clustered in major centres
- existing and future freight movements
- social disadvantage
- significant population dispersed in many small settlements
- road safety
- domestic and international tourism.

Road safety is one the challenges identified in the *Central West Regional Transport Plan*. Areas of heavy vehicle crashes in the Central West region include along the Newell Highway with clusters around Parkes, Dubbo and Coonabarabran. Safety improvement investments have also been implemented in Coonabarabran in the form of widening, profile edge line marking and the installation of audio tactile centre lines on the Newell Highway north of the Oxley Highway. However, the plan promotes the need to continue to implement strategies to improve road safety such as the implementation of bypass infrastructure to help remove heavy vehicles from passing through local towns such as Coonabarabran.

5.2 Local strategic planning

The local strategic planning documents summarised in the following section provide insight into the Warrumbungle Shire Council's strategies and objectives for the future of the LGA. From these strategic planning documents, it is evident that the Warrumbungle Shire alongside the community work to develop goals and directions to respond to the State planning objectives. There are consistent themes across these documents that include:

- the importance of community cohesion, culture and supportive environments
- guidance, leadership and investment from local council
- the value of the environment, open spaces, the Warrumbungle National Park and maintaining places for active and passive recreation

- local business and tourism, with a focus on the elements in the Warrumbungle Shire including the Siding Spring Observatory, dependence on the agricultural business sector and tourism opportunities
- accessibility, safe and efficient transport networks and the importance of the Newell Highway as a key connector across regional NSW.

5.2.1 Warrumbungle Shire Council Community Strategic Plan 2017 to 2032

The Warrumbungle Shire Council's *Community Strategic Plan (CSP) 2017 to 2032* provides council, community and stakeholders of the Warrumbungle Shire with a framework for addressing issues and developing goals for long term achievement (Warrumbungle Shire Council, 2017). The plan is divided into areas with corresponding long-term outcomes and strategies to achieve the outcomes. These areas are:

- Natural environment – preservation and enhancement of biodiversity and good health of the environment.
- Local economy – having a local economy that is strong, sustainable, with employment opportunities and ease of access to markets, goods and services.
- Community and culture – safe, harmonious and supportive communities with vibrant social and cultural interaction and a strong social identity.
- Rural and urban development – peaceful rural landscapes with thriving towns and villages and diverse agricultural activities.
- Recreation and open space – abundance of opportunities to participate in sporting and recreational interests.
- Public infrastructure and services – safe, functional and well-maintained infrastructure with a range of services.
- Local governance and finance – recognising the Shire for its strong community leadership, sound financial and asset management, and ethical, accountable and responsive local government.

The CSP identifies the role the Warrumbungle Shire plays in providing major road transport links that are of national importance for the movement of people and freight (Warrumbungle Shire Council, 2017). One of the long-term outcomes for public infrastructure and services listed in the CSP is 'alternate routes and truck-stops are established to minimise the movement of heavy vehicles through local urban areas'. The corresponding strategy to achieve this outcome is 'lobby governments to design and construct a serviced alternate route for heavy and wide load vehicles in Coonabarabran and to keep access to existing freight lines'. The proposal would seek to meet this long-term outcome and strategy through the provision of the Coonabarabran Bypass on the Newell Highway. The proposal aims to reduce the presence of large trucks and wide load vehicles on the town of Coonabarabran and provide an alternative route for these vehicles.

The CSP identifies what the community values most through the goals established for the future of the Shire. With these values at the forefront of planning, the Warrumbungle Shire Council aims to achieve long term outcomes for the community.

5.2.2 Warrumbungle Shire Local Strategic Planning Statement (draft)

In 2019, the Warrumbungle Shire Council released the draft *Local Strategy Planning Statement* (LSPS), prepared in accordance with the EP&A Act 1979. The LSPS was developed to identify the main priorities and aspirations for future land use within the Warrumbungle Shire LGA. As a 20-year framework for planning priority needs, the LSPS establishes objectives and strategies to address social, environmental, economic and civic leadership issues as identified in the CSP (Warrumbungle Shire Council, 2019a).

The Newell Highway upgrade is discussed in the LSPS, making reference to the need for road infrastructure improvements to support the surrounding communities and businesses (in particular agricultural and freight businesses that rely on the highway). It also raises the importance of land use and managing land use conflicts for agricultural land.

The LSPS also provides insight into the individual communities that comprise the LGA, and the unique characteristics that contribute the identity of the LGA as a whole. Coonabarabran is discussed in the plan, with references to key social infrastructure and tourist locations such as the Siding Spring Observatory, Dark Sky Park and Warrumbungle National Park.

Consultation undertaken with Warrumbungle Shire Council during the preparation of the REF indicated that as part of the LSPS and LEP review, Council are considering a new mixed-use area south of the town.

5.2.3 Warrumbungle Shire Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan

The Warrumbungle Shire *Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan* (PAMP) promotes the long-term upgrade of pedestrian routes and networks. The primary objective of the PAMP is to provide a planning framework for safe, convenient and reasonable connections to pedestrian routes to encourage walking and mobility (Warrumbungle Shire Council, 2016a).

As one of the six towns included in the study, Coonabarabran was identified as having numerous residents driving short distances and the most pedestrians situated within three to four blocks from the main CBD. The PAMP discusses the trends associated with particular areas of Coonabarabran being host to certain pedestrians. For example, a large number of pedestrians walk from the northern side of Coonabarabran to the CBD and medical services. The plan details the areas of high risk where investment and planning are needed most. Various locations along the Newell Highway are identified in the plan as key issue areas. This includes limited mobility access, steepness and narrow areas.

5.2.4 Warrumbungle Shire Bike Plan

In 2016, the *Warrumbungle Shire Bike Plan* was developed to identify a cycling network across six towns in the Warrumbungle Shire LGA. One of the six towns included in the plan is Coonabarabran. The plan provides a gap analysis for the existing cycling network, identifies issues with current and missing facilities and makes recommendations and cost estimates for the proposed infrastructure (Cardno 2016). In addition to the objectives of the bike plan, it also provides overarching outcomes to support active transport. These include:

- increasing transport choices for travel within towns
- reduction of environmental impacts
- improving public health and reduce healthcare costs

- improving community wellbeing and social cohesion.

As part of the Plan, an audit of the network identified several issues specifically relating to the Coonabarabran region. Coonabarabran town centre was identified as a flood prone zone and steep in grade, leading to potential safety issues when cycling. In addition, the condition and width of existing shared paths was identified as non-compliant in some areas. There are currently no on-road bicycle facilities and there are several crossing issues (i.e. the presence of kerb ramps) in the study area. A cycle network, consisting of bicycle parking, on-road bike paths and shared use paths have been proposed in the *Warrumbungle Shire Council Bike Plan* to provide safe and connected cycleway.

5.2.5 Warrumbungle Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy (2019 – 2023)

The Warrumbungle Shire Council developed the *Economic Development and Tourism Strategy* as a framework to support and facilitate economic development in the Warrumbungle Shire (Warrumbungle Shire Council, 2019b). The Strategy focuses on emerging opportunities, delivery of investments and funding allocations, identification of infrastructure needs and the development and investment of existing and new businesses.

The Strategy acknowledges the main priorities of the community, which are:

- For Council to have a positive, ‘can do’ attitude focused on removing barriers, problem-solving and improving communication
- To grow the population, attract new residents to increase the viability of local businesses and to ensure that services are retained
- To diversify the local economy, reducing the dependence on agriculture. Tourism was considered the main opportunity
- To improve infrastructure (roads, water, sewerage, power and telecommunications) to improve business productivity and enhance lifestyle. The Newell Highway is discussed in the strategy in regards to the predicted increases in freight traffic
- To provide employment locally and address skill shortages.

The Strategy explains the economic climate of the Warrumbungle Shire, providing the following key insights:

- Warrumbungle Shire is primarily dependent on agriculture and is the major employer (900 jobs). The Shire’s Gross Regional Product (GRP) is estimated at \$452.3 million, equating to 5.59 per cent of the Orana Region GRP and 0.08 per cent of the NSW Gross State Product.
- From 2012 to 2016 the Shire achieved year-on-year growth in the GRP, with GRP decreasing in 2017, primarily due to the drought.
- The sectors with the highest output are Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing (\$260.2M); Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services (\$92.9M); Construction (\$64.4M) and Public Administration and Safety (\$50.3M). The total value-add by the Shire’s economy is estimated at \$405.4M (5.43 per cent of value-added in the Orana Region), with the value of goods and services exported from the Shire being \$329.9M (5.6 per cent of the value of exports from the Orana Region).

- In 2016, around 45.7 per cent of the land area of the Shire was in agricultural production, with 86.8 per cent of this land used for livestock production (primarily grazing) and 13.2 per cent for cropping. The gross value of production was \$153.7M, with livestock production accounting for 68.1 per cent (\$104.7M) of the value of production and cropping 31.9 per cent of the value (\$49.0M).
- At June 2017, there were 1003 businesses in the Shire. Small businesses dominate with 63.6 per cent of businesses being non-employing, 27.5 per cent employed one to four people, with 8.1 per cent employing five to 19 people and 0.8 per cent employing 20 to 199 staff.

As discussed in the Strategy, the performance of the agricultural sector impacts directly on the performance of all other industries, including the transport sector. There is a focus on requirement to upgrade parts of the road network where access is limited, as identified by the farming community. In particular, the Strategy makes mention of the forecast truck traffic increases through Coonabarabran and the proposal to upgrade the Newell Highway. The Strategy discusses this further, explaining that removal of heavy traffic from Coonabarabran would increase the amenity and safety of the town however potentially result in a loss of revenue for some local businesses. This aligns with the development of the proposal as the same themes are explored in this report regarding the potential socio-economic impacts of the proposal and the risks and opportunities associated.

6 Community engagement

As stated in the *Environmental Impact Assessment Practice Note – Socio-economic Assessment (EIA-N05)*, a moderate level of socio-economic assessment requires consultation and community engagement due to the nature and context of a project (TfNSW, 2020). The proposed Community Engagement Strategy for this proposal includes public display of the REF for comment and targeted engagement with identified key stakeholders.

In town business and shopper surveys were undertaken as well as stakeholder and property owner meetings.

6.1 Key stakeholders

The impacts of the proposal would typically affect stakeholders in different ways. Key stakeholders to be consulted throughout the development of the proposal include:

- Warrumbungle Shire Council
- local community including, property owners, businesses and community groups
- local schools and childcare centres
- emergency and health services
- internal stakeholders at TfNSW.

6.2 Ongoing consultation

Consultation for a bypass of Coonabarabran has occurred since 1998, when preliminary investigations for a bypass alignment were undertaken. Table 6-1 presents a timeline of consultation activities to date, including the more recent activities associated with the development of the REF.

Table 6-1 Timeline of community consultation to date

Date	Details
1998/1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early investigations by the then Roads and Traffic Authority for potential bypass alignment. The investigations included community engagement, socio-economic impact assessment, traffic and environmental impact studies
2018/2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development, analysis and refinement of potential route options as part of value management study. Desktop preliminary environmental investigations were also conducted
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invitation for community comments on potential route options in May 2019 and June 2019• Community update and frequently asked questions, May 2019• Release of the Preferred Option Report in September 2019• Community update and frequently asked questions, October 2019.

Date	Details
2020 to present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design refinement and development for the planning approval phase of the proposal. The development of the proposal's REF and associated specialist studies, including business and shopper surveys and reporting (February 2020) Frequently asked questions, February 2020.

Source: *Newell Highway Upgrade at Coonabarabran Community Consultation Summary Report* (Roads and Maritime, Services 2019) and project website: <https://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/newell-highway/coonabarabran.html>

6.2.1 Community Consultation Summary Report

In September 2019, TfNSW released the *Newell Highway Upgrade at Coonabarabran Community Consultation Summary Report*. The report was developed to provide a summary of the feedback received from consultation during the options phase of the proposal. Roads and Maritime Services invited the community to rate the appeal of each route option, answer a series of questions about various issues and provide general feedback.

The key issues that were raised by the community and stakeholders during the 2019 consultation process were:

- socio-economic impacts on the local community, businesses and tourism
- traffic and transport impacts including heavy vehicles in the town centre, parking, safety, traffic flow and access to town
- route options for heavy vehicles, road design and connections
- property and land use impact to properties and compensation
- environmental impacts in regard to noise and air pollution
- alternative proposals, suggestions, community consultation and funding queries.

6.2.2 Summary of consultation to date

In the community consultation undertaken over the proposal life cycle, the community has indicated that it values the sense of community and pride for the town of Coonabarabran and its surrounding features. It was evident that tourism and visitors are primary economic activities for the town. The Warrumbungle National Park and Siding Springs Observatory were identified as the main attractions for tourists and the residents of the Warrumbungle LGA. The community identify Coonabarabran as a primary location within NSW, providing a mid-point for travel between Melbourne and Brisbane.

From the key issues raised by the community, there appears to be a degree of sensitivity around potential socio-economic impacts on the town from the bypass. This is consistent throughout almost all of the consultation undertaken for the proposal, including the recent business and shopper surveys, where respondents were concerned about impacts to the town's economy and tourism industry. More information about the business and shopper surveys is provided in Section 7.2.4.

The issue of Newell Highway traffic and heavy vehicles through town was repeatedly mentioned. Safety concerns around schools and for pedestrians walking through the town centre for various sectors of the community was raised. There has been a focus on the operation of the bypass and how it is expected to improve noise and air pollution and safety amenity in town.

7 Existing socio-economic environment

This section outlines the characteristics of the existing socio-economic environment in the study area. Warrumbungle Shire LGA and Greater NSW are used as a comparison, using information from the ABS 2016 Census.

The ABS 2016 data used to inform the existing socio-economic environment is at Appendix C.

7.1 Summary of the existing environment

The existing environment is summarised as follows:

- There were 3,290 people living in Coonabarabran (study area) in 2016, which accounted for 31.5 per cent of the Warrumbungle Shire LGA population. There was a higher proportion of people aged 65 years or older in the study area with 26.3 per cent of people aged over 65 years, compared to NSW at 16.3 per cent. In 2016, 18.6 per cent of the study area population were 14 years or younger, which was slightly higher than the Warrumbungle Shire LGA and NSW.
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population within the study area was 13.8 per cent in 2016. This was higher than the Warrumbungle Shire LGA with 9.8 per cent of the population being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. NSW had a substantially lower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population at 2.9 per cent.
- In 2016, 5.9 per cent of the Coonabarabran and Warrumbungle Shire LGA population were born overseas, in comparison to NSW with an overall overseas born population of 27.7 per cent.
- The population of Warrumbungle Shire LGA annual percentage change is currently minus 0.7 per cent per year and is expected to continue to decline in the future, decreasing by a total of around 16 per cent by 2036. This is in comparison to NSW which is anticipated to see a growth of 1.1 per cent per year.
- Coonabarabran had the highest unemployment rate of the three areas included in the assessment, with an unemployment rate of 8.7 per cent, in comparison to the Warrumbungle Shire LGA at 7.9 per cent and NSW 6.3 per cent.
- The greatest number of jobs in the study area was in the health care and social assistance, with 16.0 per cent of the population working in this industry. This was followed by employment in public administration and safety at 13.6 per cent and education and training at 12.4 per cent. It is possible that the higher levels of employment in these areas are associated with the location of facilities within the study area, including the hospital, education facilities and Council Chambers.
- The Warrumbungle Shire LGA had the highest proportion of the workforce in agriculture, forestry and fishing, which attributed to 27.6 per cent of the workforce working in this industry. This was followed by employment in health care and social assistance at 12.2 per cent and education and training 11.5 per cent. The main agricultural industries include sheep and cattle farming and cropping. Within the Warrumbungle Shire LGA, there is a strong dependence on the agricultural sector, providing jobs and resources to the local and regional population

- The agricultural industry in Coonabarabran is predominantly based on grazing and dryland farming. In 2015-2016, the total gross value of total agriculture production in Coonabarabran was \$154 million (Department of Agriculture, 2019)
- Coonabarabran town centre is a main point of activity in the study area, comprised of a cluster of businesses, services and facilities. Residents tend to also travel out of Coonabarabran to other towns such as Dubbo, Narrabri and Gunnedah on a weekly or monthly basis for shopping (Murray-Darling Basin Authority, 2016)
- Business and shopper surveys obtained feedback from business owners and shoppers in town that included: concerns about the future economy (business and tourism) of the town, passing trade impacts, impacts on town culture and business activity. Respondents also indicated that the bypass may provide opportunities for re-invention and improvement of the town, longer-term benefits, traffic and parking improvements, as well as safety and amenity benefits
- The Siding Spring Observatory, Virtual Solar System Drive and Warrumbungle National Park are primary tourist attractions of Coonabarabran and the broader Warrumbungle Shire LGA, contributing to tourist expenditure and town visitation
- The proposal area is located with agricultural land, comprised of open space with scattered vegetation and some areas of denser vegetation along Castlereagh River
- In 2016, the study area had a total of 1.7 vehicles per dwelling, with only 9.3 per cent of dwellings having no motor vehicles. Warrumbungle Shire had the lowest portion of dwellings with no vehicles at 5.9 per cent. The high vehicle ownership may be reflective of the needs of the residents within the Warrumbungle Shire LGA, the reliance on private motor vehicles and the lack of public transport facilities
- There are no dedicated on-road bicycle facilities in the study area and limited footpath infrastructure, becoming less frequent and discontinuous travelling out of the centre of town.

7.2 Population and demography

7.2.1 Population

In 2016, the population of Coonabarabran (the study area) was 3,290 people, which accounted for around 35.1 per cent of the Warrumbungle Shire LGA population (ABS, 2016a). Key population and demographic information about the study area and Warrumbungle Shire LGA is provided in Table 7-1.

Table 7-1 Population and demography in 2016

Indicator	Study area		Warrumbungle Shire LGA		NSW	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Usual residence	3290	-	9384	-	7,480,228	-
Proportion of people aged 14 years or younger	611	18.6%	1679	17.9%	1,386,330	18.5%
Proportion of people aged 65 years or older	866	26.3%	2450	26.1%	1,217,641	16.3%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population	453	13.8%	917	9.8%	216,176	2.9%
Overseas born	195	5.9%	553	5.9%	2,072,458	27.7%
Advantage/disadvantage	889	-	912	-	1011	-
People with need for assistance	311	9.5%	681	7.3%	402,048	5.4%

Following the review of ABS data, the following key trends were identified:

- There was an older population demographic in the study area, with over a quarter of the population being over 65 years old. As the cost of living in small towns is often lower, it may be more attractive to older people, attracting and retaining them to places such as the study area (ABS 2016b).
- There is low proportion of the population in the study area and Warrumbungle Shire LGA compared to NSW. As the study area is located in rural NSW, the It is relatively common for rural NSW areas to have a lower proportion of overseas born residents as numbers typically decrease when travelling further out of major cities. The ABS 2016 census revealed that just over one in ten people living in small towns across Australia were born overseas (ABS 2016b).
- People who require help or assistance with self-care, mobility and communication, because of a long-term health condition, disability or old age (Core Activity Need for Assistance ¹), was highest in the study area. Lower rates were present in the Warrumbungle Shire LGA and NSW. A need for assistance would require increased access to health care and assistance facilities for the community. As the study area is in regional NSW, it is likely that the residents of Coonabarabran have limited access to a range of advanced medical and health care facilities in comparison to broader NSW.

Population projections

The future population projections for the Warrumbungle LGA and NSW are shown in Table 7-2. The population of Warrumbungle Shire LGA is expected to decrease by 1,650 people by 2036 (NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, 2016). This is substantially low in comparison to the rest of NSW, which is expected to grow by 2,161,050 by 2036. The annual percentage change is currently minus 0.7 per cent in the Warrumbungle Shire LGA and 1.1 per cent in NSW. A range of factors

¹ Core activity need for assistance, ABS 2016 Census Dictionary, ABS (2016). Accessed from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2901.0Chapter27102016>

may contribute to the decrease in population within the Warrumbungle Shire Council, however the change can often be attributed to general population growth and movement (ABS, 2016).

Table 7-2 Population projections (main series) for the Warrumbungle Shire LGA 2011 – 2036

Total population (main series)	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036
Warrumbungle Shire LGA	9,900	9,700	9,450	9,100	8,700	8,250
NSW	7,218,550	7,709,400	8,194,450	8,633,200	9,030,000	9,379,600

Source: NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (2016)

7.2.2 Housing

Residential dwellings in the study area are predominately single-storey houses set back from the road. Separate dwellings comprised 80.4 per cent of the dwellings in the study area, greater than the 77.1 per cent in the Warrumbungle Shire LGA and 59.9 per cent in NSW. The lower proportion of separate dwellings in NSW can be attributed to the range of dwelling structures, particularly more dense dwellings in major cities. Housing and household information is consolidated in Table 7-3, with more information provided in Appendix C.

Table 7-3 Housing and households in 2016

Indicator	Study area		Warrumbungle Shire LGA		NSW	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total dwellings	1,391	-	4,280	-	2,889,057	-
Separate house	1,119	80.4%	3,299	77.1%	1,729,820	59.9%
Terrace/flat etc.	89	6.4%	128	3.0%	860,410	29.8%
Total households	1,240	-	3,517	-	2,604,314	-
Family households	808	65.2%	2,345	66.7%	1,874,524	72.0%
Non-family households	435	35.1%	1,179	33.5%	729,784	28.0%
Average household size	2.2	-	2.3	-	2.6	-

Following the review of ABS data, the following key trends were identified:

- The household size of the study area was lower than that of Warrumbungle Shire LGA and NSW. This may be reflective of the general household structure of the study area.
- Non-family households comprise lone person households or group households. Family households can include couples, couples with children, single parent households, other family households and multi-family households (ABS, 2016a). The higher proportion of residents living in non-family households in the study area compared to NSW may be reflective of a lack of amenities and facilities that may be more attractive to families such as larger residential settlements or urban centres.

Population projections

The household dwelling projections for the Warrumbungle LGA and NSW are shown in Table 7-4. The number of family households is expected to decrease in the Warrumbungle Shire LGA from 4,150 to 3,750 in 2036. The decrease in households in the Warrumbungle Shire LGA shows more residents choosing to live closer to main cities. Across NSW, the total number of households are anticipated to increase from 2,750,700 to 3,896,850. This indicates that although the population of NSW is continuing to grow, less people are choosing to live in the Warrumbungle Shire LGA. Similarly, the reduction of predicted dwellings within the Warrumbungle Shire LGA further demonstrates of the negative population growth within the Warrumbungle Shire LGA.

Table 7-4 Household dwelling projections for Warrumbungle Shire LGA and NSW

Projections	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036
Warrumbungle Shire LGA						
Total family households	2,800	2,750	2,700	2,600	2,500	2,450
Total non-family households	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,350	1,350
Total households	4,150	4,150	4,100	4,000	3,900	3,750
LGA dwellings	5,100	5,050	5,000	4,900	4,750	4,600
New South Wales						
Total family households	1,979,150	2,140,800	2,300,000	2,449,900	2,594,300	2,737,650
Total non-family households	771,550	843,000	915,100	992,100	1,074,950	1,159,200
Total households	2,750,700	2,983,800	3,215,100	3,442,000	3,669,300	3,896,850
Total dwellings	3,031,400	3,284,700	3,535,100	3,779,900	4,024,950	4,269,650

Source: NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (2016)

7.2.3 Socio-economic Indices for Areas (SEIFA)

The Socio-economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) is used by the ABS to measure aspects of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage across NSW. The index uses a range of variables to develop a score for each area in the index. The NSW average is 1000. Higher scores indicate greater advantage and a relative lack of disadvantage. A higher score may infer households with higher income and skilled occupations. A lower score may infer less households with low incomes and less skilled occupations. In 2016, the study area had a score of 889 (Coonabarabran State Suburb) and Warrumbungle Shire LGA had a score of 912.

The SEIFA scores indicate that study area and Warrumbungle Shire LGA had lower than average economic and social conditions for people and households. This may indicate that while there may be lower average incomes, there is also a lower cost of living. The ABS states that the most advantaged areas tend to be clustered around capital cities and coastal areas (ABS 2016b). Location often influences the ability for residents to access goods and services required to satisfy an individual's lifestyle, however this does not mean that all people living in rural areas are disadvantaged.

This means that their lifestyle and living arrangements are different to those living in the capital cities and coastal areas (ABS 2016b).

7.2.4 Economic profile

The top employment industries in the study area, Warrumbungle Shire LGA and NSW are provided in Table 7-5.

Table 7-5 Top industries of employment in 2016

Indicator	Study area		Warrumbungle Shire LGA		NSW	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Retail trade	122	11.1%	257	7.7%	326396	9.7%
Accommodation and Food Services	98	8.9%	184	5.5%	422195	12.5%
Public Administration and Safety	149	13.6%	261	7.8%	282491	8.4%
Education and training	136	12.4%	382	11.5%	239222	7.1%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	60	5.5%	921	27.6%	-	-
Health Care and Social Assistance	175	16.0%	406	12.2%	197331	5.8%

Employment in health care and social assistance comprised the highest proportion of the work force in the study area. It is possible that the higher levels of employment in health care and social assistance may be associated with the hospital located in Coonabarabran. This may also be associated with the potential demand for services by residents over the age of 65 and people's requirements for social assistance. Similarly, there are a number of education facilities and the Warrumbungle Shire Council Chambers located in Coonabarabran, which would explain the increase number of jobs in education and public administration.

The Warrumbungle Shire LGA had the highest portion of the workforce in agriculture, forestry and fishing. As stated in the Warrumbungle Shire CSP and the *Warrumbungle Shire Council Economic Development and Tourism Strategy*, the main agricultural industries include sheep and cattle farming and cropping. Within the Warrumbungle Shire LGA, there is a strong dependence on the agricultural sector, providing jobs and resources to the local and regional population.

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority released *Coonabarabran – Understanding Community Conditions* in 2016. Coonabarabran has been described as a large grazing community that benefits from tourism in the surrounding local area (Murray-Darling Basin Authority, 2016).

The agricultural industry in Coonabarabran is predominantly based on grazing. Land use for agricultural use is comprised of 87 per cent of land use for grazing and 12 per cent of land use for dryland farming (Murray-Darling Basin Authority, 2016). Australian Agricultural Census data stated that in 2015-2016 the total gross value of total agriculture production in Coonabarabran was \$154 million (Department of Agriculture, 2019).

As mentioned in Section 3.2, Coonabarabran town centre is a main point of activity in the study area. The town centre is comprised of a cluster of businesses, services and facilities. This includes retail businesses, professional services, restaurants and

cafes. Of the many businesses, there is a strong presence of local businesses within Coonabarabran town centre. There are limited large chain stores in the town, with the majority of shops and restaurants owned by local residents.

From the consultation undertaken for *Coonabarabran – Understanding Community Conditions*, it was identified that residents tend to also travel out of Coonabarabran to other towns such as Dubbo, Narrabri and Gunnedah on a weekly or monthly basis for shopping (Murray-Darling Basin Authority, 2016).

The economic benefits of tourism peaks in the summer months of the year, with over 40,000 visitors known to stop at the information centre in Coonabarabran each year, with particular interest in the Warrumbungle National Park and the Siding Spring Observatory (Murray-Darling Basin Authority, 2016). Tourism is discussed further in Section 7.2.5.

Business and shopper behaviour in Coonabarabran

Business and shopper surveys were undertaken in February 2020 to understand consumer behaviour, business operations and gauge the community sentiment toward the proposal. The business and shopper survey report was developed in March 2020 and collated survey responses and feedback during the survey period. Figure 7-1 and Figure 7-2 shows the businesses that were provided with surveys during the survey period.

The following section provides a summary of the themes and insights into the consumer and business community of Coonabarabran. More detailed quantitative information is provided in the business and shopper report in Appendix A.

Survey details

Both surveys provided the opportunity for businesses and shoppers in Coonabarabran to provide insights into community behaviours and feedback during the planning phase of the proposal.

Business survey questions were focused on determining business reliance on passing highway traffic and understanding how changes to current traffic conditions may impact on business operations.

Shopper survey questions were targeted towards both visitors and residents of Coonabarabran and were focused on identifying reasons for stay, common places to visit and how the proposed bypass would affect activities within the town.

Interpretation of survey results

Table 7-6 provides an overview of the key findings of the survey. Information from the survey has been analysed to identify patterns and trends across the local community, businesses and visitors in Coonabarabran. The insights from the publication summary (Appendix B) have provided guidance on themes to focus on upon reviewing survey information. More detailed information from the surveys is provided in Appendix A.

Table 7-6 Summary interpretation of results

Item	Analysis of information
Concerns about the future economy of the town	As identified in the Business and Shopper Survey, over half of the respondents (57 per cent) of survey respondents perceived Coonabarabran to be declining slowly, with 30 per cent of respondents indicating that they perceived it to be deteriorating more rapidly. Many businesses owners were concerned that the bypass would have a negative impact on the economy of the town due to the removal of trucks and general traffic from the town centre. This appeared to be linked to concern for the unknown.

Item	Analysis of information
	<p>Many shoppers recognised the concerns of business owners regarding the future economy of the town. Respondents to the shopper survey explained that impacts of the bypass could be negative for business, however this may be outweighed by benefits such as improved amenity for people as a result of removing trucks passing through town.</p>
<p>Passing trade reliability</p>	<p>Thirteen businesses indicated in the business and shopper survey indicated that over 50 per cent of trade was from passing trade or visitors. Survey respondents also noticed that there has been a noticeable decline in passing trade in the past five years (around 34 per cent of respondents). Some accommodation providers rely on passing highway traffic, particularly long haul truck drivers. There was concern by accommodation providers that travellers would bypass the Coonabarabran town centre and travel on the bypass.</p> <p>Based on the feedback received from businesses, it was evident that businesses relied on a mix of passing trade and local trade. Factors such as the weather and time of year were noted as the largest cause of impact to passing trade, followed by potential bypass infrastructure. Some accommodation businesses mentioned that a lot of their bookings are received in advance, online and were of the view that the bypass component of the proposal would not impact trade. Other businesses including accommodation, food service and retail thought that the loss of passing trade would be detrimental to business.</p> <p>Based on the results of the business survey in regard to a question about moving businesses to an alternate location, almost all businesses indicated hesitation to do this. This suggests a strong connection to the town, where many businesses have had family run stores for generations. Based on what was observed during the survey, it was evident that moving businesses away from the town centre would have other consequences, including reduced social interaction with other community members and potential feelings of isolation.</p>
<p>Town culture</p>	<p>Some respondents expressed a view that the movement of vehicles, including trucks form part of the town culture. The Business and Shopper survey indicated that the town experienced fluctuations in busy periods with seasonality impacts noticeable in 68 per cent of businesses. School holidays and during town events appeared to be key periods of activity for the town. In addition, many respondents acknowledged the Warrumbungle National Park and the Siding Springs Observatory as key attractions that bring in visitors.</p>
<p>Opportunities for improvement</p>	<p>Some business and shopper respondents considered the bypass component of the proposal to have a positive impact on safety, noise, and air quality. Some businesses identified that the proposal offered potential opportunities to refocus business direction.</p> <p>Some businesses and shoppers also discussed the potential to look for opportunities for the town centre if there was a bypass, such as renewal and streetscape options to improve the town.</p>
<p>Council and Government leadership</p>	<p>Many business owners and shoppers raised the need for support from council and governments for town initiatives including signage, tourism incentives, streetscape infrastructure and improvements to improve the town. There was a strong focus on leadership and community cohesion during the survey period.</p>
<p>Short term impacts with long term benefits</p>	<p>A portion of businesses and shoppers stated that the proposal would be beneficial in the long term if certain conditions were applied (i.e. no new businesses on bypass, truck-only bypass, adequate signage).</p>

Item	Analysis of information
Traffic movements, parking and access	<p>Parking on the main street was a key concern for shoppers, stating that parking on the main street is difficult when trucks are behind them (particularly rear to kerb parking along the highway). Other residents explained that the bypass may result in improved safety for pedestrians and people walking or cycling. Some residents shared the experience of trucks impeding walking or cycling through town due to safety concerns. During the survey period it was evident that many businesses and shoppers used private vehicles for travel through town, with very low numbers of active transport users.</p> <p>Other respondents explained that time savings and safety concerns do not warrant a bypass, many explaining the lack of traffic incidents in the town and time it takes to travel through. Survey respondents also acknowledged that different demographics had various opinions about the bypass, stating that many elderly and young families would prefer the bypass, focusing on safety and access, opposed to middle-aged couples and the many people in the workforce who are concerned about negative, longer-term economic impacts.</p>
Business activity and patronage	<p>80 per cent of shoppers that completed the shopper survey indicated their behaviour in town would not change post bypass, meaning they would still visit as frequently as they do currently. Some respondents to the shopper and business survey also commented on the unknown impact that the proposal would have on the town, explaining that examples of other towns have been both negative and positive.</p> <p>Although there are various businesses widespread throughout Coonabarabran, business activity is mainly concentrated in the town centre along Dalgarno Street, between Robertson St and Charles Street, the Newell Highway/John Street, between Essex Street and Cassilis Street and Cassilis Street, between the Newell Highway and Charles Street. Patronage observed during the survey period is shown in Figure 7-3.</p>

Note: this table is based on interpretations and assumptions of the data only. This is a summary, with more information provided in the Business and Shopper Report

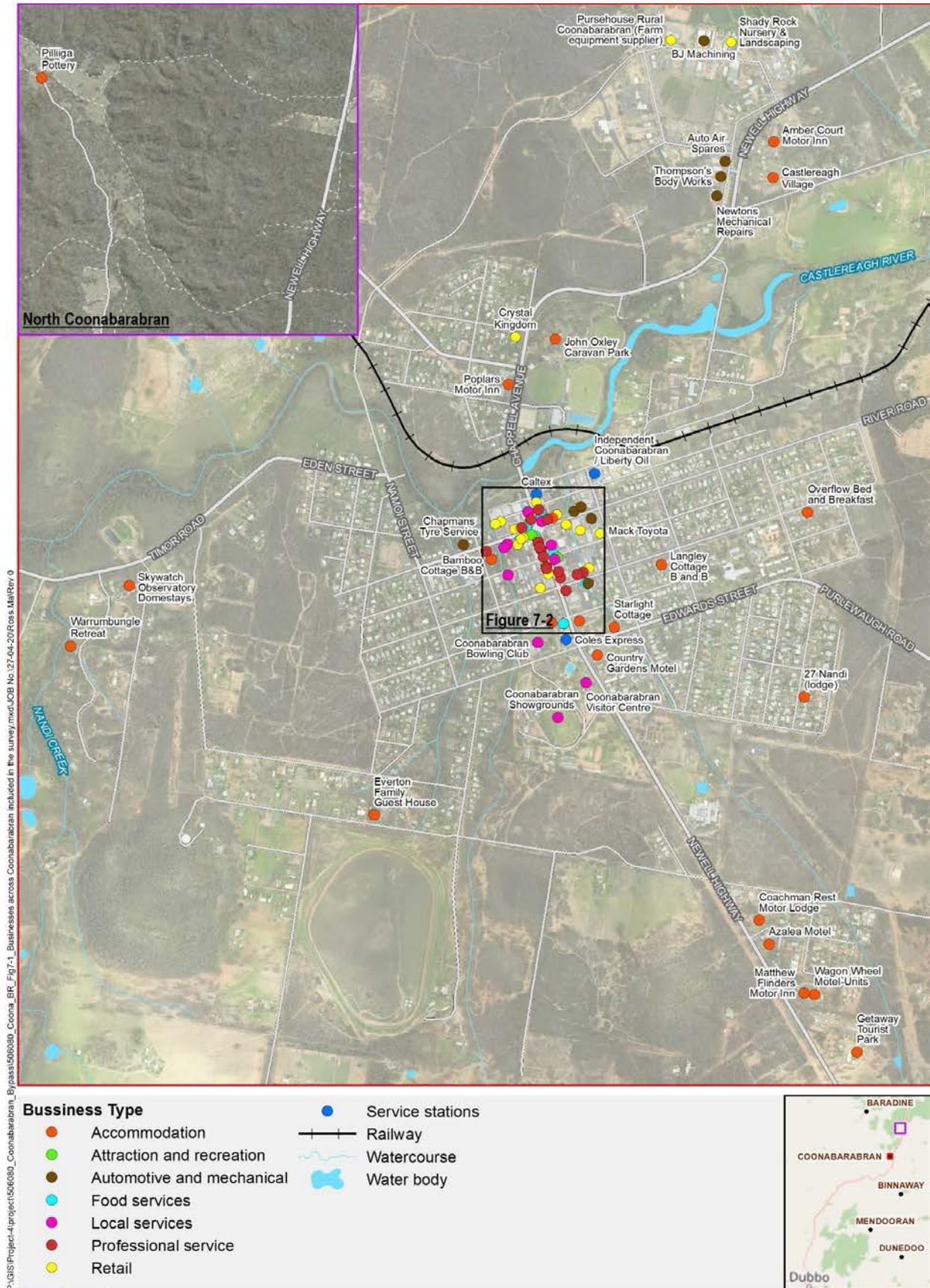
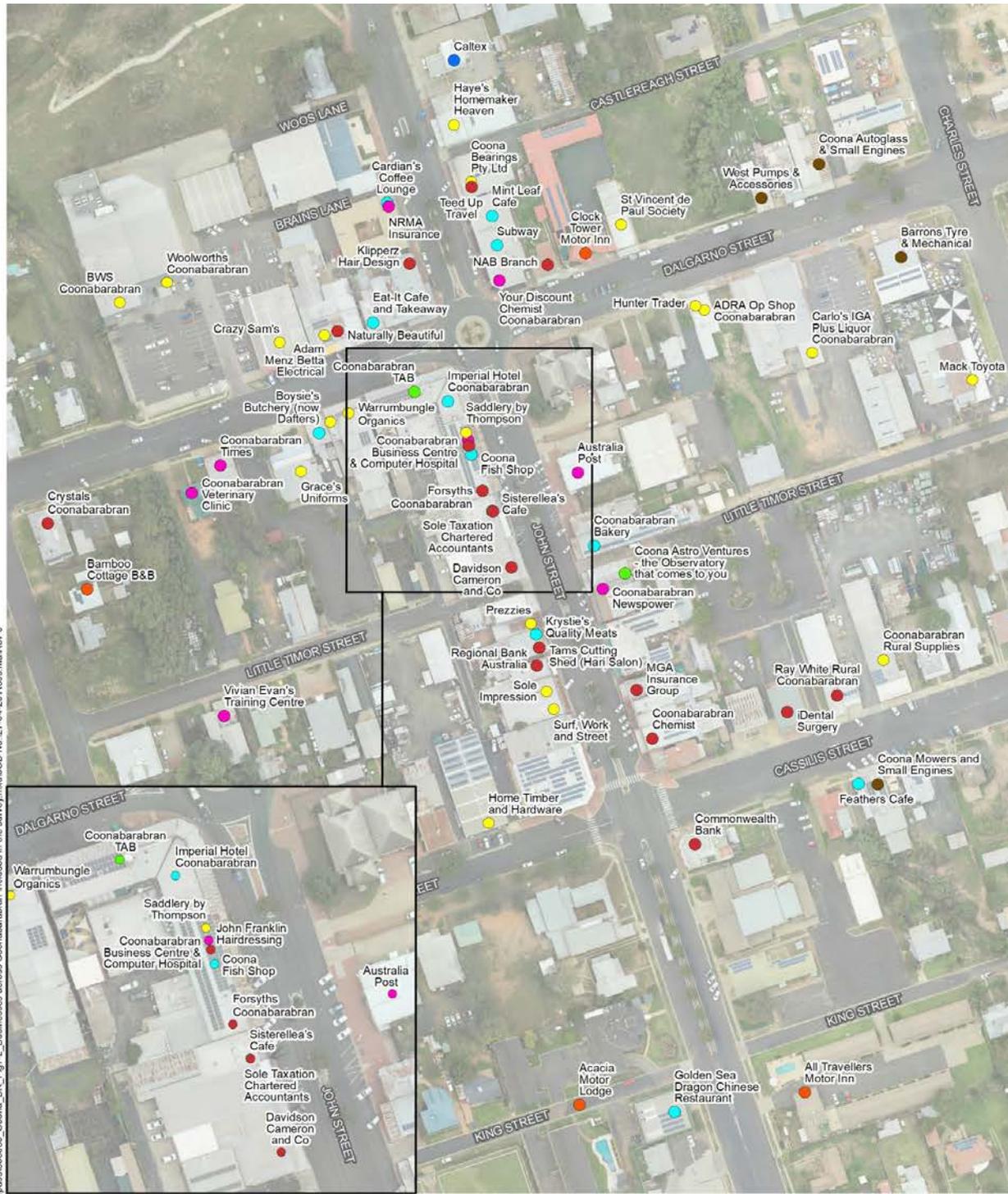


Figure 7-1 Businesses surveyed during the survey period



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Business Type

- Accommodation
- Attraction and recreation
- Automotive and mechanical
- Food services
- Local services
- Professional service
- Retail

Service stations ●



Source: Aurecon, LPI



Newell Highway Upgrade Coonabarabran Bypass SIA

Figure 7-2 Businesses surveyed during the survey period

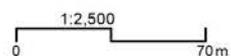


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-  High activity area focus location
-  High activity area



Source: Aurecon, LPI



Projection: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55

Newell Highway Upgrade Coonabarabran Bypass **SIA**

Figure 7-3 Business and shopper activity hotspots observed

Figure 7-4 to Figure 7-8 provide context about the various types of businesses within Coonabarabran.



Figure 7-4 Coonabarabran town centre main roundabout (facing east on Dalgarno Street)



Figure 7-5 Example of mixed businesses within Coonabarabran town centre, including restaurants, cafes and retail (facing east on Dalgarno Street)



Figure 7-6 Example of businesses within Coonabarabran town centre, including motor vehicle servicing and larger retail (IGA) (facing west on Dalgarno Street)



Figure 7-7 Example of rural type businesses within Coonabarabran town centre, including the real estate (property, livestock and commercial trade) (featured left) and a rural supplier (featured right) (facing north on Cassilis Street)



Figure 7-8 Woolworths Coonabarabran, a main point of business activity and location of shopper surveys

7.2.5 Tourism industry and events

Tourism contributed \$21.9 million to the Warrumbungle Shire economy of \$424.2 million (Economy Profile, 2019). Tourism makes up about 5.17 per cent of the Warrumbungle Shire economy and is the sixth highest industry that adds value. The industries that add the highest amount of value in the LGA are shown in Figure 7-9. Agriculture, forestry and fishing had the highest contribution at 24.71 per cent, followed by ownership of dwellings at 14.85 per cent and education and training at 10.16 per cent.

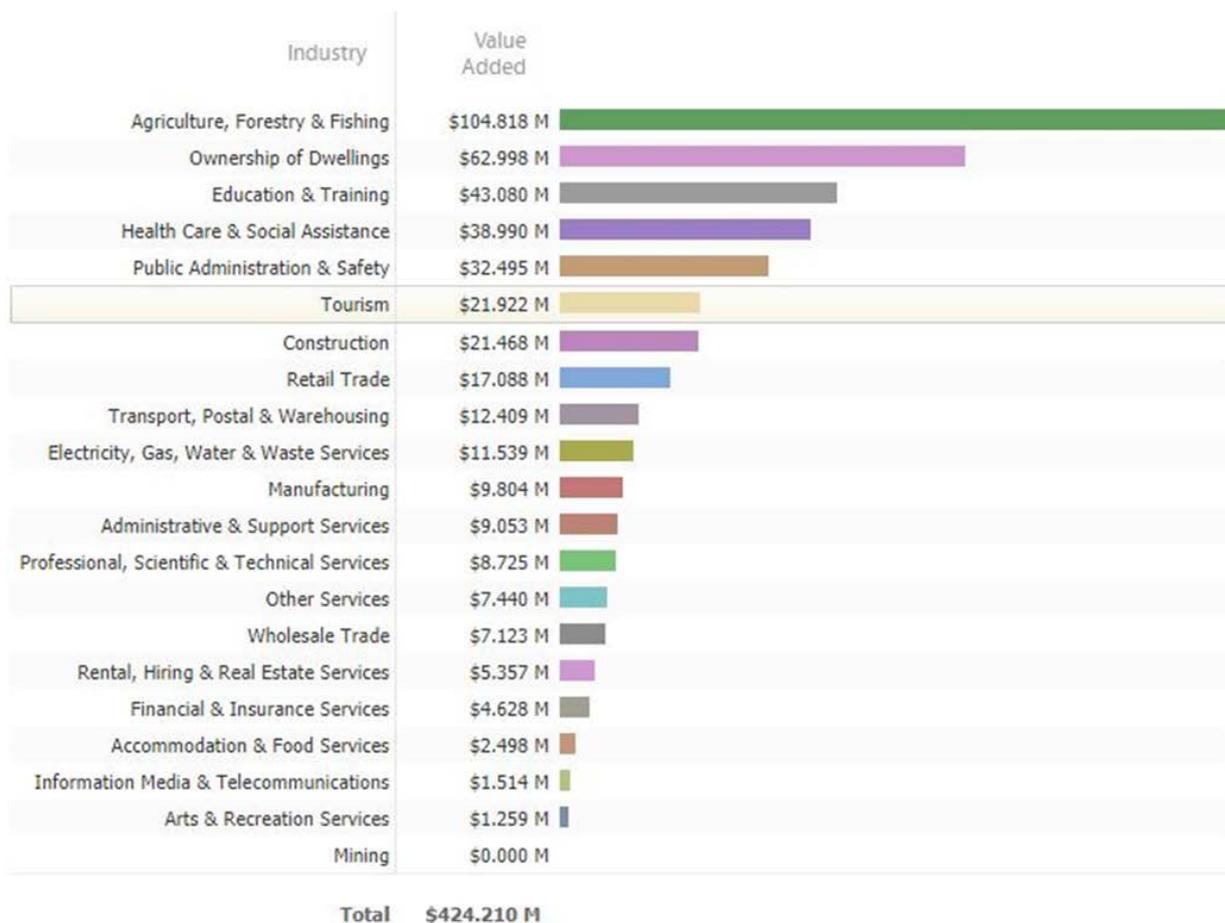


Figure 7-9 Tourism value add in the Warrumbungle Shire LGA (source: Economy Profile, 2017)

Tourism expenditure in the Warrumbungle Shire LGA is shown in Table 7-7. Domestic day visitors spend an average of \$99 when visiting Warrumbungle Shire LGA. The average stay of domestic overnight visitors is two nights, with an average spend of \$235 per trip and \$117 per night. International visitors average stay is 13 nights, with an average spend of \$560 per trip and \$43 per night. Table 7-8 demonstrates how visitors to the Warrumbungle Shire LGA spend their money (shown as expenditure per dollar). In 2017, visitors spent most on accommodation and food services, totalling 62.99 per cent of expenditure, followed by transport, postal and warehousing which accounted for 12.82 per cent of expenditure and ownership of dwellings at 7.58 per cent.

Table 7-7 Warrumbungle Shire LGA tourism expenditure

	Domestic day	Domestic overnight	International
Average stay	-	2 nights	13 nights
Average spend per trip	\$99	\$235	\$560
Average spend per night	-	\$117	\$43

Source: Economy Profile, 2017

Table 7-8 Visitor expenditure per dollar in the Warrumbungle Shire LGA

Industry	Visitor expenditure per dollar
Accommodation & Food Services	62.99%
Transport, Postal & Warehousing	12.82%
Ownership of Dwellings	7.58%
Manufacturing	6.05%
Retail Trade	5.67%
Arts & Recreation Services	1.62%
Education & Training	1.18%
Wholesale Trade	0.65%
Health Care & Social Assistance	0.50%
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services	0.35%
Other Services	0.34%
Information Media & Telecommunications	0.18%
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	0.09%

Source: Economy Profile, 2017

7.2.6 Key tourist activities and events

Siding Spring Observatory is located in Coonabarabran, around 25 kilometres west of the Coonabarabran town centre. The facility was opened in 1964 and is operated by the Australian National University (ANU) (Siding Spring Observatory, 2019). As a key place of tourism and activity in the Warrumbungle Shire LGA, the observatory is the largest optical observatory in Australia and is known for its research in astronomy, astrophysics and space science (ANU, 2018). Siding Springs Observatory has a variety of telescopes and space science facilities and includes tours, accommodation, a visitor shop and café and also hosts a range of events including the annual StarFest celebration and the Dark Sky Awakens Festival.

Leading to the observatory is also the world's largest Virtual Solar System Drive. The Virtual Solar System Drive features three dimensional billboards of planets along the five drives that lead the observatory (which has the final billboard, the sun) (VisitNSW, 2020). There are 24 planets located at visitor information centres and on roadsides between the observatory and the regional NSW towns of Dubbo, Tamworth, Gulgong, Moree and Merriwa (Warrumbungle Shire Council, n,d). The Newell Highway between Dubbo and Coonabarabran includes the planets of Neptune, Uranus and Saturn along the Virtual Solar System Drive.

Siding Spring Observatory also provides views of Warrumbungle National Park which is looked after by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and is popular for camping, bushwalking and bird watching (NPWS, 2018). It is also recognised as Australia's first Dark Sky Park, with optimal stargazing conditions due to its clear night skies, low humidity, high altitude and distance to the Siding Spring Observatory (NPWS, 2020). Figure 7-12 shows the observatory and the surrounding landscape. Figure 7-13 provides an overview map of the national park and its proximity to Siding Spring Observatory.

Coonabarabran hosts a variety of annual events which bring in a range of local and regional visitors. Key events in Coonabarabran include:

- StarFest – held on the October long weekend annually, the Siding Spring Observatory holds and runs astronomy themed events including:
- Siding Spring Observatory Day (including the Bok Lecture) – public tours lead by Australian National University staff, including local markets and telescope viewing
- Bok Lecture – featuring guest speakers
- Science in the Pub – features guest panellists.
- Coonabarabran Agricultural Show – held in March and gives the region a chance to showcase its many produce, agricultural and horticulture businesses
- Bunny Bazaar – held on Easter Saturday annually with John Street, Coonabarabran closed to traffic between 8am and 1pm
- Coonabarabran Cup Race Meeting – run by the Coonabarabran Jockey Club, usually at the end of October (26th and 27th October).
- Coonabarabran Townlife Markets – held on the fourth Sunday of every month.



Figure 7-10 Coonabarabran Visitor and Information Centre



Figure 7-11 Existing wayfinding signage on the Newell Highway travelling to Coonabarabran



Figure 7-12 Siding Spring Observatory (Source: ANU, 2018)

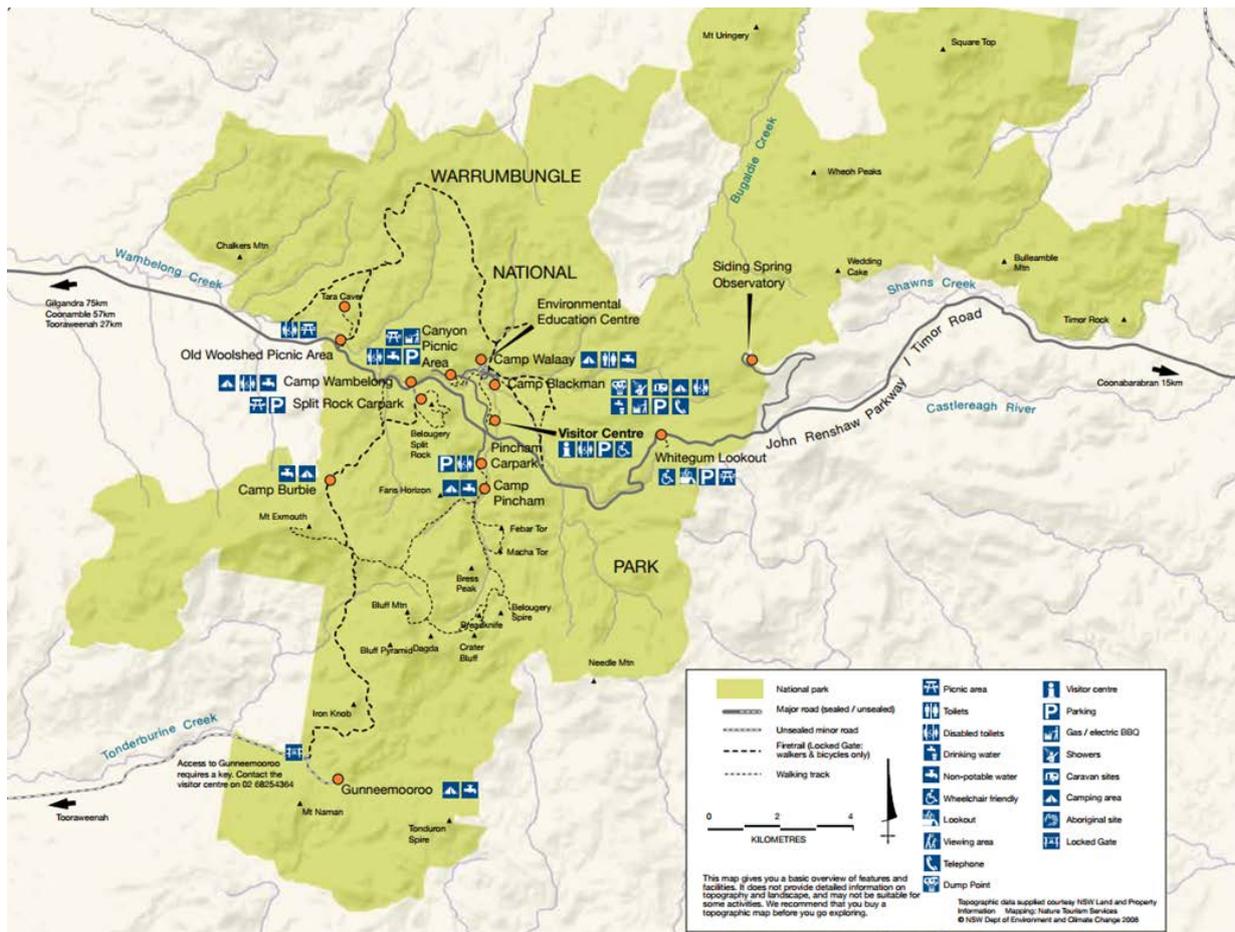


Figure 7-13 Warrumbungle National Park (Source: NPWS, 2018)

7.3 Land use

7.3.1 Land use and zoning

The proposal is mapped on the following land zones on the *Warrumbungle Local Environmental Plan 2013*:

- RU1 – Primary production
- R1 – General residential
- R5 – Large lot residential
- SP2 – Infrastructure.

Other land zones within the socio-economic study area for the proposal are shown in Figure 7-14 and include:

- RU1 – Primary production
- SP2 - Infrastructure
- RE1 – Public recreation
- R1 – General residential
- B6 – Enterprise corridor
- RE2 – Private recreation
- B2 – Local centre

- IN1 – General industrial
- R5 – Large lot residential
- E1 – National parks and nature reserves.

The proposal area is located within existing agricultural land used for livestock farming and crop fields. The majority of Coonabarabran town centre is surrounded by agricultural/production land use. The landscape is comprised of areas of dense and scattered vegetation, separated by farm fence lines and unmarked roads. Some of this land has been zoned for future residential lots however remains consistent with the existing surrounding land use. It is likely that these areas are planned for future development.

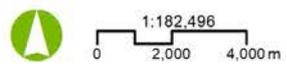
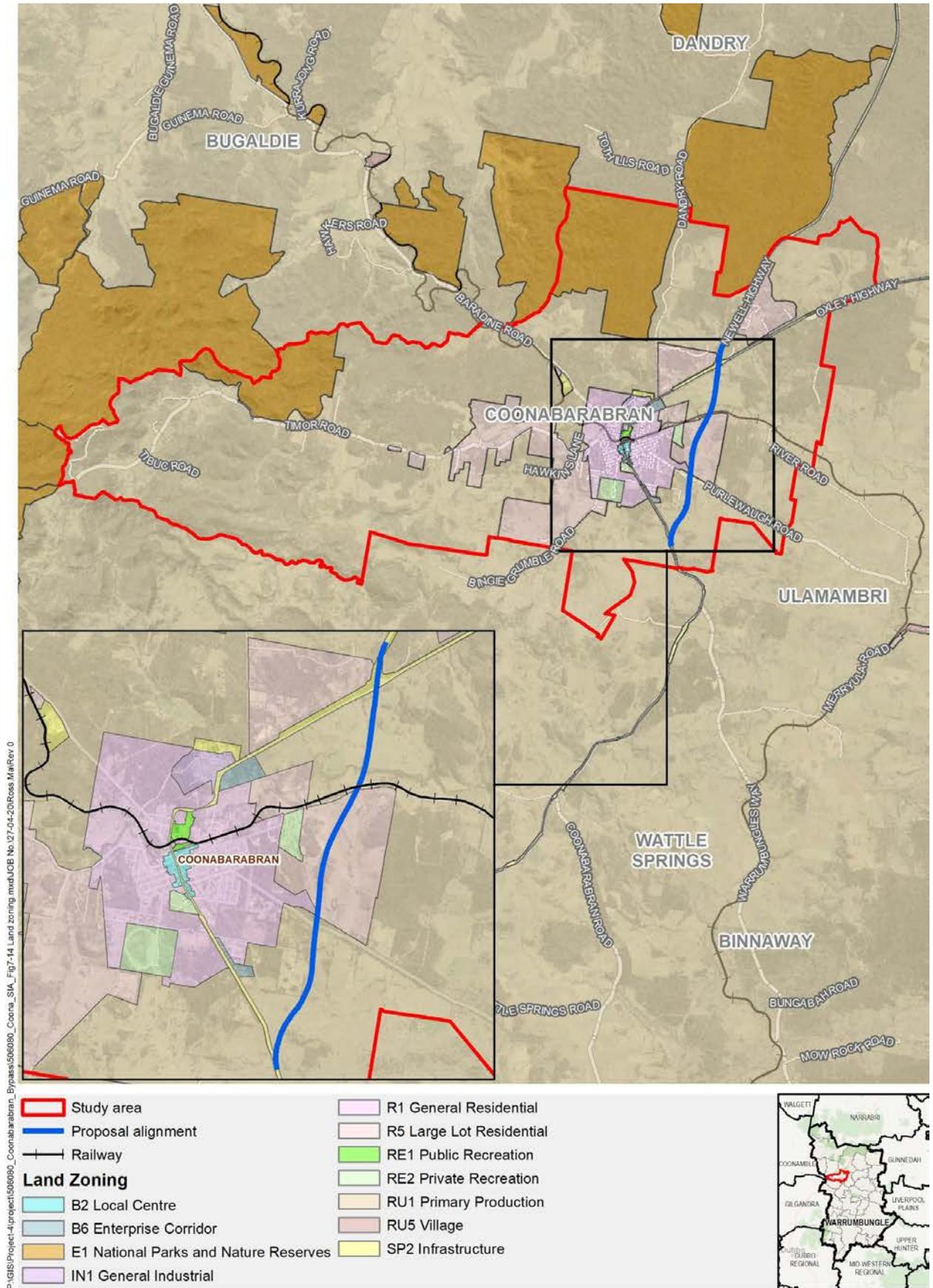
Many local facilities and residential dwellings are clustered within the town centre of Coonabarabran. The Newell Highway is located through the middle of the suburb and travels predominately in a north south direction, before turning eastward toward the Oxley Highway. Most town facilities and services are populated around the Highway between Dalgarno Street in the north and Edwards Street in the south. Section 7.3 discusses social infrastructure and town features in more detail.

There are three large parks within the study area located just outside of the main town centre with dense vegetated areas on the outskirts of the town. The Castlereagh River is located in the north of Coonabarabran, traveling in an east west direction under the highway.

7.3.2 Property

As mentioned previously, the study area is comprised mostly of agricultural properties, with open spaces, paddocks, areas of dense and scattered vegetation and some agricultural structures. Residential dwellings are located on these properties within the proposal footprint and surrounding the broader construction area.

Proposed acquisition and leasing requirements for the proposal are discussed further in Section 8.3.1. More details about the properties that would be required for the proposal is included in the REF.



Projection: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55

Newell Highway Upgrade Coonabarabran Bypass SIA

Figure 7-14 Land zoning

7.3.3 Major projects and development

The proposal forms part of a broader program of works referred to as the Newell Highway Upgrade. As discussed in Section 5.1.6, the program of works would seek to manage the future requirements of the Newell Highway. In addition, the proposal, the Newell Highway Upgrade would include:

- road upgrades to reduce future maintenance
- road pavement improvements
- intersection upgrades
- bypass infrastructure
- additional overtaking lanes.

The various projects that comprise the program of works would seek to improve connectivity, road transport efficiency and safety. Figure 7-15 from the Newell Highway Upgrade Strategy shows the location of the study area along the Newell Highway.

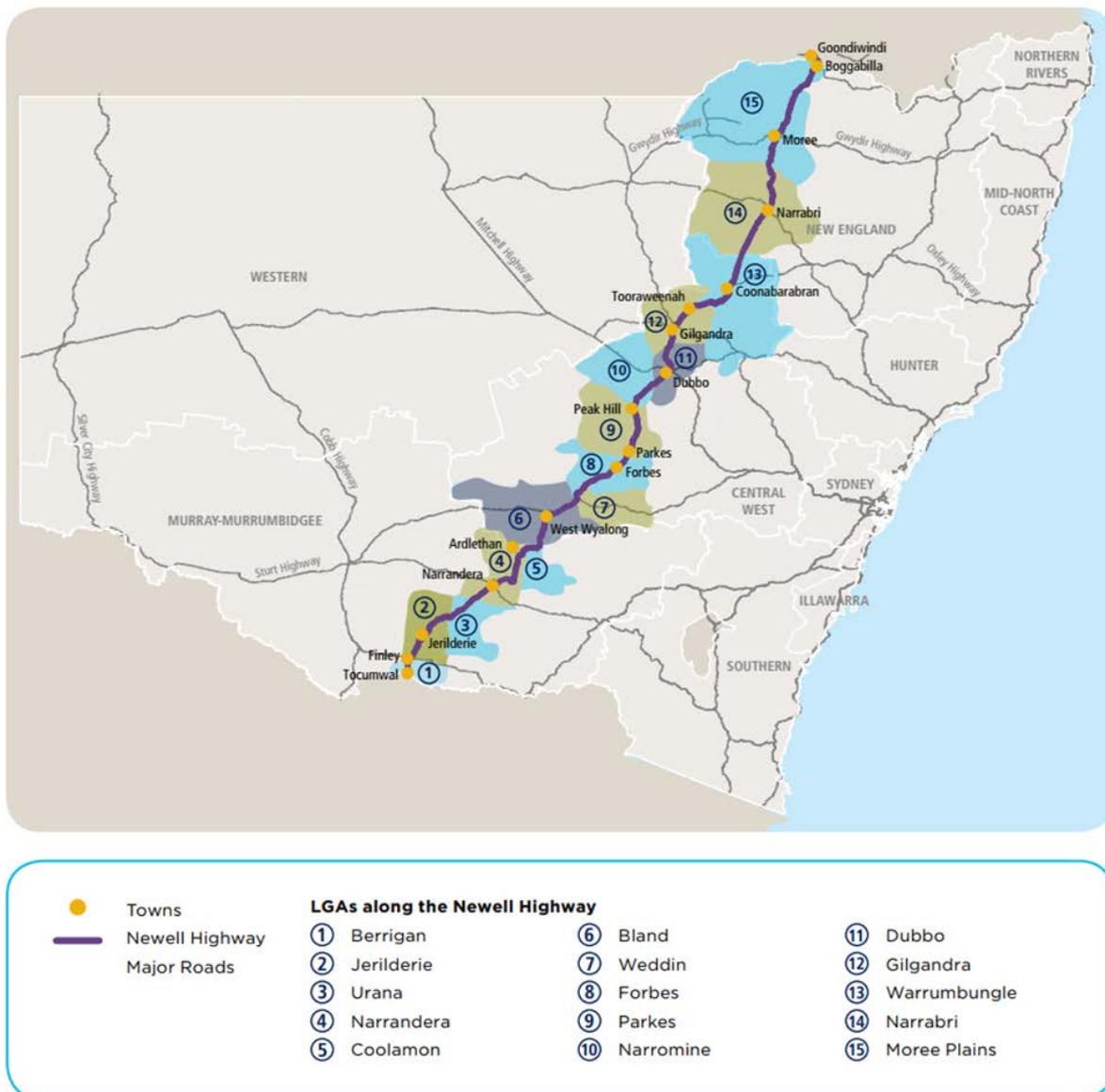


Figure 7-15 Locality map of the Newell Highway Corridor (Roads and Maritime Services, 2015)

7.4 Social infrastructure

Key social infrastructure existing within the study area is reflective of the regional context of the study area. As previously mentioned, Coonabarabran is the main town centre in the Warrumbungle Shire LGA. Within the suburb of Coonabarabran, social infrastructure includes:

- Educational facilities including Coonabarabran High School, Coonabarabran Public School, St Lawrence's Primary School and TAFE NSW Coonabarabran (Figure 7-17)
- Childcare centre facilities including Castlereagh Family Day Care Centre, Cooina Coonabarabran and Yuluwirri Kids Child Care Centre
- Parks and reserves including Neilson Park, David Bell Park and the Warrumbungle National Park
- Recreational facilities including Coonabarabran Golf Club, Coonabarabran Memorial Swimming Pool, Coonabarabran Showgrounds, Coonabarabran Bowling Club and some local sport ovals, playing fields and tennis/netball courts
- Places of worship including, Saint Lawrence's Catholic Church, Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church and Coonabarabran Uniting Church
- Emergency facilities including Coonabarabran Hospital, Fire and Rescue, the NSW Rural Fire Station and Coonabarabran Police Station
- Community facilities including Coonabarabran Public Library (Figure 7-16), Coonabarabran local court, Warrumbungle Shire Council, Coonabarabran Visitor Centre, Coonabarabran Community Centre, Warrumbungle Community Centre, Breakthru Coonabarabran and Coonabarabran General Cemetery.

An overview map of social infrastructure within and near the study area is shown in Figure 7-18.



Figure 7-16 Coonabarabran Public Library (facing south on the Newell Highway/Oxley Highway/John Street)



Figure 7-17 Coonabarabran TAFE

7.5 Access and connectivity

7.5.1 Travel patterns

Table 7-9 provides a summary of the vehicle ownership Table 7-10 provides a list of other transport methods used in the study area, Warrumbungle Shire LGA and NSW.

Table 7-9 Vehicle ownership in the study area, Warrumbungle Shire LGA and NSW

Indicator	Study area		Warrumbungle Shire LGA		NSW	
	No.	%	No.	No.	%	No.
Households with no vehicles	115	9.3%	229	6.5%	239,625	9.2%
Average motor vehicles per dwelling	1.7	-	1.9	-	1.7	-

Table 7-10 Travel to work data for the study area, Warrumbungle Shire LGA and NSW

Travel (one method only)	Study area		Warrumbungle Shire LGA		NSW	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Travel to work by car (as driver)	699	63.7%	1,849	55.4%	1,953,399	57.8%
Travel to work by train	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	252,786	7.5%
Travel to work by bus (one method)	11	1.0%	19	0.6%	133,903	4.0%
Travel to work by car (as passenger)	75	6.8%	131	3.9%	144,820	4.3%
Travel to work by walking	81	7.4%	290	8.7%	154,289	4.6%
Travel to work by cycling	4	0.4%	5	0.1%	23,332	0.7%
Travel to work by motorbike / scooter	9	0.8%	43	1.3%	21,159	0.6%
Travel to work by truck	37	3.4%	87	2.6%	32,908	1.0%

The following trends were identified from the review of ABS data:

- The study area and NSW had similar portions of the population with no vehicles. Warrumbungle Shire LGA had the lowest portion of dwellings with no vehicles. The high vehicle ownership may be reflective of the needs of the residents and the lack of public transport.
- The high average of cars per dwelling in all three areas can be linked to the mode of transport used to travel to work. The preferred method of travel to work in the study area, Warrumbungle Shire LGA and NSW was travel to work by car (as driver). The study area had the highest portion of residents overall.

- Travel to work by walking was the second highest mode of transport used by the study area and Warrumbungle Shire LGA. This may indicate the distance residents have to travel to work and/or the lack of public transport options available in the study area. Travel to work by train was the second most used method of travel to work in NSW. This is likely to be an indication of the access to train stations that residents in broader NSW have.

7.5.2 Roads

The Newell Highway is a state road that travels through the study area in a north south direction. As mentioned previously, it is a major freight route between Victoria and Queensland through regional NSW, passing through various regional towns. The Newell Highway is mostly a two-lane road throughout the study area (one lane in each direction) with additional lanes on each side located along the alignment for parking and overtaking. Parking is permitted on the Newell Highway through town and includes restricted 45-degree angle rear to kerb parking in the town centre and becomes unlimited parallel parking further north and south along the highway. The Newell Highway intersects with a range of local roads in Coonabarabran including Dalgarno Street, John Street, Little Timor Street, Cassilis Street, King Street, Edwards Street and Bandulla Street

There are no traffic lights in the town of Coonabarabran. The busiest intersection in Coonabarabran is the Dalgarno Street / Newell Highway roundabout which is known for its heritage listed War Memorial Clock Tower. The road network is comprised of large verges and vegetated medians, with some median parking permitted on surrounding local road network around the highway. Figure 7-19 to Figure 7-23 provide context on the local road network throughout Coonabarabran.



Figure 7-19 Newell Highway (John Street) in Coonabarabran town centre (facing south)



Figure 7-20 Parking signage and heavy vehicles on the Newell Highway (John Street) (facing north)



Figure 7-21 Cassilis Street in Coonabarabran town centre (facing west)



Figure 7-22 Northern entry into Coonabarabran on the Newell Highway (facing south)



Figure 7-23 Local use of the Newell Highway northern Coonabarabran (facing north)

7.5.3 Public transport

Coonabarabran's primary mode of public transport is travel by bus or coach. Coonabarabran Railway Station is disused, with the existing railway line traversing across the north east of the study area. There are coach routes (i.e. the NSW TrainLink) that service the Coonabarabran town centre and surrounds.

There is no local public transport within the town (Warrumbungle Shire Council 2016). There are 10 coach routes that pass through or depart from Coonabarabran town centre and use the Newell Highway. The coach routes are summarised in Table 7-11.

Table 7-11 Coach routes within the study area

Bus number	Route name
545, 549, 547, 539	Lithgow to Coonabarabran
573	Lithgow to Baradine
574	Baradine to Lithgow
540, 546	Coonabarabran to Lithgow
362	Tamworth to Dubbo
361	Dubbo to Tamworth

The schools within the study area are serviced by school buses that drop-off and pick-up students to and from the three schools within the Coonabarabran town centre (Coonabarabran Public School, Coonabarabran High School and Saint Lawrence's Catholic Primary School). There are no specific designated bus routes for the study area (Warrumbungle Shire Council 2016).

7.5.4 Freight

The Newell Highway forms part of the National Land Transport Network and is the third most significant heavy vehicle route in NSW in terms of freight mass and number of vehicles. The *NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy Framework* (TfNSW, 2018) identified the Newell Highway to be upgraded for end to end access for 36.5 metre vehicles HPVs (PBS3a). In November 2019, the existing highway through Coonabarabran was opened to higher productivity vehicles up to 36.5 metres long.

A range of vehicles travel through the study area on the Newell Highway. As there are a range of machinery and equipment suppliers, agricultural businesses, hardware and mechanical services within the study area, it is likely that heavy vehicles also travel throughout the local road network of the study area. In particular, industrial businesses are located in Coonabarabran industrial estate in the north of Coonabarabran and along the Newell Highway and immediate surrounding streets.

There are two key heavy vehicle routes that pass through Coonabarabran, being the north-south passage along the Newell Highway and the east-west passage along the Purlewaugh Road to Baradine Road. The existing approved heavy vehicle movements within the study include:

- Newell Highway, Oxley Highway and Purlewaugh Road are approved for use by 25/26 metre B-double heavy vehicles that are up to 4.6-metres high. They are also an approved Higher Mass Limit (HML) short combination routes
- Dalgarno Street / River Road are not approved for B-Double use.

The following types of road trains are approved along the Newell Highway only, with some road train routes having travel restrictions imposed for all or part of the highway:

- Type 1 A-double: approved route for Newell Highway before the Newell/Oxley Highway intersection, and approved with travel conditions thereafter
- Modular B-triple: approved route with travel conditions
- B-triple: approved
- AB-triple: approved.

The *NSW Roads and Maritime Services Traffic Volume Viewer* provides information on the existing volume of heavy vehicles traffic passing through the study area (Roads and Maritime Services, 2019a). Data from three counting stations on the Newell Highway were analysed as indicators of the traffic travelling through the study area. The daily average traffic count from 2017 to 2019 for all three stations are provided in Table 7-12.

Table 7-12 Heavy vehicle traffic counts on the Newell Highway near the study area

Station location and ID	Traffic count	2017	2018	2019
Newell Highway 800 metres north of Oxley Highway (Station ID: T0498)	Total daily average	1,681	1,633	1,611
	Heavy vehicle percentage	42.12%	42.93%	42.89%
Newell Highway 1.18 kilometres north of Warrumbungles Way, Tannabar (Station ID: T0245).	Total daily average	2,868	2,804	2,780
	Heavy vehicle percentage	32.98%	34.34%	34.21%
Newell Highway 1.15 kilometres north of Warrumbungles Way, Tannabar (Station ID: CBBSTC)	Total daily average	2,865	2,797	2,778
	Heavy vehicle percentage	32.95%	33.57%	34.13%

Source: Traffic Volume Viewer, Roads and Maritime Services (2019)

Heavy vehicles travelling between the north and south of the study area have fluctuated between 32.95 per cent and 42.89 in the last three years. There is a higher presence of heavy vehicles north of the study area. The Coonabarabran Industrial Estate is north of Coonabarabran, therefore it is likely that the slightly higher numbers of vehicles may be travelling to and from facilities within the estate.

7.5.5 Walking and cycling

The study area has a discontinuous footpath network throughout the town. There are footpaths in the town centre along the Newell Highway and some of the intersecting roads, however, the footpaths become less frequent travelling out of the centre towards the residential outskirts.

As discussed in Section 5.2.4, there are currently no on-road bicycle facilities and there are several crossing issues (i.e. the presence of kerb ramps) in the study area. A cycle network, consisting of bicycle parking, on-road bike paths and shared use paths have been proposed in the Warrumbungle Shire Council Bike Plan to provide safe and connected cycleway infrastructure in the study area. Additionally, as discussed in the PAMP in Section 5.2.3, investigations into updating some areas of

Coonabarabran's pedestrian network have been undertaken to look for opportunities to invest in mobility and accessibility improvements.

The *Roads and Maritime Services Cycleway Finder* is a database that identifies cycleway infrastructure throughout NSW (Roads and Maritime Services, 2019). The cycleway finder also indicates the difficulty level based on criteria such as if there is a dedicated, separate path from live traffic, on-road cycling, steep gradient, and type of road (e.g. highway). The study area has a small section of Newell Highway around the Coonabarabran town centre that has off-road, shared path lanes (i.e. used by both cyclists and pedestrians) and on-road lanes with moderate difficulty (i.e. cyclists who are more confident riding with traffic) (Figure 7-24). There is no data for the remaining sections of Newell Highway and surrounding road network. Shared path use (all paths) extends from Crane Street, running parallel to Newell highway, and ends at Robertson Street. Two other small sections of shared pathway run through the Coonabarabran High School, and the other running parallel to the Newell highway in the south of the study area. There is an on-road cycleway that uses the asphalt road shoulder. It extends along the Newell Highway from Edwards Street to after Merebene Street.

Walking trails are provided in Warrumbungle National Park, being around 11 kilometres east of the town centre. These are used by both visitors and residents. More information about the National Park is in Section 7.2.5.

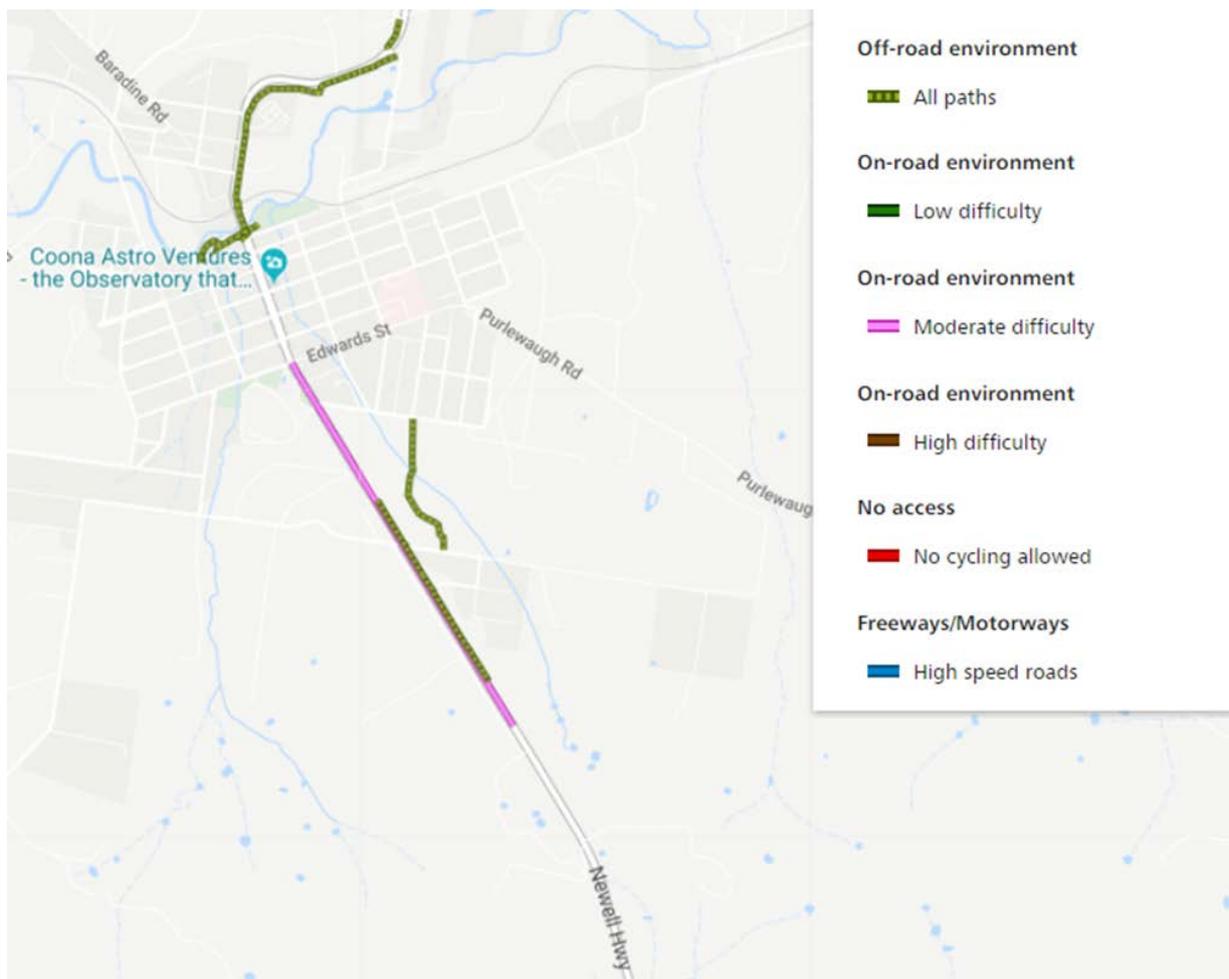


Figure 7-24 Cycling network within the study area (source: Roads and Maritime Services Cycleway Finder (2020))

8 Impact assessment

8.1 Methodology for assessing impacts

The impact assessment implements the following methodology as per the *Environmental Impact Assessment Practice Note – Socio-economic assessment (EIA-N05)* (TfNSW, 2020). This includes:

- Identification and analysis of likely changes to existing socioeconomic conditions of the proposal area during construction and operation.
- Determination of the significance of likely impacts, based on the sensitivity and magnitude of the impacts.
 - Sensitivity refers to the qualities of the receptor which influence its vulnerability to change and capacity to adapt.
 - Magnitude refers to the scale, duration, intensity and scope of the proposal including how it will be constructed and operated.

This assessment applies the impact grading matrix presented in the *Environmental Impact Assessment Practice Note – Socio-economic assessment (EIA-N05)* to assess the level of significance for potential negative impacts only (Table 8-1).

Table 8-1 grading matrix to assess the level of significance

Sensitivity	Magnitude				
		High	Moderate	Low	Negligible
High	High	High-moderate	Moderate	Negligible	
Moderate	High-moderate	Moderate	Moderate-low	Negligible	
Low	Moderate	Moderate-low	Low	Negligible	
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Sensitivity ranges from negligible to high. If impacts to sensitivity are considered negligible, this means that no vulnerability is expected and/or receptors are likely to be able to absorb or adapt to change. High sensitivity is when there is the potential for multiple vulnerabilities to occur and/or receptors would have very little capacity to absorb or adapt to change.

The levels of magnitude also range from negligible to high. Negligible can be classified as having no distinct positive or negative changes caused by the impact (i.e. is similar to what is currently experienced at the baseline). High magnitude is considered to be a change that dominates over existing baseline conditions. The change is widespread or persists over many years or is effectively permanent

8.2 Construction impacts

8.2.1 Demography, population and employment

During construction, the proposal could result in an increased population from the construction workers required to undertake the works for the proposal. This would include up to 260 construction workers anticipated to be on-site at peak construction. Some construction workers would be expected to temporarily reside in

Coonabarabran during this period. The increased population from the construction workforce would also result in increased demand of services and facilities. This change is expected to be noticeable to residents in Coonabarabran, being such a small and close-knit community. The presence of the construction workforce may impact the quiet, rural area of Coonabarabran.

The proposal would also provide short-term employment opportunities for people within and surrounding Coonabarabran. This may benefit local people through employment opportunities and increased business at local shops and services from construction workers. In addition, some of the construction workforce would require accommodation services or rent properties nearby during the construction phase of the proposal. This is expected to have a positive, short-term impact on these businesses. It is likely that some construction workers may also travel from nearby towns and cities such as Narrabri or Dubbo.

As discussed in Section 7, Coonabarabran is experienced in hosting large events such as Star Fest, the weeklong festival run by the Siding Springs Observatory and the Dark Sky Awakens Festival. Over 60 per cent of tourist expenditure in the Warrumbungle Shire LGA is spent on accommodation and food services. It is expected that the town has the facilities required to accommodate the additional temporary construction workers, however, during busier periods, this may impact tourists' ability to stay in certain accommodation facilities if vacancies are limited. Effective planning and management, such as, using a mix of accommodation facilities, would reduce the pressure on facilities during construction. More information about mitigation is provided in Section 9.2.

Significance of demography, population and employment impacts: The sensitivity of the town and businesses to accommodate the additional population is low. The magnitude of the change, being temporary, is low. This results in the significance of the impact being low.

8.2.2 Property acquisition and adjustments

The majority of the properties that are located in the proposal area are comprised of a number of individual lots. In this section, properties are assessed by lot and DP based on the composition of land through and surrounding the proposal area.

The proposal would require partial and full acquisitions and adjustments to some land parcels. This would be required for the new road, ancillary facilities and the construction footprint. Figure 8-1 provides a summary of the acquisition and adjustments likely to be required for the proposal. The anticipated area of lease requirements is around 51 hectares. The anticipated full and partial acquisitions required for the proposal is around 27 hectares. These areas are approximate only and may change during the design refinement phase of the proposal.

Some land would be permanently acquired from the Government and private owners to build the proposal. Of the land to be acquired, four buildings would be demolished for the construction of the bypass. These buildings are residential dwellings and associated structures directly within or right next to the proposal area. In addition, partial acquisitions close to buildings and other rural structures would also occur, however most of these buildings and structures would remain.

Leases and/or access agreements would be required for construction. This may result in some disturbance to movements within properties as well as access to properties from the road network. In addition, TfNSW may need to access properties for investigation works or bore access. TfNSW would consult with landowners to

establish the necessary agreements and arrangements for access. Access is discussed further in Section 8.2.4. The final acquisition of land would be confirmed during the detail design. Leased land would be rehabilitated (as agreed to by the owner) and returned to the property owner at the completion of construction. TfNSW has undertaken consultation with landowners and occupiers through the development of the design to mitigate concerns and potential impacts of the proposal.

Impacts of property acquisition can include stress, anxiety and loss of social networks. These impacts occur when residents are required to relocate, with some property owners and tenants being more vulnerable to the impacts of moving than others. This includes people with the need for assistance, older people and those with lower levels of economic resources. Feedback from consultation indicates that many property owners in the properties to be permanently acquired have resided in homes for long periods of time, some their whole life. These property owners are likely to experience feelings of loss and separation to place and the surrounding environment.

Significance of property acquisition and adjustment impacts: Based on the characteristics of property owners and occupiers, sensitivity of these stakeholders is high. The magnitude of both the temporary and permanent changes during construction would be high, resulting in the significance of the impact being high.

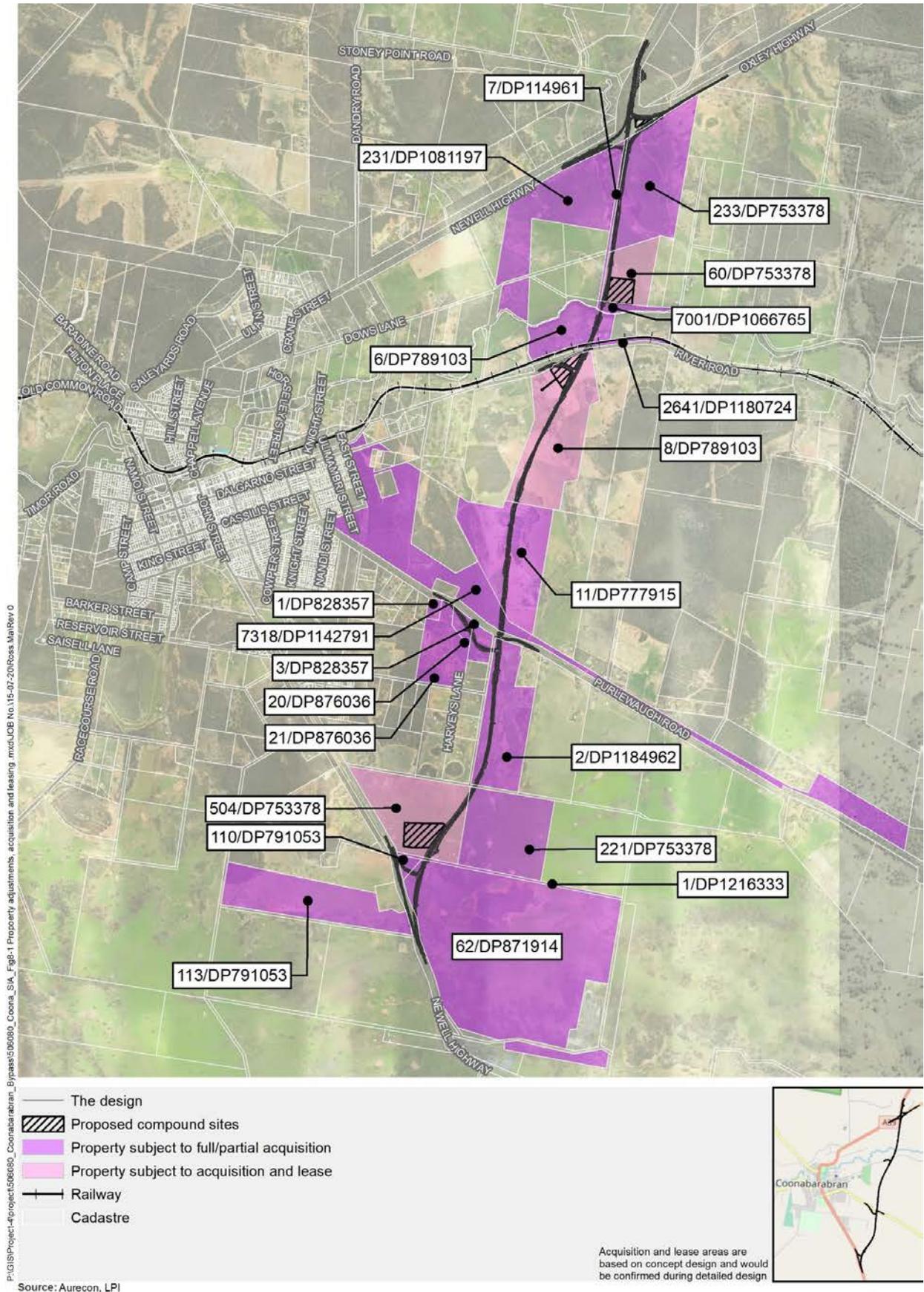


Figure 8-1 Properties that would be directly impacted by the proposal

8.2.3 Land use changes

The proposal would require some temporary land use changes during construction. The construction footprint and ancillary facilities would occupy open space and agricultural land. This would result in a change in land use from agricultural and rural residential land use to infrastructure land use. Changes in the land use during construction would substantially impact properties that are severed by the proposal by partial acquisitions, as it may restrict some current land uses such as agricultural operations and productivity.

Areas surrounding the proposal, including roadside areas and ancillary facilities would be temporary only, restored to their previous use and in some instances where determined with the property owner rehabilitated/revegetated.

Significance of land use impacts: The sensitivity of land occupiers, owners and the broader study area to changes in land use is high. The magnitude of the changes would also be high resulting in the significance of the impact being high.

8.2.4 Access and connectivity

Road network and property access

The proposal would result in some temporary changes to access and connectivity within and surrounding the study area. Construction may require some road closures and temporary access tracks for the development of intersection arrangements. This may lead to the implementation of alternative property access locations and travel routes for road users.

Property access that would be impacted during construction would be as follows:

- Property street accesses on the Oxley Highway, River Road and Purlewaugh Road
- Inter-property agricultural access where the proposal passes through a property
- Local street access - Honey Pot Road Newell Highway access and temporary changes to access arrangements when the northern intersection and tie-in works are undertaken.

Construction traffic would also temporarily increase traffic on roads, most noticeably on River Road and Purlewaugh Road, and may result in localised areas of traffic delays from temporary traffic controls. Changes to access and connectivity are expected to impact most road users, particularly land occupiers. Where access to private property would be impacted, TfNSW would consult with land occupiers to determine alternative temporary and permanent access points to the local road network.

Majority of the construction works would be done without interacting the surrounding road network. Impacts to the road network would be at the intersection locations where the intersections are tied into the existing roads at Newell Highway, Oxley Highway, HoneyPot Road, River Road and Purlewaugh Road. During periods where road construction is required at these roads, traffic planning and management would be required.

In addition, construction traffic would impact on the road network, particularly around entry to ancillary facilities. Increase in vehicles would be expected through town where construction vehicles and delivery trucks access the construction site and

ancillary facilities. An average of 90 personal (light) vehicles with a maximum of 260 vehicles (including heavy vehicles) are expected during the construction phase of the proposal. During peak hour of vehicle arrivals and departures may result in some localised increased queuing at the Newell Highway / Dalgarno Street and Edwards Street intersection.

Freight and business movements

The Newell Highway is an important inter-state freight route and keeping traffic operating along the Newell Highway would be critical. Local farms and movement of cattle are also important to the surrounding local farms. TfNSW would be required to consider freight and agricultural industries during different times of the year where access to surrounding areas would be crucial to business operations. Freight would continue to be able to use the Newell Highway during construction (i.e. for freight carriers travelling to major centres along the highway). Temporary access tracks would be designed to similar conditions of existing roads to allow for use by similar vehicles. Mitigation measures relating to freight and business movements are provided in Section 9.

School routes

Local school bus routes may experience slight disruptions due to construction traffic. This would occur mostly in areas surrounding the proposal area. As these buses service the regional population of Coonabarabran, including school children that live outside the Coonabarabran town centre, consultation with school bus providers would be required prior to the commencement of construction to maintain pick-up and drop-off schedules and plan for any delays.

Emergency services

Coonabarabran Hospital is located about 1.25 kilometres west of the proposal area. Located on Edwards Street, it is likely that emergency vehicles use the Newell Highway / Edwards Street intersection to access the hospital and may also use Purlewaugh Road. Prior to construction works, consultation with the hospital would be undertaken to make sure that emergency access is maintained.

Active transport

Consideration of local walking and cycling networks must also be considered during construction. As discussed in the Traffic and Transport Assessment, the use of the Newell Highway, Oxley Highway, River Road and Purlewaugh Road by cyclists riding in an on-road environment may be disrupted during construction, where works are required on these roads. There are no off-road pedestrian dedicated paths along the roads in the proposal area, therefore pedestrian movements are not expected to be impacted along these roads.

Significance of access and connectivity impacts: The sensitivity of road users (both local and regional) to changes in access and connectivity is moderate. The magnitude of the temporary changes during construction would be moderate, resulting in the significance of the impact being moderate.

8.2.5 Social infrastructure

Most of the social infrastructure is located within the town centre, with the closest facility to the proposal area being the Coonabarabran Golf Club, around 300 metres west. The Golf Club is used for golfing activities, private functions and events. It is likely that the proposal would be visible from the course.

The proposal is not expected to substantially impact patronage to the Golf Club as it is a destination type facility where individuals would travel to, to visit outside the centre of town. Due to the surrounding topography and vegetation coverage, there would be minimal views to the construction site and amenity of the golf club would not be noticeably affected, however the *Newell Highway Upgrade Coonabarabran, Noise Impact Assessment* anticipates some low-level construction noise impacts (TfNSW, 2020). Some visual impacts would be screened from the golf course by vegetation that borders the course on the eastern side.

The Coonabarabran General Cemetery is also located on the western side of the golf club, around 800 metres from the proposal boundary. The cemetery is separated from the proposal by vegetation and the Coonabarabran Golf Club. Impacts to the cemetery are expected to be limited to noise impacts. It is of note that these impacts would be limited to part of the construction period.

The *Newell Highway Upgrade Coonabarabran, Noise Impact Assessment* (TfNSW, 2020) also assessed commercial/industrial and 'other sensitive' receivers, identifying that there would also be receivers within 1.1 kilometres of the proposal area. The closest non-residential receivers include the Coinda Aged Care Centre, Wagon Wheel Motel, Matthew Flinders Motor Inn, El Passy Motel, Coachman Rest Motor Lodge and Yuluwirri Kids Child Care. Based on the assessment of non-residential receivers, exceedances were predicted at for the Coinda Aged Care Centre. The assessment indicated that minor worst-case impacts are predicted at the Coinda Aged Care Centre during the daytime period when noise intensive equipment is in use. There are also predicted moderate and minor worst-case impacts at the aged care centre during the night-time period when noise intensive equipment is in use.

Impacts to other social infrastructure within the town centre are not anticipated.

Significance of social infrastructure impacts: The overall sensitivity of the non-residential receivers/social infrastructure to visual and noise impacts is moderate. The magnitude of impacts is low resulting in a moderate-low level of significance.

8.2.6 Businesses and commercial operations

The proposal is expected to generate jobs for businesses involved in earthworks, roadworks, bridge construction and material supply. In addition, the proposal is also expected to have a positive impact on the town's economy through construction worker expenditure and potential increased temporary demand in private room and house rentals to accommodate part of the construction workforce. The proposal would also provide the opportunity to source local materials and resources for construction of the new road and associated features where possible (discussed further in the REF).

Businesses closer to the outskirts of town may experience some visual and noise impacts during construction. Many motels and accommodation facilities are located north and south of the town centre, where construction movements and activities would be more visible. In particular, occupancy at accommodation facilities closest to the southern intersection may be impacted by the proposal during construction. This

includes Wagon Wheel Motel, Matthew Flinders Motor Inn, El Passy Motel and Coachman Rest Motor Lodge. Audible noise during construction during the day and night for overnight guests at accommodation facilities may impact business operations. Consultation with these business owners regarding construction timeframes and potential impacts would be undertaken prior to construction.

Agribusiness and farming

Construction vehicles and movements may also impede local and regional freight and operations on the road network if not managed effectively. Traffic controls and management would reduce impacts to the efficiency of the road network and reduce impacts to operations surrounding the proposal area. As mentioned previously, agricultural businesses within and surrounding study area would also need to be considered during construction. As majority of the agricultural businesses in Coonabarabran are livestock/grazing farmers, the movement of livestock and use of surrounding paddocks for livestock would need to be managed to reduce impacts to agribusiness.

The loss of productive/farmable land available during construction may impact some businesses. This could include internal property access to buildings, paddocks, dams and sheds on some properties. The construction of the proposal may also have additional impacts to businesses operating costs. Concerns may be experienced by some owners of agricultural land in regard to potential impacts on the movement of cattle and farm machinery between paddocks. The construction of the proposal through some properties, including the two Travelling Stock Routes (TSRs) may also impact movements of cattle. Property owners would need to be continuously communicated with during construction to avoid potential impacts to their operations

Significance of business and commercial operations impacts: The sensitivity of businesses during construction is high. The magnitude is moderate, resulting in the significance of the impact being high-moderate.

8.2.7 Amenity and community values

Amenity often refers to the quality of life, character and elements in a community that make it a more pleasant and comfortable place to be a part of. Impacts of a proposal such as traffic, perceived air quality impacts, noise and visual impacts can affect the amenity of an area.

During construction there would likely be a reduction of amenity in the proposal area. Receivers in the vicinity of the proposal would experience the most impacts to amenity. As discussed in Section 7.3.1, the areas surrounding the proposal is mostly agricultural land. There are about 32 sensitive receivers within 600 metres of the proposal area. The majority of sensitive receivers were residential receivers, located on properties surrounding the proposal area. The highest impacts would be during construction activities that use noise intensive equipment such as rock breakers, concrete saws, chainsaws, or mobile batch plants. Noise intensive works would occur during the day near sensitive receivers for earthworks and pavement works, and out of hours works for some activities during pre-construction clearing, utility, drainage and pavement works.

The worst-case night-time impacts are predicted to be 'high' at the nearest receivers within 175 metres of the proposal area during noise intensive works. Up to 13 receivers are predicted to be above the night-time noise management level by greater than 25dB. During works outside standard construction hours, this could result in

some potential sleep disturbance or discomfort for some receivers. Where possible, high noise intensive activities would not be undertaken out of standard work hours. Even during standard day time construction hours, most construction activities would have lower noise levels than the worst-case levels predicted.

However, in rural areas, affected distances for receivers during construction spread further than urban areas, due to the quieter context of the environment. Background noise levels are often lower due to less local traffic and intrusive noise sources. Due to these features, construction noise would spread over a wider distance. The *Newell Highway Upgrade Coonabarabran, Noise Impact Assessment* predicted that while noise impacts are expected to be negligible to low for most of the town centre, estimates indicate that day and out of hours works construction noise would range from noticeable to moderately intrusive. Noise and vibration mitigation would be undertaken to reduce the potential noise and vibration impacts of construction and the noisiest works would only be required for relatively short periods.

As mentioned in the Warrumbungle Shire CSP, the community values the natural environment. As stated in TfNSW's *Environmental Impact Assessment Practice Note – Socio-economic Assessment (EIA-N05)* community values are those elements held as being important to quality of life and wellbeing. This includes physical elements such as parks and landscapes, and social elements, such as belonging and diversity. Concerns about air quality in response to dust generated during construction and idling engines is also likely to contribute to the reduction in amenity.

The proposal would require some vegetation removal for the development of the new road. This would occur in the following areas:

- along the existing Newell Highway corridor at the northern and southern intersections
- at the proposed intersection with Coonabarabran Road and along Purllewaugh Road
- within some properties, including the densely vegetated areas of 11/DP777915 and 8/DP789103 where the new road would be located
- vegetation along River Road that intersects with the new road
- riparian vegetation along the Castlereagh River to allow for the bridge and the new road.

The removal of vegetation and construction works would result in visual impacts to surrounding receivers. As stated in the *Newell Highway Upgrade, Coonabarabran, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Report* (SCAPE, 2020), the highest impact would be experienced by dwellings in close proximity to the proposal, with the scenic outlook from a number of other surrounding properties also being moderately impacted. More substantial changes to the proposal area including the construction of the northern intersection configuration and large ancillary facilities visible from the road at the southern intersection would also visually impact surrounding and passing receivers using the Newell Highway. However, these impacts would be temporary and short term as the travellers pass the construction site at the southern or northern intersection areas.

During periods that require nightworks, lighting would be focused on the construction areas to avoid light spill and disturbance to surrounding properties and road users and in consideration of the Dark Sky Park as to not impact stargazing and astronomy research at the Siding Spring Observatory.

Significance of community and amenity impacts: The sensitivity of the community to changes in amenity and values is high. The magnitude of the impacts during construction is moderate, resulting in the level of significance being high.

8.3 Operational impacts

8.3.1 Property acquisition and adjustment

As discussed in section 8.2.2, permanent property acquisition would occur as a result of the proposal. This may require some residents to either move their residence on their property or permanently relocate away from the proposal area. This would be a substantial impact to those residents, particularly those who have resided in these dwellings for long periods of time.

The proposal would also pass through the centre of some properties, with a partial strip of acquisition required. This would divide some properties but may also separate them from other neighbouring properties and spaces they frequent such as vegetated areas and walking tracks. This may result in feelings of severance (discussed previously in Section 8.2.6). Property severance occurs when physical barriers such as road infrastructure separates a community, resulting in reduced access and the disruption of local social networks. Larger agricultural properties are vulnerable to severance based on their vast size and open surroundings. This can lead to feelings of isolation, separation and less community cohesion.

Changes to property access would occur during the operational phase of the proposal. This includes local private property access from River Road, Purlewaugh Road and Oxley Highway where the new tie-in crosses the existing access pathway. There would also be local private property access changes on the bypass near the southern intersection. Property accesses would be relocated by TfNSW in consultation with the property owners.

There are two TSRs that would be impacted by the proposal. Property acquisition includes a 1.2 hectares section of the TSR north of Purlewaugh Road. A stock underpass would be implemented under the Newell Highway to enable passage along the TSR. The alteration to the TSR would mean that livestock travelling through the proposal area would need to be redirected. Additional movements around the bypass may impact the efficiency of movements for livestock herding. The establishment of a culvert under the bypass and signage on the bypass and intersecting roads would mitigate potential safety impacts. The inclusion of these features is being investigated and would be refined during the detail design, in consultation with Local Land Services during detailed design to minimise impacts.

Significance of property impacts: Sensitivity of receivers to permanent changes to property is moderate. The magnitude of these changes is low, resulting in the level of significance being moderate-low.

8.3.2 Land use changes

The proposal would change a portion of land currently used for agricultural and rural purposes. During the operation of the proposal, this land would form a new section of the Newell Highway. This would have an impact on land use, based on the existing use of the land, as discussed in Section 8.3.2. Land use surrounding the highway would not be altered, such as agricultural areas and private properties. Temporary

ancillary facilities would be restored to their former use or as per the arrangements made with landowners during consultation.

As discussed in Section 5.2.2, Warrumbungle Shire Council is focused on managing land use conflicts and impacts on primary producers and agricultural land (Warrumbungle Shire Council, 2019). Separation buffers, residential dwellings and development can have an impact on agricultural and rural properties. For properties subject to partial acquisition for the proposal, this may result in a change to the lot size that may be lower than the Warrumbungle Local Environmental Plan 2013 minimum lot size requirements. This could affect the ability for any future change in land use or development. As stated in the Warrumbungle LEP (*Part 4 and the Minimum Lot Size— Dwelling House and Dual Occupancy Map*), the size of any lot resulting from a subdivision of land is not to be less than the minimum size shown on the Lot Size Map in relation to that land. The minimum lot sizes featured in the proposal area include lots of two hectare and 500-hectare land. Potential impacts to minimum lot size requirements of properties partially acquired for the proposal are expected to be for a small number of properties that are subject to partial acquisition.

Significance of land use impacts: The sensitivity of land occupiers and owners to permanent changes in land use is moderate. The magnitude of these changes is moderate, resulting in the level of significance being moderate.

8.3.3 Access and connectivity

Overall the proposal would improve connectivity for local and regional travel. The proposal would result in improved freight efficiency and travel times for travellers.

The proposed bypass would also reduce the presence of long haul Newell Highway trucks within the Coonabarabran town centre, in particular B-Doubles and B-Triples. In addition, Edwards Street / Purlewaugh Road between the town and the bypass would no longer be designated a B-Double route. B-Doubles travelling to Quirindi / Newcastle would need to travel north to the Newell Highway / Oxley Highway intersection, then access the bypass and Purlewaugh Road. However, some smaller heavy vehicles would still travel through the town to access the Newell Highway or Purlewaugh Road.

The reduction in traffic would result in improved safety for parking on John Street and active transport users. It would also result in more road space available for local and regional traffic. This is expected to benefit residents and visitors of Coonabarabran, relieving potential driver stress or safety concerns. Access through the local road network to local schools, parks and facilities would be improved.

In addition, the proposal is also expected to result in new active transport opportunities for walking and cycling in Coonabarabran due to the removal of trucks from the town centre. Feedback during the shopper and business surveys included the positive impact the proposal would have on active transport in the town centre to access facilities and businesses.

Access along Purlewaugh Road and River Road would be maintained once the bypass is opened. Both roads would be altered to ensure that the intersection with the bypass meets road user requirements. Property access for properties along the bypass would also be maintained and would be via the existing Newell Highway, Purlewaugh Road, River Road and Oxley Highway. However, one property (Lot 504 DP 753378) would be severed by the proposal with the eastern portion not having access to an existing road. To maintain access to this property, a new left in / left out arrangement would be created onto the bypass.

Significance of access and connectivity impacts: The sensitivity of road users to permanent changes in access and connectivity is negligible. The magnitude is negligible and therefore the level significance is negligible.

8.3.4 Social infrastructure

The proposal is not expected to impact social infrastructure and businesses that are located outside of the immediate town centre. The Siding Springs Observatory, Warrumbungle National Park and local events would continue to attract visitors and tourism. It is assumed that the improved amenity of the town as a result of the proposal would make the town more attractive to visitors. Road lighting for the bypass would only be located at intersections and would comply with the *Dark Sky Planning Guidelines*. This would avoid ambient light sources which could affect the Siding Spring Observatory operations or jeopardise the Dark Sky Park.

The golf course may experience some amenity impacts during the operation of the proposal. The bypass may not be visible from the clubhouse; however some low-level road traffic noise may be audible from some areas of the golf course and club, resulting in a reduction to the quiet amenity of the facility.

Significance of social infrastructure impacts: The sensitivity of people using social infrastructure during operation of the proposal is low. The magnitude of the operation of the bypass is low, resulting in a low impact level of significance.

8.3.5 Businesses and commercial operations

As discussed in Section 4, impacts on commercial centres, towns and villages can be influenced by the size of the town, existing economic base of the town and the distance the town is from larger centres. Based on stakeholder and community consultation, there are concerns around the introduction of the bypass amongst businesses and residents.

The Business and Shopper surveys identified that almost 50 per cent of businesses in Coonabarabran indicated that over half their trade was from passing trade or visitors, in particular from accommodation, food service and retail businesses. With the bypass opening, it would result in fewer 'through' vehicles (i.e. those that are passing through, with Coonabarabran not being the start or end point of the journey). Those businesses that rely on passing trade may experience a reduction in business patronage.

The reduction in business from passing trade was a key concern of the business and shopper survey respondents. This concern was also more pronounced as about 34 per cent of respondents noted that over the past five years, there had been a decline in passing trade through town. This pre-existing reduction in business has heightened the concern of potential future losses from the opening of the bypass.

While the bypass would remove through traffic from the town centre, access to the town centre would remain open and local and regional travellers and visitors would still be able to pass through town. Road-side signage on the Newell Highway and bypass would be used to promote the town. This is discussed further in Section 9.

As a regional town that services a large rural community, patronage would continue even with the bypass. Especially for essential resources such as the Woolworths and

IGA supermarkets, rural supply stores and the post office. This is supported by the shoppers surveyed, with 80 per cent indicating that the bypass would not change how they shopped.

The improved road and parking accessibility and amenity of the town could increase patronage from the local / regional area and provide opportunities to the community and council to capitalise on the changed town environment to generate economic benefit such as consideration of street landscaping. TfNSW, as part of the proposal would install town signs on the highway in consultation with Warrumbungle Shire Council and the community to promote the town. The preliminary signage strategy is discussed in Section 9.1. As the bypass provides four opportunities for travellers on the Newell Highway to enter Coonabarabran at the intersection points, this increases the opportunities for travellers to turn off into Coonabarabran.

TfNSW would not establish any service centre (i.e. rest stop with retail businesses) on the bypass.

Agribusiness and farming

The proposal would impact some agricultural land, resulting in some agricultural business impacts. The proposal is not anticipated to have an impact on the overall agricultural industry of Coonabarabran; however, some businesses may experience impacts in productivity due to land acquisitions. The loss of productive/farmable land following the construction of the bypass would impact some businesses, by reducing the number of cattle or other stock that can be kept on the property or reducing / removing access to building, paddocks, dams and sheds on some properties. In addition, some residents and community members may also be concerned about the reduction of the agricultural area's rural land values, opportunities and character.

It is expected that the agricultural businesses would benefit from the proposal through increased efficiency to market for those agribusinesses that use the upgraded highway to transport agricultural outputs. Benefits to the broader agricultural sector are also expected through the efficient and safe travel to freight dependent agribusinesses.

Significance of business and commercial operations impacts: The sensitivity of businesses to the operation of the proposal is high. The magnitude of the operation of the proposal is high, resulting in the level of significance being high.

8.3.6 Amenity and community values

The proposal would introduce a new road between two points of the Newell Highway to form the bypass. This has the potential to both beneficially and adversely impact the community and the values of the community in regard to the natural landscape, businesses and the local economy and amenity of the study area. The dominance of the bypass structure within the existing landscape may result in visual impacts to surrounding receivers. This structure would introduce a built element to the existing natural rural landscape, resulting in a high impact to surrounding receivers. As discussed, the proposal may also result in feelings of severance for the local community, as the new road could be perceived as a barrier created by the bypass.

An increase in road traffic noise levels is predicted at receivers within 175 metres of the proposal (TfNSW, 2020). The increase in road traffic noise is due to the proposal being relatively close to receivers, where most were not previously subjected to highway noise. Operational noise is expected to have the most impact on surrounding residential and non-residential receivers in close proximity to the proposal.

It is expected that there would be a reduction in noise within the town centre of Coonabarabran, as there would be a reduction in the number of vehicles travelling through town due to the proposal. The bypass would improve amenity within the town centre of Coonabarabran, reducing noise from heavy vehicles such as trucks and road trains. By removing trucks from the centre of town, this would improve safety, traffic and parking condition throughout the local road network of Coonabarabran. The community has provided feedback on the proposal since the preliminary studies. Mixed responses from the community have been received, from various demographics of the community. Feedback in support of the proposal has been focused on:

- the improvement in amenity and safety
- potential to improve Coonabarabran town centre and increase tourism as a result of the improved amenity and safety
- traffic and parking improvements
- increase active transport use
- allow of opportunities to focus on business refocus and marketing.

Alternatively, feedback that did not support the proposal was focused on:

- the potential impact to the already declining economic status of the town, including customer spending and employment
- potential impact to businesses that rely on passing trade
- potential impacts to tourism and visitor frequency
- property acquisition.

Although many residents that provided feedback to the shopper survey would not be located near to the bypass, they have raised concerns about the indirect impacts that they expect would occur as a result of the proposal. Examples of bypass infrastructure that are explored in this assessment provides insight to the conditional factors that can influence a proposal. There have been a lot of conditional considerations expressed during consultation, such as implementing appropriate mitigation measures to attempt to offset negative potential impacts during the operation. Examples of mitigation include visibility of the town from the bypass, signage and developing a bypass that would enable drivers to make a conscious choice to either utilise the bypass or travel through town.

Leadership from Warrumbungle Shire Council to capitalise on the potential benefits for the amenity of the town was important to the community. The importance of re-invention and capitalising on the amenity changes brought by the proposal such as improving signage were crucial issues raised by the community. As part of the bypass, TfNSW are developing photo signage in consultation with Warrumbungle Shire Council and the community to promote the town. The preliminary signage strategy is discussed in Section 9.1.

Significance of community and amenity impacts: Sensitivity of the community on amenity and community values is moderate. The magnitude of the operation of the proposal is expected to be moderate, resulting the level of significance being moderate.

The following table provides a summary of the impact assessment by assigning a sensitivity and magnitude rating to determine overall significance.

Table 8-2 Summary of level of significance of impact assessment

Issue category	Impact (with mitigation) / Comment	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Level of significance
Construction impacts				
Demography, population and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased population from the construction workforce resulting in increased demand of services • short-term beneficial employment opportunities and increased business at local shops and services • temporary residents' requirement for accommodation, resulting in impacts to tourist stays at particular facilities. 	Low	Low	Low
Property acquisition and adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proposal would require partial and full acquisitions and adjustments to some land parcels. • leases and/or access agreements would also be required during construction which may result in some disturbance to movements within properties as well as access to properties from the road network • many property owners in the properties to be acquired have resided in homes for long periods of time (some their whole life). These property owners are likely to experience feelings of loss based on their connection to place and the surrounding environment. 	High	High	High
Land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change in land use from agricultural and rural residential land use to infrastructure land use • properties that are severed by the proposal by partial acquisitions may experience restrictions in some current land uses such as agricultural operations and productivity. 	High	High	High
Access and connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property access that would be impacted during construction, including property street accesses, inter-property agricultural access and local street access. • Construction traffic may result in traffic delays and installation of temporary traffic controls 	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Issue category	Impact (with mitigation) / Comment	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Level of significance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts to the road network would be at the intersection locations where the intersections are tied into the existing roads Increase in vehicles would be expected through town where construction vehicles and delivery trucks access the construction site and ancillary facilities Interstate freight travel and traffic operations along the Newell Highway. 			
Social infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitors of the Coonabarabran Cemetery may be able to hear some noise from the proposal Cooinda Aged Care Centre and Yuluwirri Kids Child Care may also be subject to noise impacts during construction, with some exceedances at the Cooinda Aged Care Centre facility during noisy works 	Moderate	Low	Moderate-low
Business operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> positive impact on the town's economy through construction worker expenditure and potential increased temporary demand in private room and house rentals to accommodate part of the construction workforce opportunity to source local materials and resources for construction of the new road and associated features where possible noise impacts at accommodation facilities close to the southern intersection, including Wagon Wheel Motel, Matthew Flinders Motor Inn, El Passy Motel, Coachman Rest Motor Lodge the loss of productive/farmable land available during construction including access to dams and sheds on some properties impacts to agricultural properties in regard to movement of cattle and farm machinery between paddocks. 	High	Moderate	High-moderate
Amenity and community values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> receivers in the vicinity of the proposal would experience the most impacts to amenity in the form of noise, visual and air quality impacts potential sleep disturbance and moderately intrusive noise impacts, with up to 13 receivers within 175 metres of the proposal predicted to be above the night time noise management level during nightworks residents up to 1.1 kilometres would be impacted by noise from the proposal, which includes receivers from within the town centre 	High	moderate	High-moderate

Issue category	Impact (with mitigation) / Comment	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Level of significance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • construction would change the nature of land use and views of the landscape, from a quiet and interrupted landscape, to an area of construction • vegetation removal for the development of the new road would alter the current landscape of the proposal area, with dwellings in closest proximity to the proposal being impacted most • drivers travelling along the existing Newell Highway alignment would be impacted by the proposal by visual impacts to the proposal area including ancillary facilities. 			
Operational impacts				
Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • permanent property acquisition would require some residents to either move their residence on their property or permanently relocate away from the proposal area • partial strip of acquisition would divide some properties but may also separate them from other neighbouring properties and spaces resulting in severance • changes to property access along the proposal. 	Moderate	Low	Moderate-low
Land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proposal would occupy a portion of land previously used for agricultural and rural purposes. • potential impacts to minimum lot size as a result of partial acquisitions. 	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Access and connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved connectivity for local and regional travel as a result of the proposal • reduction in the presence of trucks is anticipated to ease parking concerns in the town centre • access to local facilities and infrastructure would be safer and more efficient • new active transport opportunities due the reduction in the presence of trucks • impacts to the efficiency of livestock movements along the travelling stock route which would be redirected. 	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Issue category	Impact (with mitigation) / Comment	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Level of significance
Social infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the improved amenity of the town as a result of the proposal is expected to make the town more attractive to visitors road lighting for the bypass would only be at the intersections and would comply with the dark sky park guidelines the golf course may experience amenity impacts in the form of noise impacts. 	Low	Low	Low
Business operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> potential impacts to businesses that rely on passing trade within the town centre agribusinesses may experience impacts in some productivity due to land acquisitions agricultural businesses would benefit from the proposal through increased productivity and efficiency on a local and regional scale. 	High	High	High
Amenity and community values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> impacts to the amenity of the rural landscape as the proposal would introduce a large built structure to the quiet and natural space severance may be experienced by the local community as the new road could be perceived as a barrier increase in road traffic noise level close to receivers, with some facades of houses in line of sight of the road expected to be reduction in noise in the town centre due to the bypass improvements to safety, traffic and parking conditions would improve the amenity of the town the proposal may lead to other opportunities such as reinvention and capitalisation on the amenity changes to improve the town. 	Moderate	Moderate	High-moderate

9 Safeguards and management measures

The following section provides the management measures that would be implemented during the construction and operation of the proposal.

9.1 Signage strategy and response

As part of the proposal, TfNSW has developed a preliminary signage strategy to promote the town.

Photo signs have been shown to be effective to promote regional towns (*Bypassed Towns Signage Trial Evaluation Report* (Roads and Maritime Services, 2018)) from both the local community and businesses as well as road users. As part of the proposal, TfNSW would install photo signs on the Newell Highway near the southern and the northern intersections to promote the town (refer Figure 9-1 and Figure 9-2). Other tourist signs would be developed in accordance with Tourist Signposting (Roads and Maritime Services, 2012). TfNSW will continue to consult with local community and Warrumbungle Shire Council regarding signage to promote the town.



Figure 9-1 Coonabarabran entry/exit signage example 1



Figure 9-2 Coonabarabran entry/exit signage example 2

9.2 List of mitigation measures

The following section provides a list of mitigation measures that should be applied during the proposal.

Aspect	Mitigation measure	Responsibility	Timing
Community consultation	<p>A Communication Plan (CP) would be prepared and implemented as part of the CEMP to help provide timely and accurate information to the community during construction. The CP would include (as a minimum):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanisms to provide details and timing of proposed activities to affected residents, including changed traffic and access conditions • Contact name and number for complaints. <p>The CP would be prepared in accordance with the Community Involvement and Communications Resource Manual (RTA, 2008).</p>	TfNSW	Pre-construction
Changes in demography and population	<p>The use of a mix of accommodation facilities for the temporary construction workforce should be considered to reduce pressure on facilities.</p> <p>Consultation with the Warrumbungle Shire Council and the Warrumbungle Chamber of Commerce should occur to understand the various accommodation options available.</p>	TfNSW / Construction contractor	Pre-construction / construction
Property	<p>Transport for NSW will continue to consult with affected property owners and land occupiers until the completion of the proposal.</p> <p>Discussions including the nature and timing of construction works would be required to identify relevant mitigation measures for noise, traffic and visual impacts.</p>	TfNSW	Pre-construction/ construction
Property acquisition	<p>Land acquisition will occur in accordance with the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991.</p>	TfNSW	Pre-construction

Aspect	Mitigation measure	Responsibility	Timing
Property severance	TfNSW would consider each owner's remaining holdings accounting for the impacts of severance and/or the residual functional use of any remaining land. TfNSW would engage an appropriately qualified property and/or agricultural specialist to assess these impacts and to identify alternative opportunities for their remaining holdings. TfNSW would manage any residual land in accordance with its disposal processes. This would involve considering landowner requests for land swaps.	TfNSW	Pre-construction / operation
Changes in access	Temporary and permanent changes in access will be discussed with impacted land occupiers prior to commencement of construction and during construction activities should arrangements change. TfNSW would confirm any realignment of street access or inter-property access under the proposal, in consultation with property owners	Transport for NSW	Pre-construction/ construction
Freight and agricultural access routes	TfNSW will consult with freight and agricultural industries to identify critical times during the year where access reliability is critical on the Newell Highway. Road Occupancy Licences for the highway and with the local roads impacted by the proposal would be obtained. Temporary access tracks will be designed to similar conditions of existing roads to allow for use by the same sort of traffic.	TfNSW	Pre-construction/ construction
Social infrastructure	Communication and consultation with facilities near to the proposed construction works including the golf course, hospital and Coinda Aged Care Centre so that potential impacts are managed. This includes maintaining access along Purlewaugh Road and noise mitigation.	TfNSW	Pre-construction / construction
Loss of passing trade	TfNSW would work Council and the Warrumbungle Chamber of Commerce to maintain communication with businesses who may be impacted by the proposal and ensure ongoing concerns are listed and acted upon.	TfNSW	Construction / operation

Aspect	Mitigation measure	Responsibility	Timing
Community values and local amenity	During construction of the proposal, vegetation removal will occur only in areas identified in the REF and biodiversity assessment report for the proposal. Other natural areas will be protected where possible to maintain the landscape and amenity of the surrounding area	TfNSW	Construction
Initiatives	TfNSW will continue to work together with the Warrumbungle Shire Council to develop initiatives and strategies such as town signage to promote the town.	TfNSW	Detailed design
Planning for construction pressures	TfNSW and their contractor would consult with the Warrumbungle Shire Council and community throughout the construction period.	TfNSW	Pre-construction
Planning for construction pressures – events	TfNSW will work with Council through the construction period to try and minimise impacts during town events, such as StarFest to minimise any adverse impacts on the community and businesses	TfNSW	Pre-construction
Business and tourism impacts	The proposal is to be designed to meet the guidelines of the <i>Dark Sky Planning Guidelines</i>	TfNSW	Pre-construction and construction

10 Conclusion

This assessment has evaluated the potential positive and adverse socio-economic impacts of the construction and operation of the proposal. The assessment has included the investigation of the existing environment and strategic and planning documents, as well as reviewed literature, case studies and previous projects to inform the evaluation of impacts. In determining the significance of impacts, specialist studies prepared for the REF have been reviewed and have contributed to this report, including current and previous consultation information.

As discussed in Section 8.2 and 8.3, there are expected to be some adverse impacts as a result of the proposal. These impacts range from low to high impacts and are both temporary and permanent in nature, with some impacts limited to the construction phase of the proposal. Key adverse impacts include property and land use impacts, such as partial and full property acquisition and adjustments, potential impacts to local businesses and agribusiness and impacts to community amenity and values during construction. These impacts would be mitigated through a range of mitigation measures. TfNSW would continue to consult the community and stakeholders and work with Council to mitigate potential adverse impacts.

The proposal is also expected to result in benefits in both the short and long term. During construction, the proposal is expected to provide local jobs and the opportunity to source materials and services from local businesses. In the long term, the proposal is expected to provide a range of socio-economic benefits for both the local community and visitors. The removal of trucks from the town centre would reduce noise and safety issues and improve the amenity within the town centre. This has the potential to make the town more attractive to tourism, business and residential living.

Additionally, the proposal is expected to improve connectivity and efficiency for freight and regional travel, forming part of the broader program of works to provide reliable and safe travel along the Newell Highway Corridor.

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Appendix A Business and shopper survey report

Newell Highway Coonabarabran Bypass

Business and Shopper Survey
Report

Transport for NSW

2020-05-04



aurecon

*Bringing ideas
to life*

Document control record

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1 Introduction

1.1 Proposal overview

Transport for NSW (formerly Roads and Maritime) is undertaking planning for an upgrade of the Newell Highway at Coonabarabran in the north west of New South Wales (NSW). The Newell Highway is a major freight route between Victoria and Queensland through regional NSW. Coonabarabran is located within the Warrumbungle Shire Council local government area about 120 kilometres north-east of Dubbo central business district (CBD) and 335 kilometres north-west of Sydney CBD. This work is part of the Newell Highway upgrade program.

Construction of the bypass is expected to support more efficient and productive movement of freight along the Newell Highway corridor. The bypass is also anticipated to improve regional connectivity, improve road safety in the area and increase travel efficiency for local and regional road users.

The location of the proposal is shown in Figure 1-1 and the preferred alignment is shown in Figure 1-2.

1.2 Key features of the proposal

The proposed Newell Highway Coonabarabran Bypass is a new road east of the existing Newell Highway alignment which runs through the town.

Key features of the project would include:

- a new two-lane, two-way road, about eight kilometres long to the east of Coonabarabran, between the Newell Highway and Oxley Highway with a posted speed limit of 110 kilometres per hour
- changes to the intersection arrangement of the Newell Highway and Oxley Highway to the north of Coonabarabran
- intersections and local road adjustments at Purlewaugh Road and River Road
- a bridge crossing of the Castlereagh River
- stock culvert under the highway just south of Purlewaugh Road
- property acquisitions and adjustments (including to some property access)
- drainage adjustments and utility relocations
- temporary ancillary facilities during construction including water quality controls, site offices and stockpile sites.

1.3 Proposal background

The Newell Highway is the longest highway in NSW, running 1058 kilometres through the State and providing an essential road connection for central western NSW. The highway is a vital transport corridor between Victoria, NSW, and Queensland and is crucial for freight and livestock transporters, tourism operators, caravanners and holiday makers, emergency services, government and business owners.

The NSW Government has committed \$500 million into upgrading the Newell Highway under the Newell Highway Upgrade Program (the program). The program includes numerous upgrades to the Newell Highway over 20 years. At Coonabarabran, the program has identified the priorities to:

- reprioritise the Newell Highway at the intersection with the Oxley Highway

- provide intersection improvements required for adequate HPV access
- remove heavy vehicle through traffic from the main urban commercial centre.

The proposal would complement other projects in the program and enable the operation of high productivity vehicles over the full length of the Newell Highway. This would improve freight productivity and contribute to the overall objectives of the program.

1.4 Proposal benefits

The objectives for the proposal, as defined in the Inception Brief Annexure A5, are outlined below.

- The key project objective is to:
 - Upgrade the Newell Highway to support more efficient movement of freight by improving access for HPV PBS3(a) vehicles.
- The key project benefits are:
 - Facilitation of access for HPV PBS3a on the Newell Highway from Dubbo to Queensland by avoiding geometrically substandard intersections;
 - Reduced vehicle operating costs and increases in travel time savings;
 - Amenity and pedestrian access improvements for the local community
 - Improvement of motorist and pedestrian safety
 - Improve traffic flow in Coonabarabran, particularly east-west travel
 - Improvement of amenity of the retail district for shoppers, residents and workers
 - Reduction of heavy vehicle noise and stock created odour
 - Removal of the conflicts between local traffic and heavy through vehicles.

1.5 Purpose of this report

This report has been developed by Aurecon Australasia Pty Ltd (Aurecon) on behalf of Transport for NSW. This report reflects the feedback received from businesses and shoppers in Coonabarabran during the planning phase of the proposal. Key themes, impacts and opportunities based on community feedback is summarised in this report to develop a better understanding of business and shopper behaviour in Coonabarabran. It will inform the Review of Environmental Factors (REF) currently being prepared under Division 5.1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act).

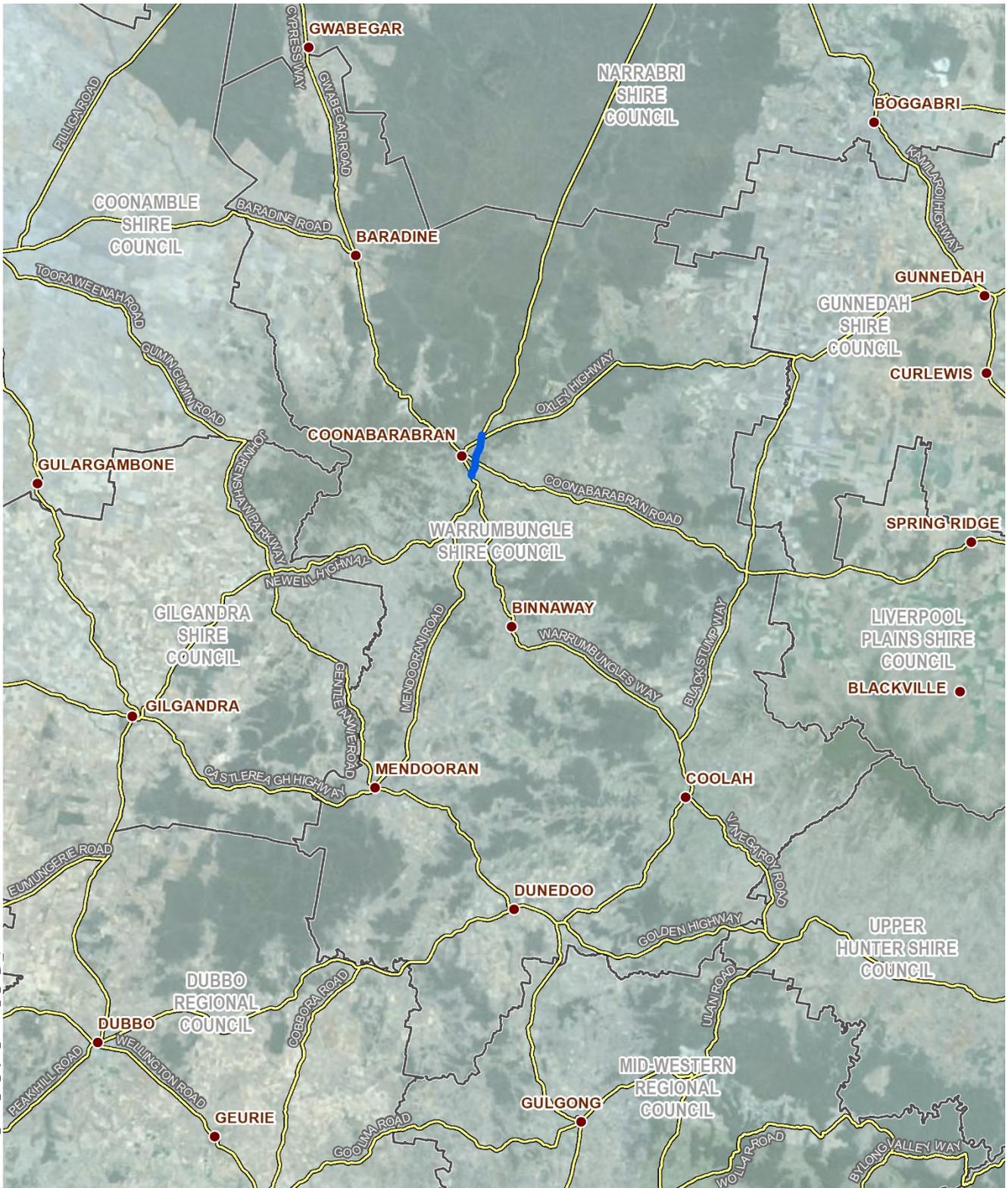
This aim of this report is to:

- support the planning and design activities of the proposal including identifying environmental risks, constraints and areas of sensitivity
- present the feedback from businesses and shoppers about their business operations and shopper behaviour
- detail the community consultation methodology that was carried out to gain the business and shopper feedback.

1.6 Report structure

The report is structured as follows:

- Section 1 – Introduction outlining the project background and purpose of the report
- Section 2 – Consultation approach explaining the methodology and details of consultation activities
- Section 3 – Survey observations and themes identified during the survey period
- Section 4 – Quantitative results of business and shopper surveys.

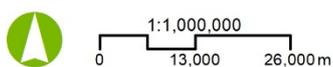


- Proposal alignment
- Major towns
- Major road network



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Source: Aurecon, LPI



Newell Highway Upgrade Coonabarabran Bypass Business and shopper survey

Projection: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55

FIGURE 1-1: Location of the proposal

2 Consultation approach

To understand shopper and business behaviour and the community sentiment towards the proposal, two surveys were conducted over a period of three days. The first survey was targeted towards business owners, whilst the second survey was focused towards shoppers. This section provides the details of these surveys.

2.1 Method for community consultation

2.1.1 Business surveys

Business surveys were carried out over a period of two days during the following periods:

- Thursday 6 February from 1pm to 5:30pm
- Friday 7 February from 9am to 10:50am
- Friday 7 February from 1pm to 5:30pm.

In advance of the survey events, Transport for NSW wrote to businesses in Coonabarabran with an overview letter to explain the surveys, a copy of the survey questions and a link to the survey for businesses to complete online if they wished. During the survey period, around 57 businesses within Coonabarabran were visited for face-to-face surveys. The businesses that were visited represented a range of industries such as accommodation, retail, food, automotive and professional service type businesses.

Some businesses that were visited had already completed the survey prior to the survey event, from the letters that were sent by Transport for NSW earlier that week. These were collected by the Aurecon representatives when visiting.

All businesses that weren't visited during the survey period were contacted during the following week to provide their survey and feedback over the phone. All businesses were offered to complete the survey in their own time and remain confidential.

The majority of businesses who were visited (30 out of the total 57) decided to complete the survey in their own time, whilst others chose to speak to the Aurecon representatives and provide their feedback verbally. Those that completed the survey verbally (face-to-face or over the phone) allowed for the Aurecon representatives to enter their answers into the online survey on their behalf during the discussion. Those who chose to complete surveys in their own time were given a range of options to do so, including a link to an online survey, phone number, email or mailing options.

A total of 111 businesses in Coonabarabran were contacted about the survey. This list of businesses was developed by Aurecon with input from Transport for NSW. The Chamber of Commerce and Warrumbungle Shire Council were also asked for input. Figure 2-1 shows an overview of the businesses that were provided with surveys during the survey period. The initial survey close date was the 14th of February 2020, however as some businesses were not visited and wished to complete surveys in their own time following phone discussions, the survey period was extended to the 19th of February 2020 to allow sufficient time for feedback.

The objectives of the survey were:

- to understand key features and operations of businesses
- to identify consumer behaviours and industry trends

- to ask businesses about the perceived potential impacts of the bypass on the local businesses, shoppers and economy
- to understand community attitudes/sentiments in general.

Of the businesses engaged, 38 businesses completed surveys (around 34 per cent of businesses)¹.

Questions were focused on determining business reliance on incoming highway traffic and understanding how changes to current traffic conditions may impact on business operations. A copy of the business survey is attached in Appendix A.

2.1.2 Shopper surveys

Shopper surveys were carried out over a period of two days during the following periods:

- Friday 7 February from 11am to 2pm
- Saturday 8 February from 9am to 1pm.

The surveys were held outside Coonabarabran Woolworths on Dalgarno Street, which was identified to be the busiest place to interact with shoppers during the survey period. An overview of the areas of key business activity that was observed during the survey is shown in Figure 2-2(a) and (b).

The objectives of the survey were:

- to engage with shoppers to understand shopping behaviours and trends
- to ask shoppers about the perceived potential impacts of the bypass on the local businesses and economy
- to understand community and visitor attitudes.

Of the shoppers engaged, 45² shoppers completed the surveys over the two-day survey period.

Survey questions were targeted towards both visitors and residents of Coonabarabran and were focused on identifying reasons for stay, common places to visit and how the proposed bypass would affect activities within the town. The survey was left open until Monday (3 February 2020) to give shoppers the opportunity to complete the survey at home in their own time. The shopper survey is included in Appendix B of this report.

2.1.3 Limitations of the survey

Both surveys and associated events were carefully planned, aiming to achieve survey targets and gain comprehensive feedback. However, some limitations were experienced during the survey and events, including:

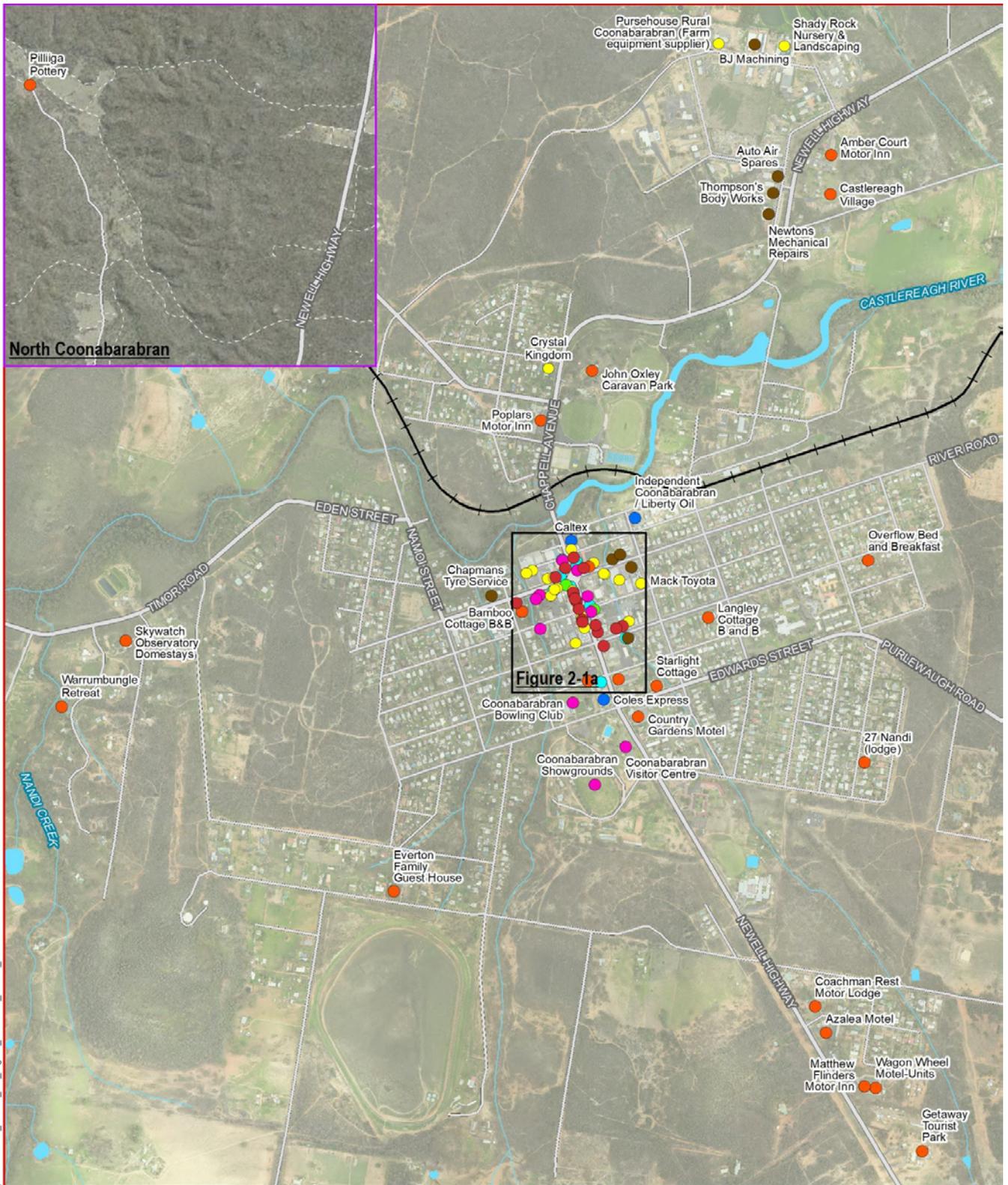
- rainy weather conditions during the shopper survey events that may have impacted patronage at Woolworths on both days. The rain also impacted the survey team's abilities to survey past Woolworths, potentially missing other shoppers in the town.
- limited time for face to face surveys may have impacted the amount of feedback received from businesses who may have wanted to provide more feedback
- it was observed that some shoppers who were approached by survey representatives did not want to participate because they opposed the project or did not want to participate because they didn't

¹ Overall a total of 39 business surveys were registered in the Transport for NSW data system. Of these surveys, 1 survey was completely blank, therefore it has not been included in the results of the report.

² Overall a total of 50 shopper surveys were registered in the Transport for NSW data system. Of these surveys, 5 were completely blank, therefore have not been included in the results of the report.

have time to stop. This means that some surveys were missed by patrons who would have potentially contributed to the survey.

- survey recipients in both surveys explained that they had some difficulty answering some of the multiple-choice questions, as some answers were conditional. For example, some recipients found it difficult to answer questions relating to bypass impacts, in particular the question about what kind of impact the bypass would have on the town. When answering this question, some people thought the bypass would have an initial negative impact, then a positive impact in the long term. This was not able to be reflected in the multiple-choice option with some shoppers choosing to not answer the question, or only select one option.
- some shoppers were business owners that had already completed business surveys, therefore they did not want to complete an additional survey relating to the bypass.
- the business survey targeted businesses that were located in Coonabarabran, however did not specifically target service/trade type businesses e.g. businesses from home, trades people/services located outside of town that are used by residents. Therefore, the representation of some services and businesses is not accounted for in this survey.



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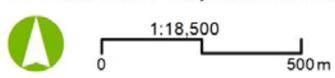
Business Type

- Accommodation
- Attraction and recreation
- Automotive and mechanical
- Food services
- Local services
- Professional service
- Retail

- Service stations
- Railway
- Watercourse
- Water body

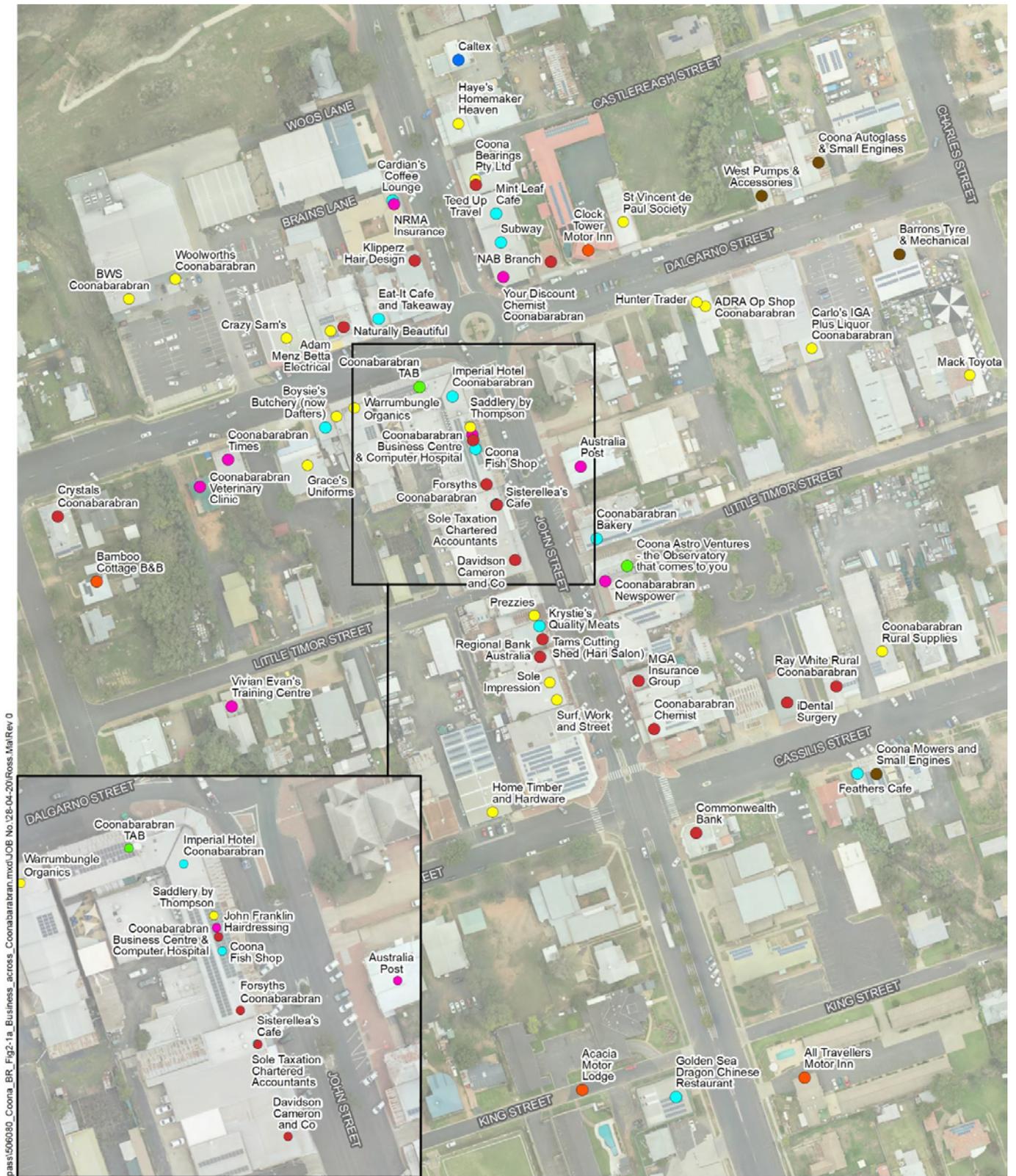


Source: Aurecon, LPI Projection: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55



Newell Highway Upgrade Coonabarabran Bypass Business and shopper survey

FIGURE 2-1: Businesses in Coonabarabran provided with the survey



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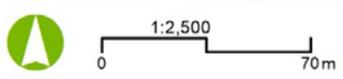
Business Type

- Accommodation
- Attraction and recreation
- Automotive and mechanical
- Food services
- Local services
- Professional service
- Retail

● Service stations



Source: Aurecon, LPI Projection: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55



Newell Highway Upgrade Coonabarabran Bypass Business and shopper survey

FIGURE 2-1a: Businesses in Coonabarabran provided with the survey



High activity area focus location

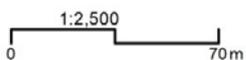


High activity area



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Source: Aurecon, LPI



Newell Highway Upgrade Coonabarabran Bypass **Business and shopper survey**

Projection: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55

FIGURE 2-2: Areas of high patronage in Coonabarabran

3 Community survey outcomes

3.1 Background and observations

The survey of both business owners and shoppers allowed for consultation and feedback from a broad cross section of the community, representing a diverse range of priorities, beliefs and opinions. A general observation from both surveys was that the bypass proposal is well-known in the community. It was also recognised that the community of Coonabarabran is well-informed and active in wanting to know more about the proposal, showing interest in receiving up to date information and participating in stakeholder consultation updates and activities. During both survey periods, it was observed that Coonabarabran is a close-knit community.

3.2 Summary of responses

In general, business owners held greater concern over potential economic impacts associated with a bypass. In contrast, the wider community, as represented by feedback returned from the shopper survey, held more mixed views regarding the proposed bypass and issues such as safety and amenity were given greater precedent over potential economic impacts. General themes and comments from the surveys are detailed in the following sections.

3.2.1 Key themes and comments

The following tables (Table 3-1 and Table 3-2) present the key themes and comments from the survey period. The information is based on the surveys that were completed and stakeholder discussions during these surveys.

Table 3-1 Key feedback, issues and comments from business owners during surveys

Issue	Comment
Economy	<p>Comments in favour of bypass:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bypass would force businesses to rebrand to attract more business rather than relying on passing traffic ■ Most visitors book in advance, particularly online, so the bypass most likely will not affect accommodation providers <p>Comments opposed to bypass:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The town doesn't currently have enough tourism investment to encourage motorists to stop in town and attract them to come and visit, therefore many businesses are dependent on the passing trade ■ Money could be better used elsewhere for streetscapes, community and tourism initiatives ■ The bypass could make town's struggling economy even worse with businesses forced to restructure and employ less staff ■ Employees are concerned about the impact the bypass will have on them if business declines further ■ Businesses do not want any new businesses and service centres (especially petrol, food and toilet facilities) constructed on the bypass as this could take away business from town
Safety	<p>Comments in favour of bypass:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Taking trucks off the main street would improve safety and amenity of the main street particularly in the form of noise and air pollution

Issue	Comment
	<p>Comments opposed to bypass</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Safety risks do not warrant bypass as there have been no accidents involving trucks
Traffic	<p>Comments opposed to bypass</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Time saving benefits do not warrant bypass as it would only save three minutes ■ Businesses would like for the bypass to be designed in a way that is a conscious choice for travellers to use so the town isn't easily missed.
Other Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The bypass would be beneficial if it was a truck only bypass and smaller vehicles could still pass through town including caravans and passenger vehicles ■ Impacts will have domino effect on town with passing trade vendors declining first, followed by residents leaving based on lack of employment opportunities and services having to close due to small population with low spending. ■ The bypass should be designed so that it includes adequate signage and advertising for the town.

Table 3-2 Key feedback, issues and comments from shoppers during surveys

Issue	Comments
Amenity	<p>Comments in favour of bypass:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improved amenity for residents living near the highway in the form of noise and air pollution benefits <p>Comments opposed to bypass</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The trucks are a part of the town culture, they are part of the environment and people know that Coonabarabran is frequented by trucks and large vehicles
Economy	<p>Comments in favour of bypass:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recognition that although there may be some short-term effects at first, the long-term effects may be positive if the town is rejuvenated to survive the changes ■ Most shoppers did not believe the bypass would change their shopping activities ■ Visitors to town were mostly from surrounding towns therefore a bypass would not prevent them accessing the town since this was their only place shop ■ Majority of shoppers seemed to understand the town itself was slowing down economically – most shoppers mentioned the town needed to be invested in to make improvements <p>Comments opposed to bypass</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Shoppers acknowledged that some businesses have already closed due to the declining economy and that some would likely be unable to adapt to change and suffer in the short term from lack of passing trade if a bypass was constructed ■ Some shoppers stated the declining economy and how spending has decreased from residents in town, therefore the reliance of visitors for businesses would be paramount to their success. If a bypass was built this may add to the decline of these businesses.
Safety	<p>Comments in favour of bypass</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improved safety for pedestrians and active transport users. Some residents explained that trucks impede their use of active transport, including cycling through town due to safety concerns <p>Comments opposed to bypass</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some mentioned they had no safety issues with trucks, that this was only a perception by various demographics in the town

Issue	Comments
Traffic	<p>Comments in favour of bypass:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Trucks on the road affect traffic conditions and make it harder to navigate the main street for all road users ■ Parking on main street was a key issue raised with many survey recipients mentioning a reluctance to park on main street when there was a truck behind and having to navigate 45-degree parking arrangements <p>Comments opposed to bypass</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some shoppers stated that the bypass wouldn't result in a large enough time saving to warrant a bypass.
Other comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Many shoppers stated that drought was a key issue for businesses. ■ Those living further out of town seemed to be indifferent about the proposed bypass with some thinking it would eventually be a good change (conditional to a range of factors) ■ Some shoppers suggesting closing the main street from through traffic completely to make the town more appealing to visit for both residents and visitors ■ Shoppers indicated the bypass should be for trucks only as this will take trucks out of town and improve safety and amenity without impacting businesses negatively ■ Shoppers had questions regarding why representatives were consulting after the decision for the bypass had been made ■ Shoppers made reference to existing towns that had been bypassed and were negatively impacted, whilst others referenced towns that benefitted from bypass infrastructure.

3.2.2 Summary of trends

A summary of the trends from both surveys are as follows:

- Most businesses owners spoken to were concerned that the bypass would have a negative impact on the town.
- Some accommodation facilities explained their reliance on passing traffic, especially truck drivers and stated that travellers would no longer stop in town and would simply pass through to the next larger town or highway service stop.
- A few recipients mentioned that the trucks form a part of the town culture, they are part of the environment and people know that Coonabarabran is frequented by trucks and large vehicles.
- Some business and shopper recipients considered the bypass to have a positive impact mentioned the safety, noise, air and amenity improvements that would come from the bypass.
- Some accommodation facilities mentioned that a lot of their bookings come from online and are booked in advance.
- A portion of business owners and shoppers stated that the project would be beneficial in the long term if certain conditions were applied (i.e. no new businesses on bypass, truck only bypass, adequate signage).
- Many shoppers recognised business owners concerns regarding the declining economy and businesses slowing down. Recipients explained that impacts of the bypass could be negative for business, however this may be outweighed by benefits such as improved amenity from removing trucks from town.
- Parking on the main street was a key concern for shoppers, stating that parking on the main street is difficult when trucks are behind them.
- Some business owners and shoppers raised the need for support from council and governments for town initiatives including signage, tourism incentives, streetscape infrastructure and improvements to improve the town.

4 Quantitative results

The following section provides a quantitative analysis of the responses received from the business and shoppers surveys. The graphs and charts represent the recipient responses to questions in both surveys from the data gathered during the survey period.

There were 27 questions in business survey and 26 questions in the shopper survey, noting that shopper survey automatically changed its sequence depending on whether a recipient was a local or visitor not.

It is important to note that some questions were open-ended, and respondents could provide more than one response to a single question. In addition, some respondents did not answer all questions in the survey. Therefore, the number of respondents changes slightly across different questions, with percentages used to identify trends and themes.

In some instances, questions that were open ended resulted in the need for trends identification and collaboration of answers to provide consolidated information. All information in this section is based on the information provided in the surveys.

4.1 Business owners

Question 1: Business type

Figure 4-1 represents the types of businesses in Coonabarabran. The most common types of businesses that completed the survey were retail (29 per cent), accommodation (26 per cent), professional services (11 per cent) and food services (10 per cent). Other businesses although not as high in number were also located throughout town. These businesses reflect market specific and niche type businesses including automotive, rural supply and hardware stores amongst others.

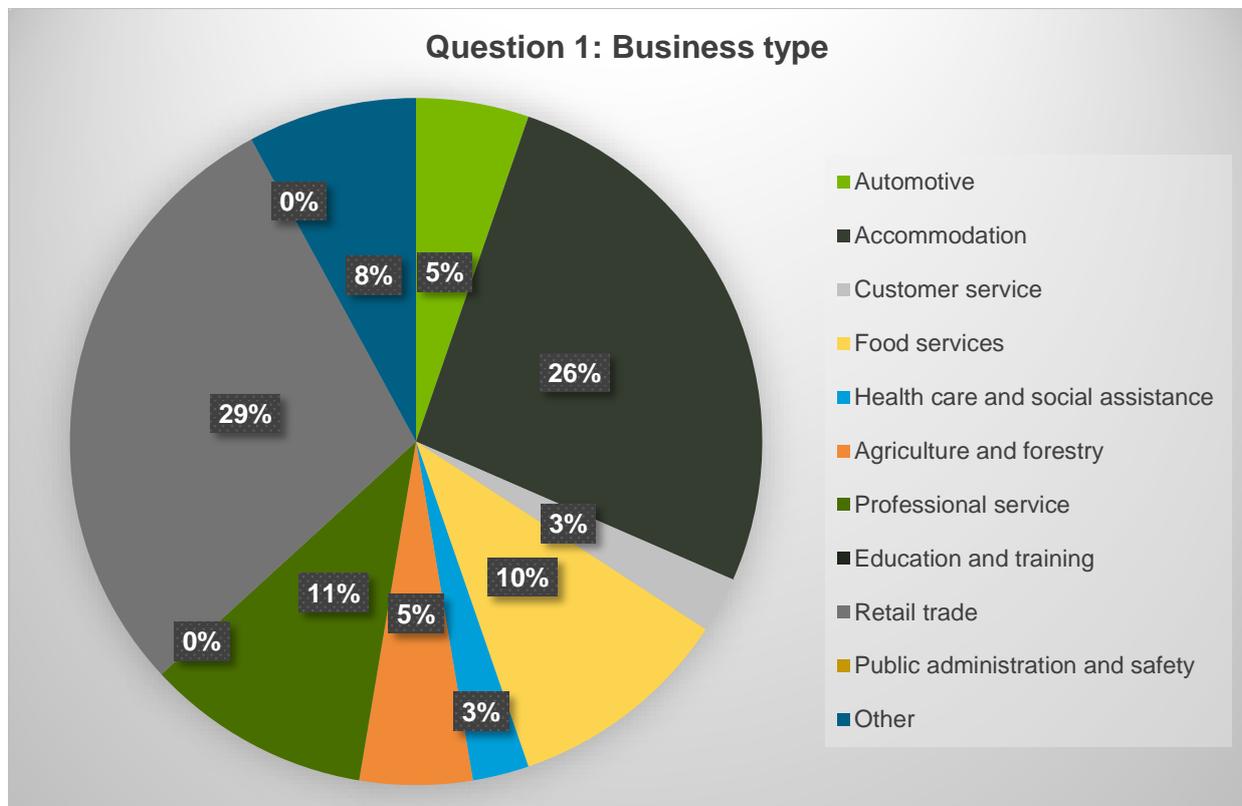


Figure 4-1 Business type

Question 2: Business trading hours

Figure 4-2 shows the trading hours of businesses that participated in the survey. 32 recipients answered this question. The most common trading hours for business in Coonabarabran were between 7am and 6pm.

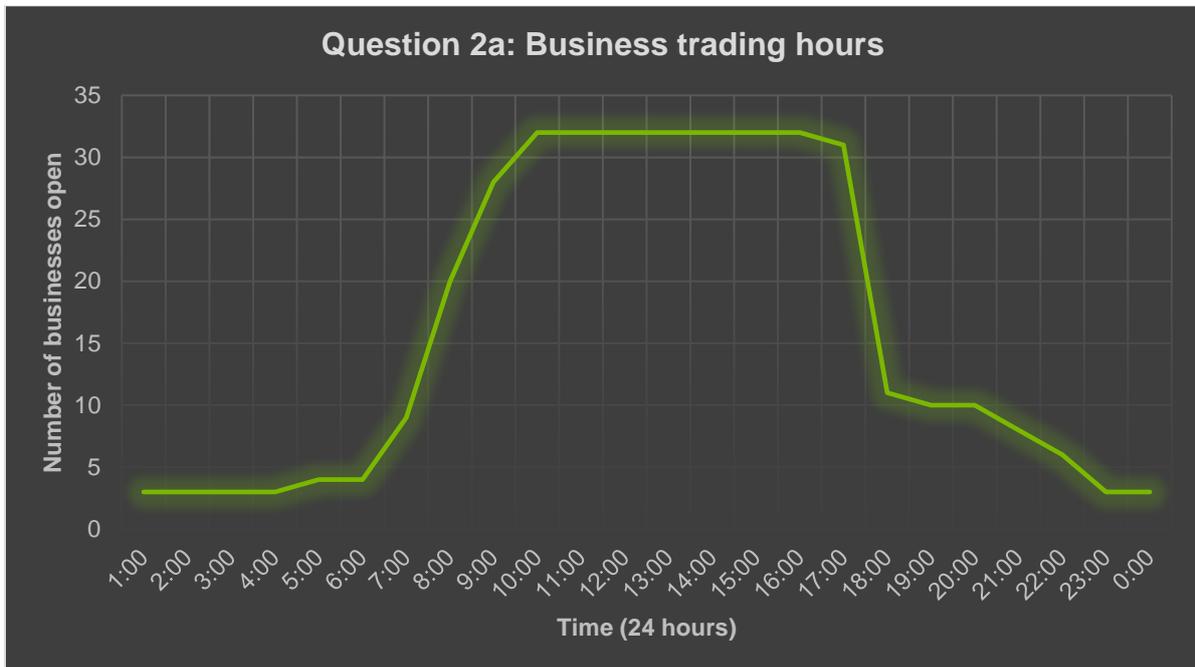


Figure 4-2 Business trading hours

Of the 32 businesses that answered this question, 21 recipients indicated which days of the week they operated their business. Majority of businesses operated during the week between Monday to Friday. Most of these businesses stated in question 2a that their business hours were between 8-9:30am to 5-5:30pm. Some businesses that worked on Saturday indicated half day trading between the hours of 9am and 1pm. Only six businesses indicated that they were open on the weekend, with a mix of accommodation, retail and agriculture/forestry businesses.

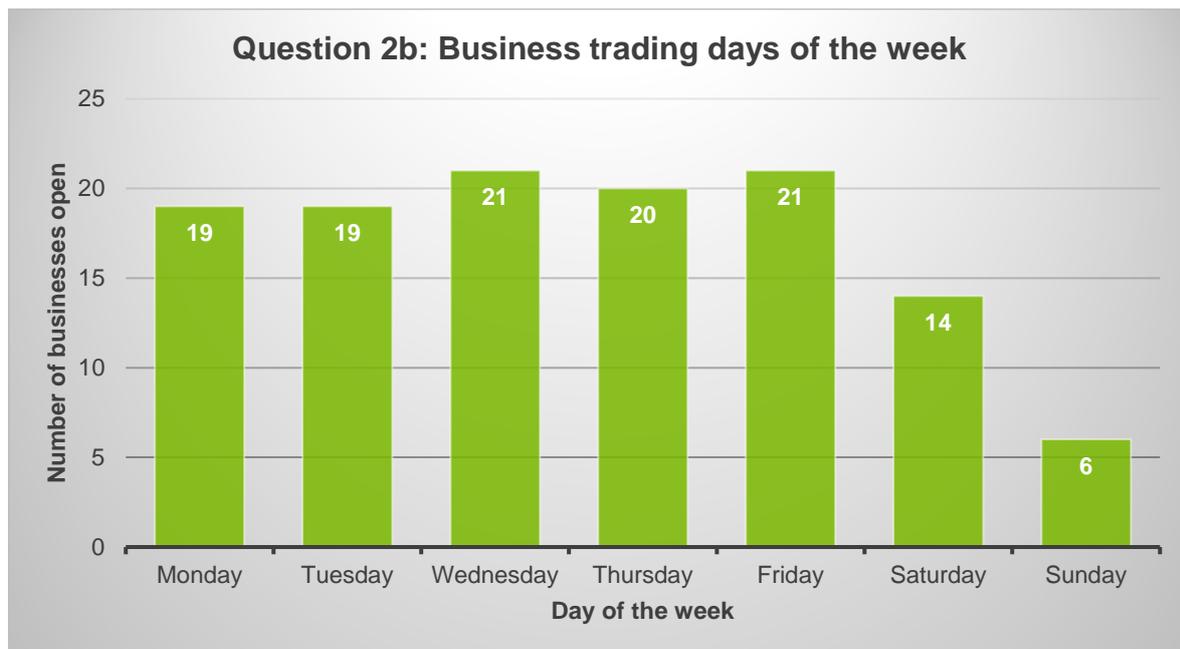


Figure 4-3 Business trading days

Question 3: Operation of business

Businesses were asked how long they have been operating in Coonabarabran. A total of 37 businesses answered this question. As shown in Figure 4-4, 84 per cent of businesses have operated in Coonabarabran for over ten years. Only three per cent of businesses had been operating in Coonabarabran between one to three years.

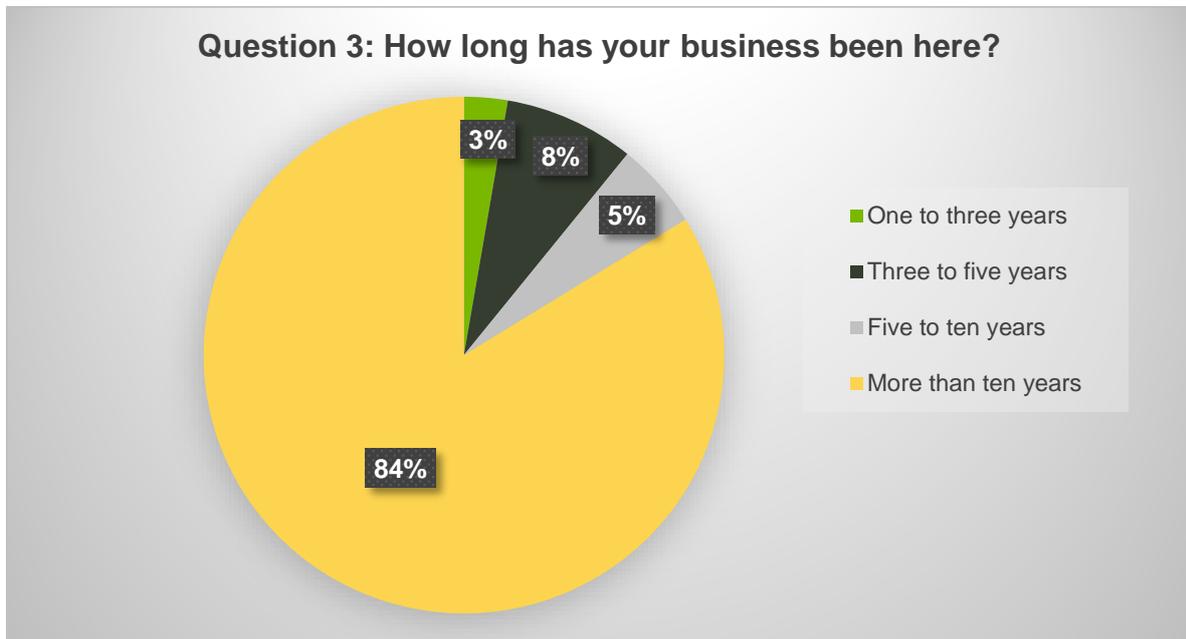


Figure 4-4 Operation of business

Question 4: Employee structure

Businesses were asked about the number and type of employees working in their business. Responses are shown in Figure 4-5. Full time employees were the most common across the businesses in Coonabarabran, followed by casual employees and then part time. Many businesses that answered this question indicated mixed employee structures, for example hiring some casual staff and some full-time staff.

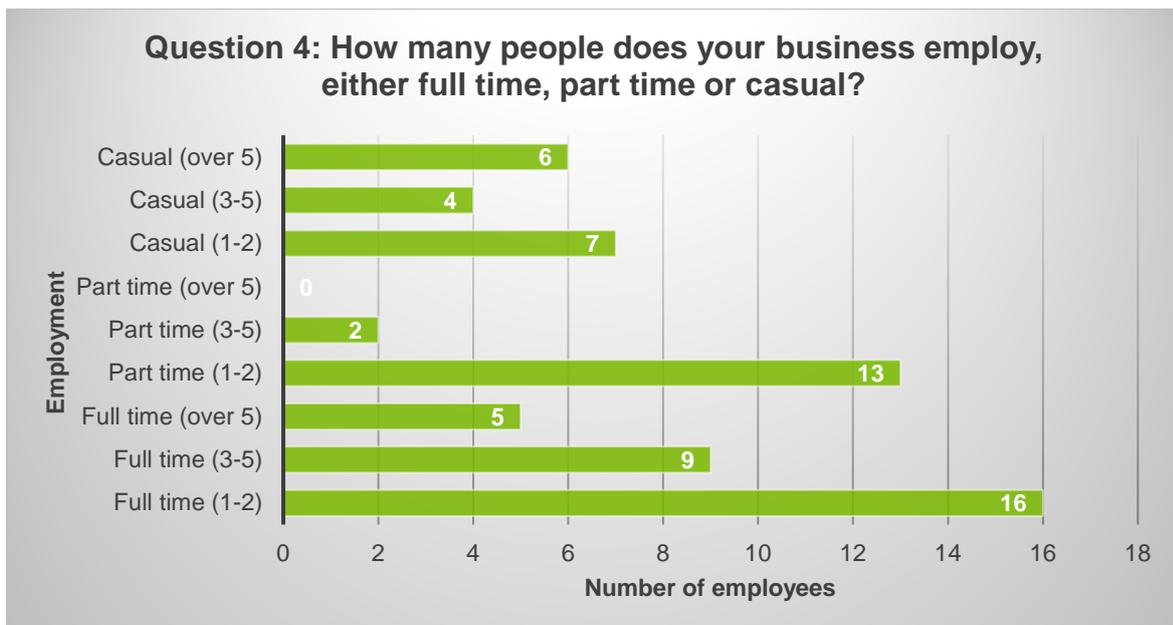


Figure 4-5 Employee structure

Question 5: Size of business

Figure 4-6 represents the size of businesses in Coonabarabran. Of the 32 businesses that answered this question, majority of businesses were small businesses (up to \$1million in turnover).

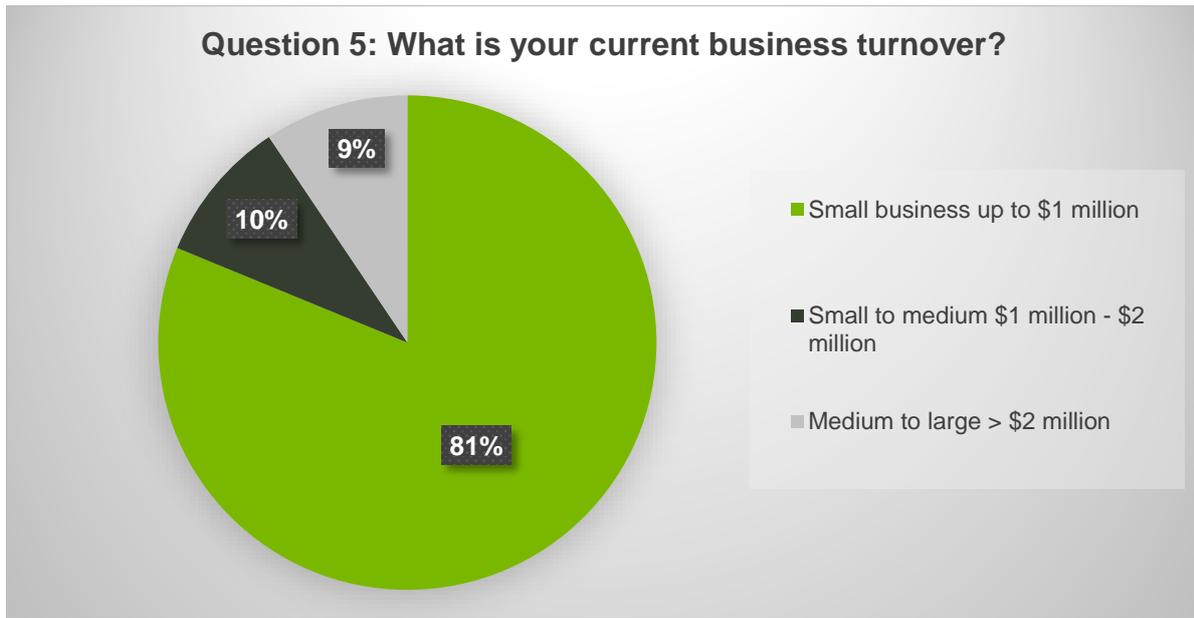


Figure 4-6 Size of business

Question 6: Vehicles accessing businesses

Businesses were asked what the largest size vehicle that accessed their business was. Of the 36 businesses that answered this question (see Figure 4-7), 58 per cent of businesses stated that large vehicles access their business, followed by medium sized vehicles.

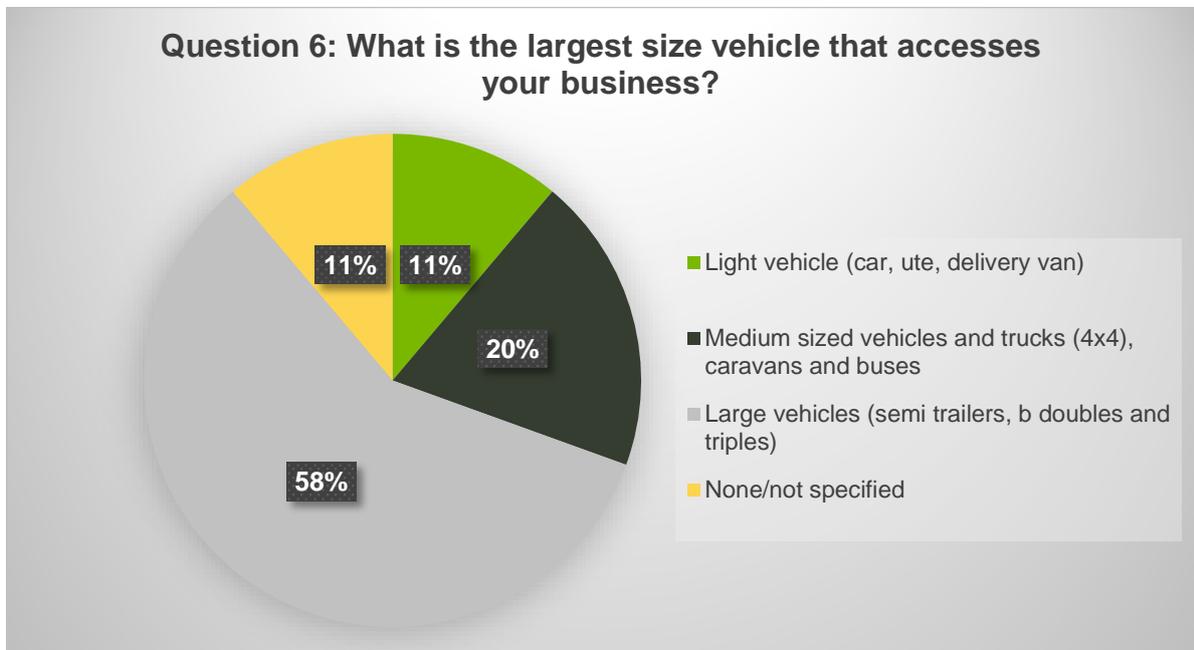


Figure 4-7 Size of vehicles that access businesses

Question 7: Marketing and advertising

Businesses were asked how their customers hear about their business (Figure 4-8). A total of 32 businesses responded to this question, with recipients being able to provide more than one answer. The most common responses to this question were:

- Word of mouth (23 businesses)
- Online / Google / Website / Tripadvisor (19 businesses)
- Social media (10 businesses)
- Other / did not specify (8 businesses)
- Passing trade / visual (7 businesses).

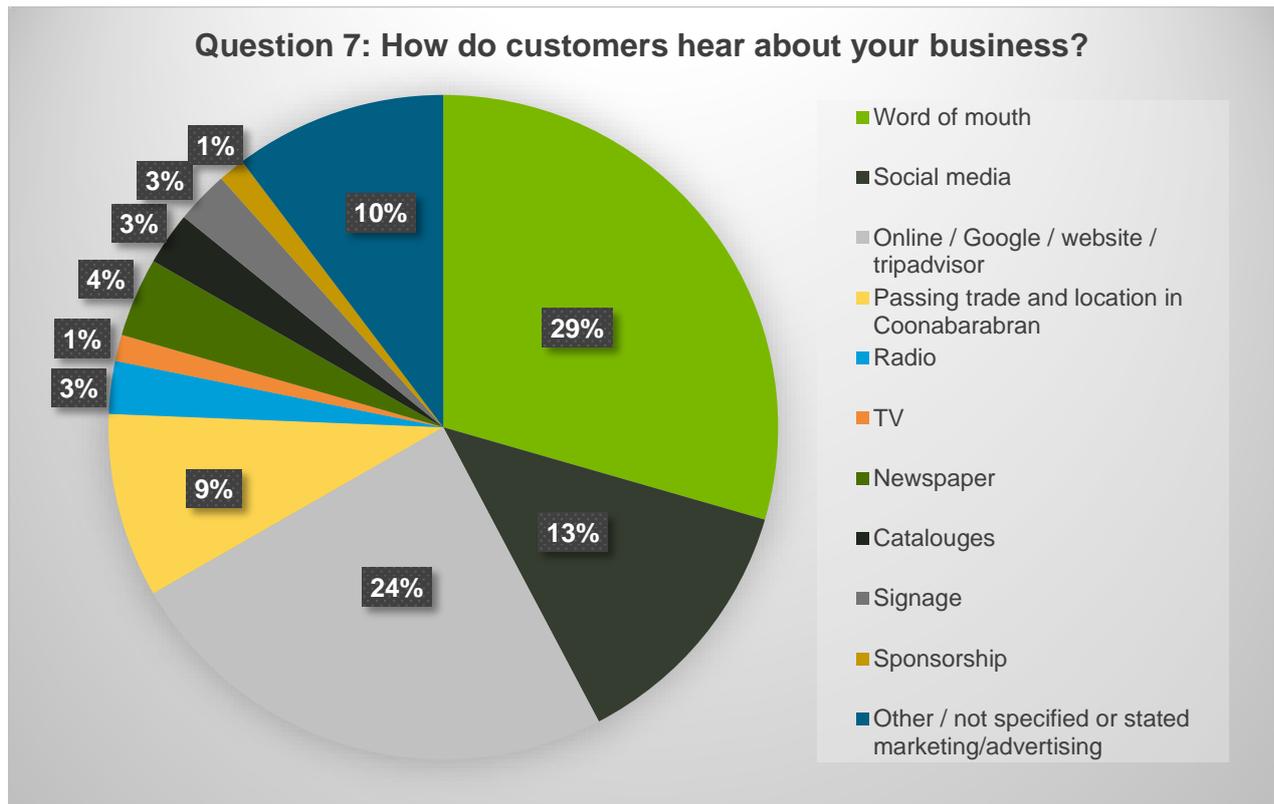


Figure 4-8 Marketing and advertising

Question 8: Customer behaviour: peak trading periods

Recipients were asked to identify the peak trading periods for their business (Figure 4-9). Recipients were allowed to provide more than one answer. Of the 38 recipients that answered this question, the most common responses were between 9am and 5pm between the following times:

- 2pm to 5pm: 20 businesses
- 9am to noon: 19 businesses
- Noon to 2pm: 15 businesses.

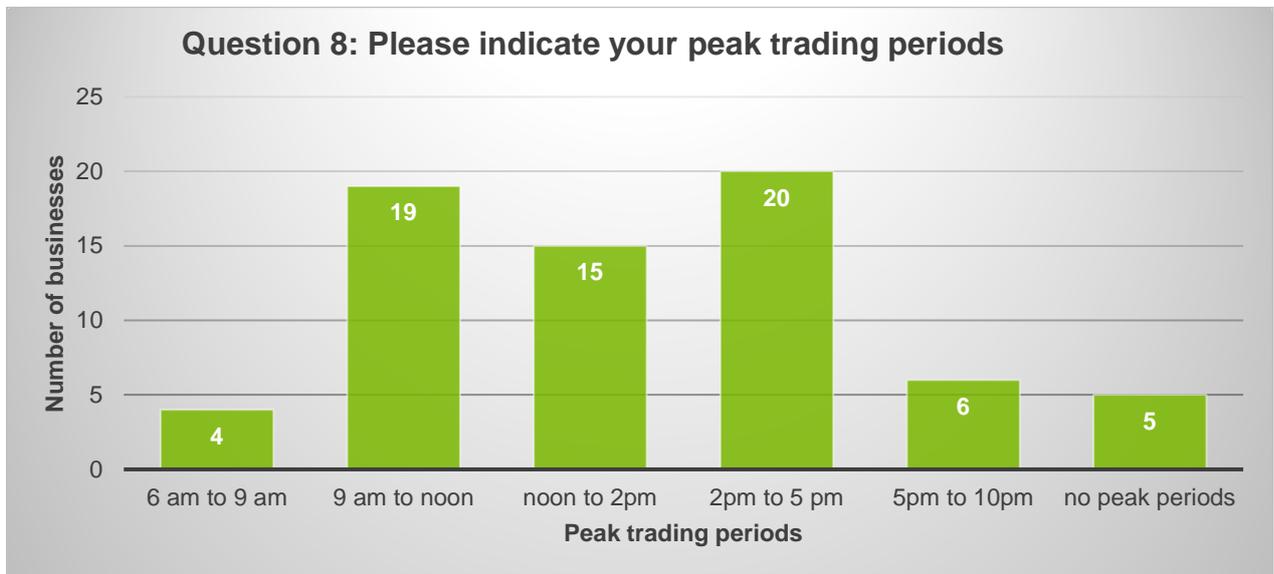


Figure 4-9 Peak trading periods

Question 9: Seasonal variation

Businesses were asked if they noticed seasonal variation during trading. As shown in Figure 4-10, 68 per cent of businesses indicated that they experience seasonal variation.



Figure 4-10 Seasonal variation

Some businesses that answered this question provided insight into their busiest times. Key themes amongst these answers for the busiest periods included:

- School holidays
- During events and event seasons (e.g. pony season)
- Christmas
- Factors such as weather and time of year, rug repairs in the winter are higher
- February to June.

Question 10: Sources of trade

Recipients were asked what percentage of their trade was from local customers, regional customers, passing trade/visitors and walk in customers. Figure 4-11 indicates that over 50 per cent of trade for most businesses comes from local trade (within Coonabarabran) and passing trade or visitors (not local to the region).

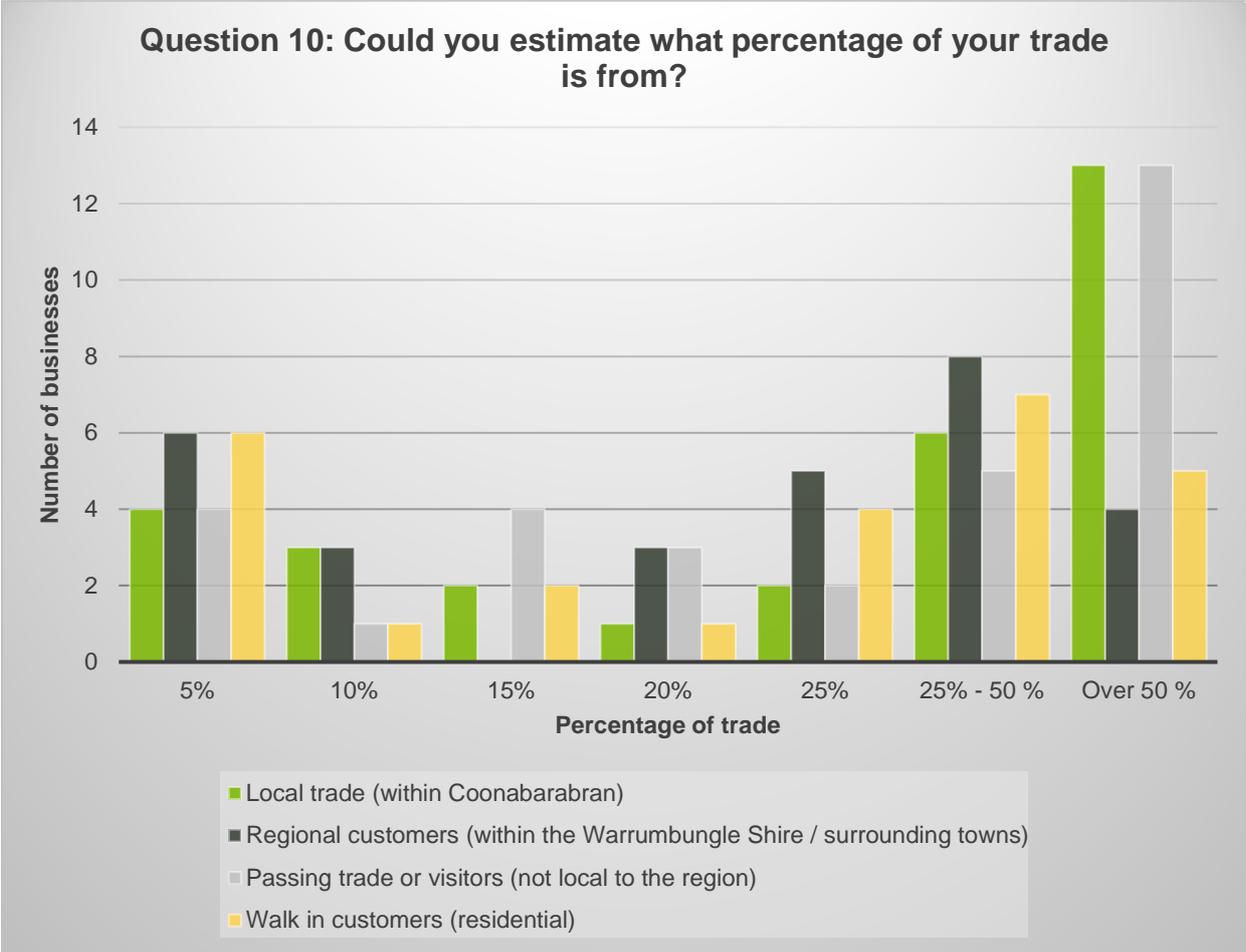


Figure 4-11 Sources of trade

Question 11a and 11b: Service to walk-in trade

Recipients were asked if their business serviced walk-in trade. All 37 respondents that answered this question stated “Yes”, they did service walk-in trade. When prompted with the following question of how this is done, survey recipients provided the following answers:

- On the spot service is provided
- On the spot service or can make an appointment if required (some businesses stated appointments were needed)
- Retail trade and food services provide instant service to customers
- Depending on the level of service required, for example repairs may take longer
- Depending on the vacancies and availability
- Emergency services can be provided for walk in customers if possible
- Some businesses stated that appointments are preferred but that they are always willing to assist where possible
- Same day service, or within the week.

Question 12: Factors that could influence daily trade

Figure 4-12 provides an overview of the factors that could influence daily trade for businesses in Coonabarabran. 34 recipients answered this question, with the most common responses being:

- Weather, particularly rain
- Holidays, time of year, seasonality and tourists
- Natural disasters including fires, drought and flooding.

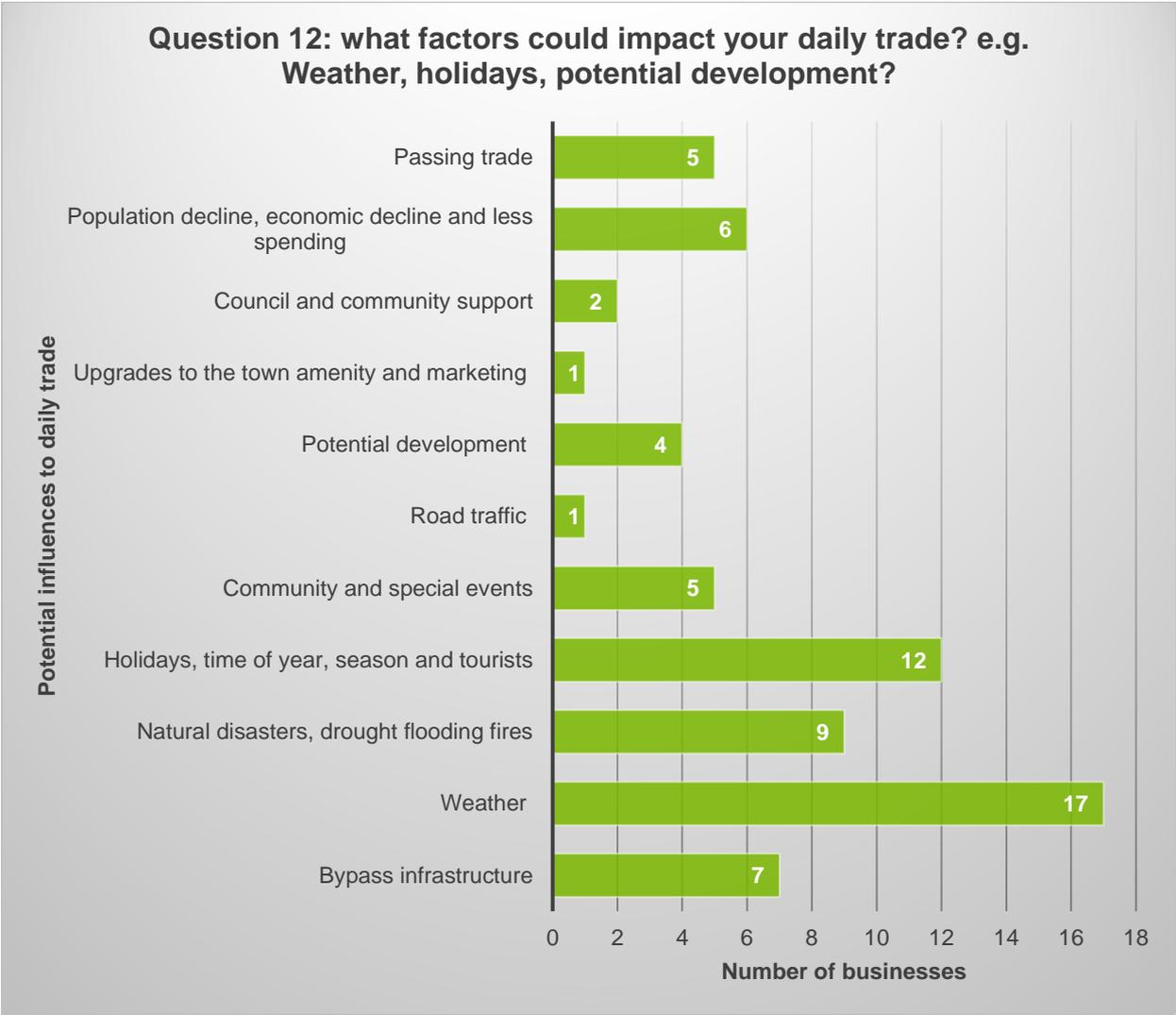


Figure 4-12 Potential influences of daily trade

Question 13: Advertising

Businesses were asked what activities or platforms they used to advertise or market their business and how frequently these platforms were used (Figure 4-13). The responses in the 'other' category in this question included school newsletters, bulletins and events such as shows and markets. Word of mouth, social media, advertising and local newspaper advertising were the most used marketing platforms. The most common responses for the frequency of use were:

- Word of mouth (24 businesses – daily)
- Social media (15 businesses – weekly)
- Social media (10 businesses daily)
- Advertising (8 businesses daily).

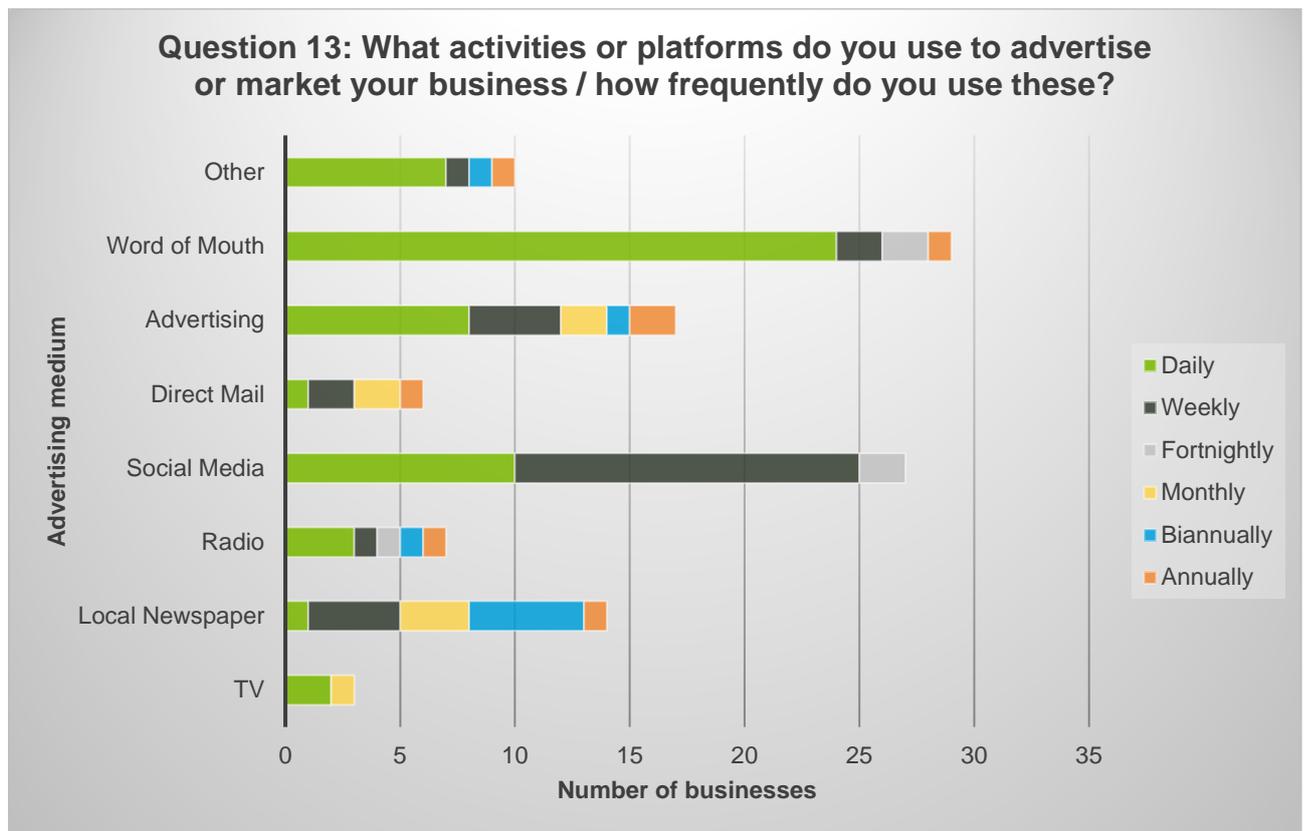


Figure 4-13 Marketing platforms

Question 14: Changes in business over the past five years

Figure 4-14 presents the results of the 33 recipients that answered the question about noticing changes to businesses over the past five years. 34 per cent of businesses noticed changes in the past five years related to drought, fires, flooding, economic decline and changes on reliance of passing trade. Other recipients stated they had noticed changes (24 per cent) but did not specify what these changes were.

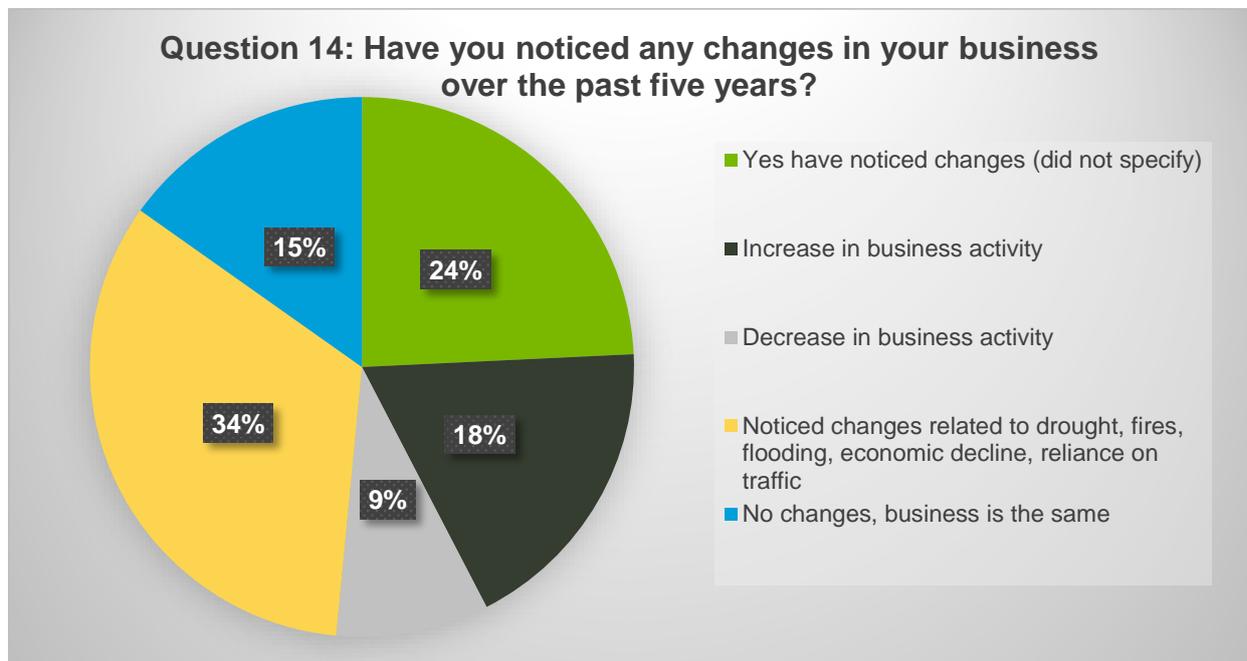


Figure 4-14 Changes over the past five years

Question 15: Economic perspective

Recipients were asked how they would describe Coonabarabran from an economic perspective. A total of 37 businesses answered this question. As shown in Figure 4-15, 57 per cent of recipients perceived Coonabarabran to be declining slowly, with 30 per cent of recipients indicating that they perceived it to be deteriorating more rapidly.

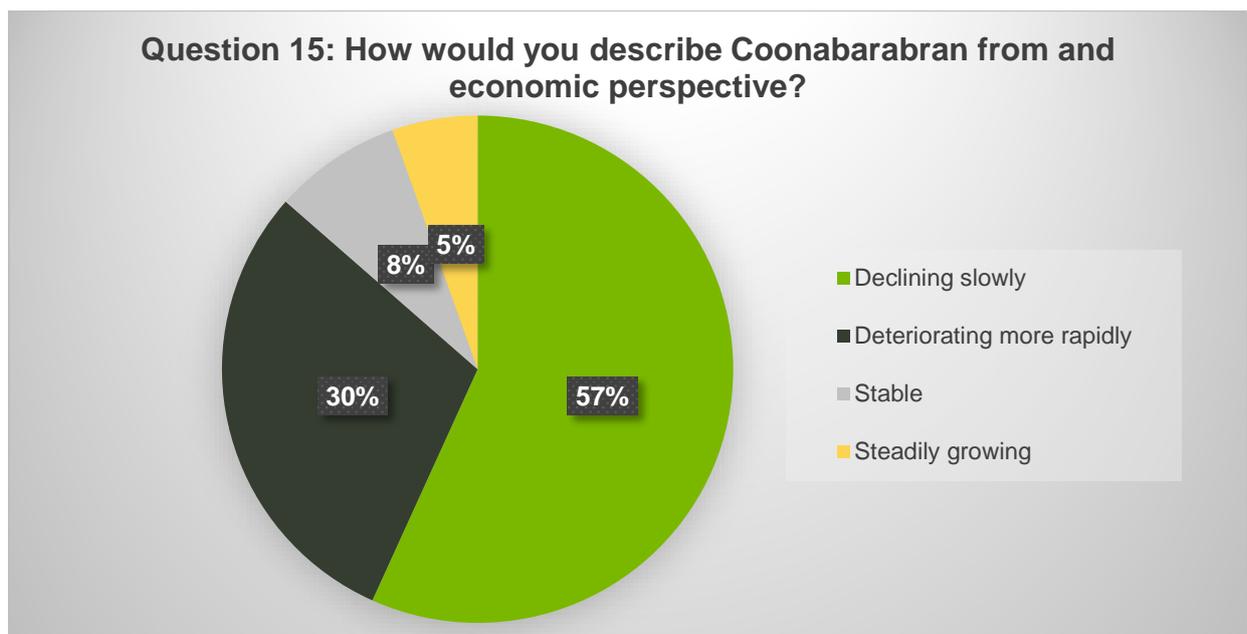


Figure 4-15 Economic perspective

Question 16: Position on a proposed bypass

Recipients of the survey were asked questions about the proposed bypass (details in Section 1.1), including if they supported the proposed bypass. A total of 35 businesses answered this question, with 17 businesses stating they supported the bypass and 18 businesses stating they did not support the proposed bypass (see Figure 4-16). Those that did not support the bypass were then prompted to provide some more insight into their perception of the bypass. Justifications for why people did not support the bypass included:

- No existing issue with the traffic through town and has been that way for many years. No reported incidents of truck accidents in the main street. Safety risks and time saving benefits don't warrant bypass
- The bypass will not drastically save travellers any time. The Government and Transport for NSW should look at putting a bypass through larger towns i.e. Dubbo. Inland Rail will also remove trucks from the road
- The bypass will kill this town that is already suffering from the worst drought in history
- The bypass will have a domino effect on the town, making other businesses fall after the first
- The town relies on passing trade and people won't stop in town without a highway. Travellers will not detour into town, unless they really need to. With that effect, stores will cease trading, and drive locals to move elsewhere.

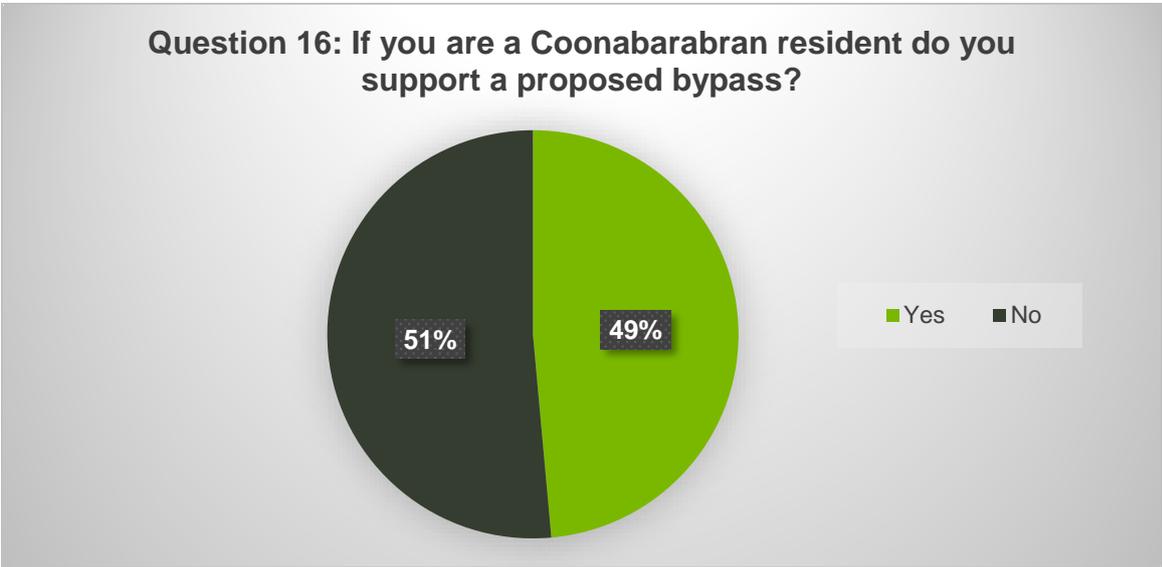


Figure 4-16 Position on a proposed bypass

Question 17: Potential impacts of the proposal – Part 1

Businesses were asked about how they thought a proposed bypass would affect their turnover. Recipients were asked to indicate what degree of impact the bypass would have. 35 businesses answered this question. As shown in Figure 4-17, majority of respondents stated that a proposed bypass would have a large negative effect on their business turnover, with 26 per cent of businesses stating that a bypass would have a small negative impact.

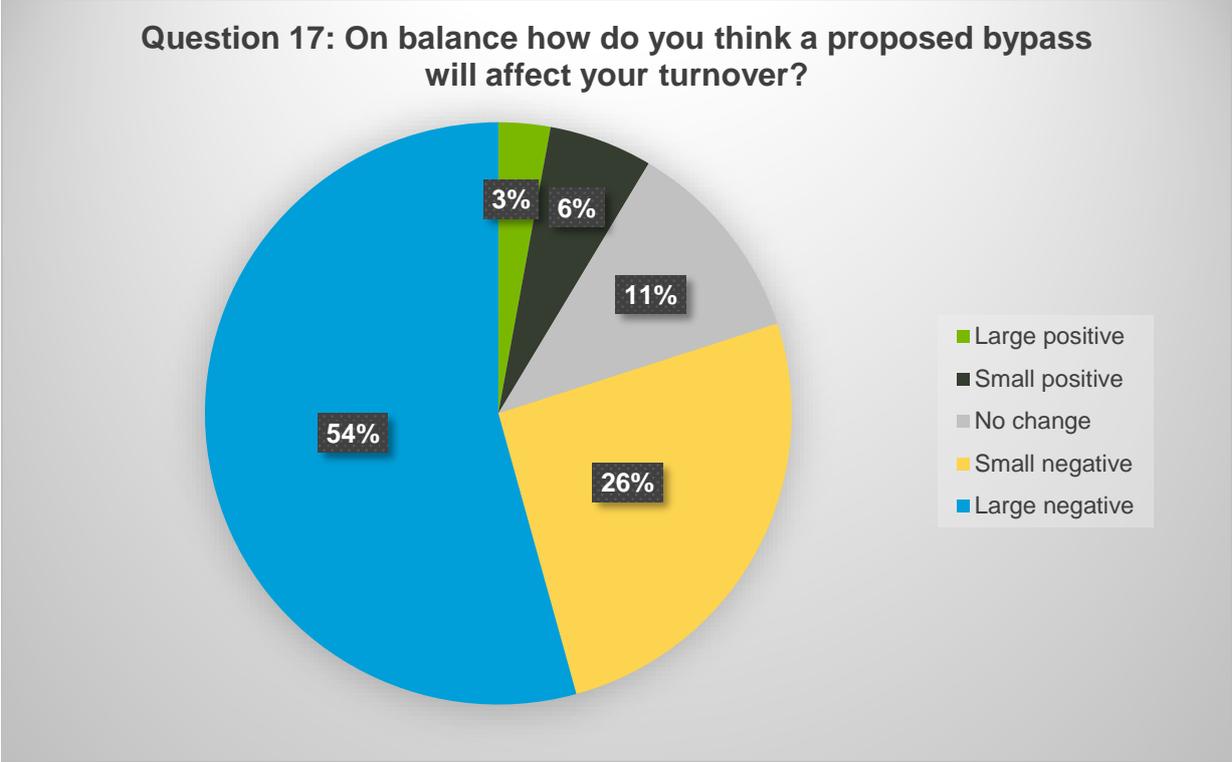


Figure 4-17 Potential impacts to turnover

Question 18: Potential impacts of the proposal – Part 2

Figure 4-18 presents the degree of impact businesses perceive would occur if a bypass was established. The question provided two options to consider:

- impact from reduction in passing trade that now stops in Coonabarabran (18a)
- impact from a calmed traffic environment attracts more business activity to the town (18b).

34 businesses answered the first part of the question (18a), and 32 businesses answered the second part of the question (18b).

Businesses that answered 18a considered the bypass to mostly have a significant impact on businesses from a reduction in passing trade (19 businesses), followed by no impacts (eight businesses) and some degree of impact (seven businesses).

Businesses that answered 18b considered the calmed traffic environment to mostly have no impact on business (18 businesses), followed by some impact (10 businesses) and a significant impact (four businesses).



Figure 4-18 Factors affecting businesses following a bypass

Question 19: Potential impacts of the proposal - Part 3

Businesses were asked how a proposed bypass would affect the local economy (Figure 4-19). Of the 37 businesses that answered this question, 57 per cent of businesses stated that a proposed bypass would really undermine the town's economy, followed by 24 per cent of businesses who stated that a proposed bypass would have a moderate negative impact on the economy. 11 per cent of businesses stated that a proposed bypass would encourage moderate growth and eight per cent stated that a proposed bypass would have no impact on the local economy.

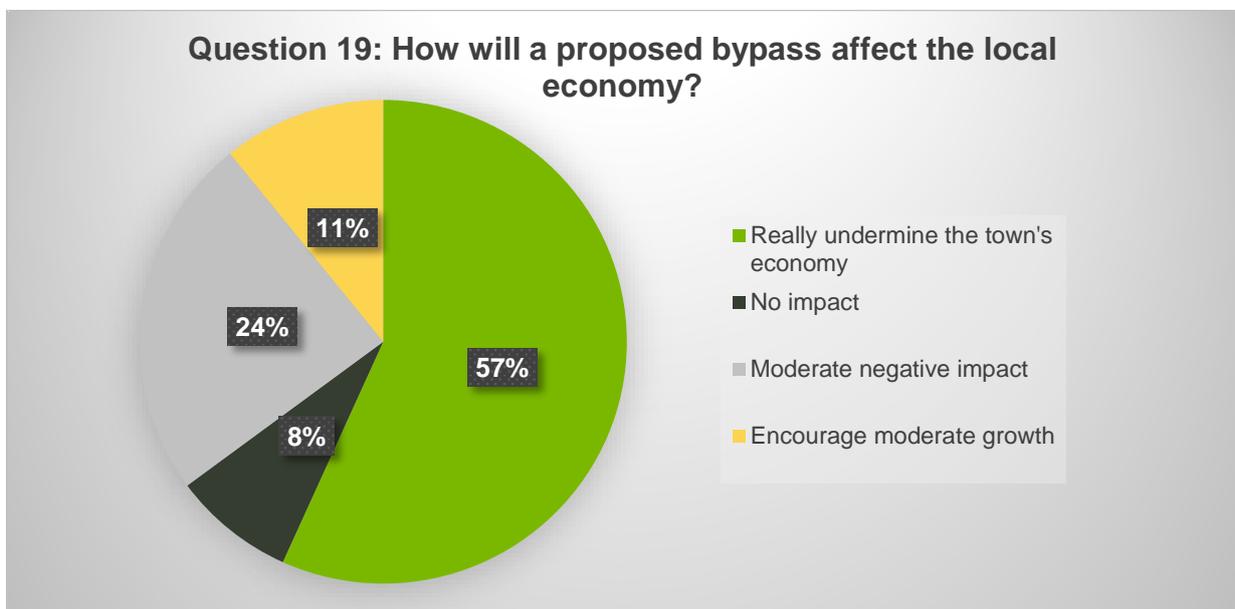


Figure 4-19 Potential impacts on the local economy

Question 20: Opportunities

19 businesses provided responses to Question 20 which asked if businesses had identified any opportunities associated with a proposed bypass that might support local business. As shown in Figure 4-20, 32 per cent of businesses indicated that it would provide for a new location for business on the bypass, followed by 26

per cent that stated 'other' opportunities would occur. 21 per cent of businesses stated that it would improve amenity and provide for new business opportunities.

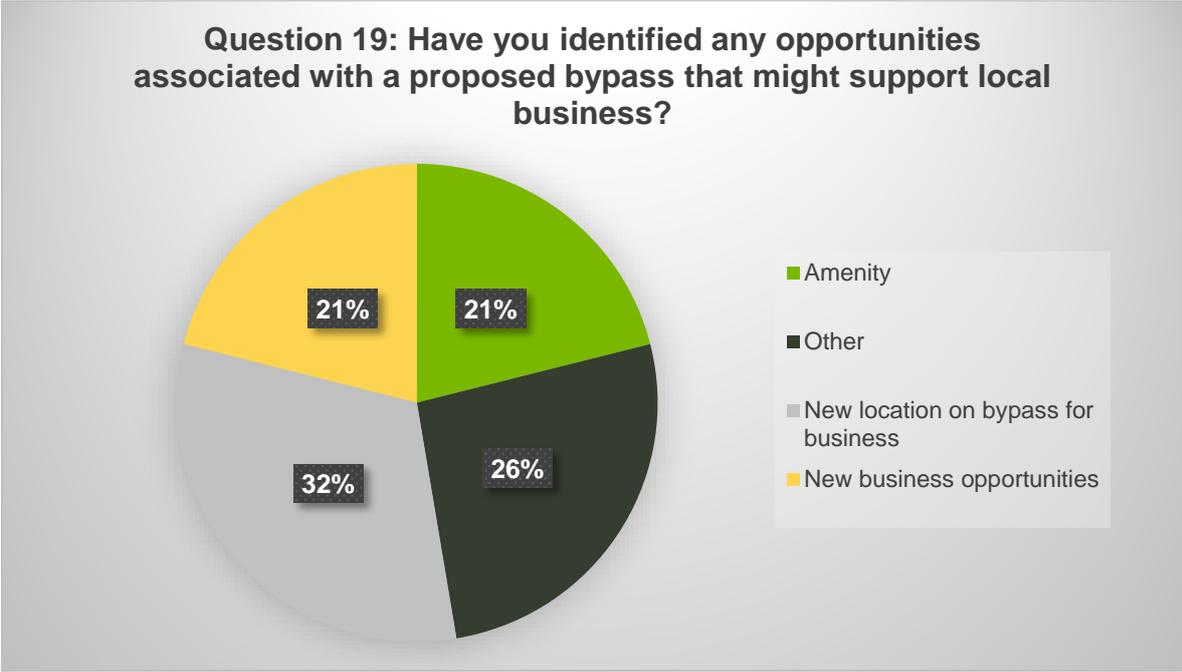


Figure 4-20 Opportunities associated with the proposed bypass

Question 21: Moving business to the bypass

Businesses were asked if they'd consider moving their business to be located on a proposed bypass (Figure 4-21). 38 businesses answered this question, with 95 per cent of businesses stating that they would not move their business to be a located on a proposed bypass. Some businesses that answered this question also stated that they would potentially move their business if they had no other choice.

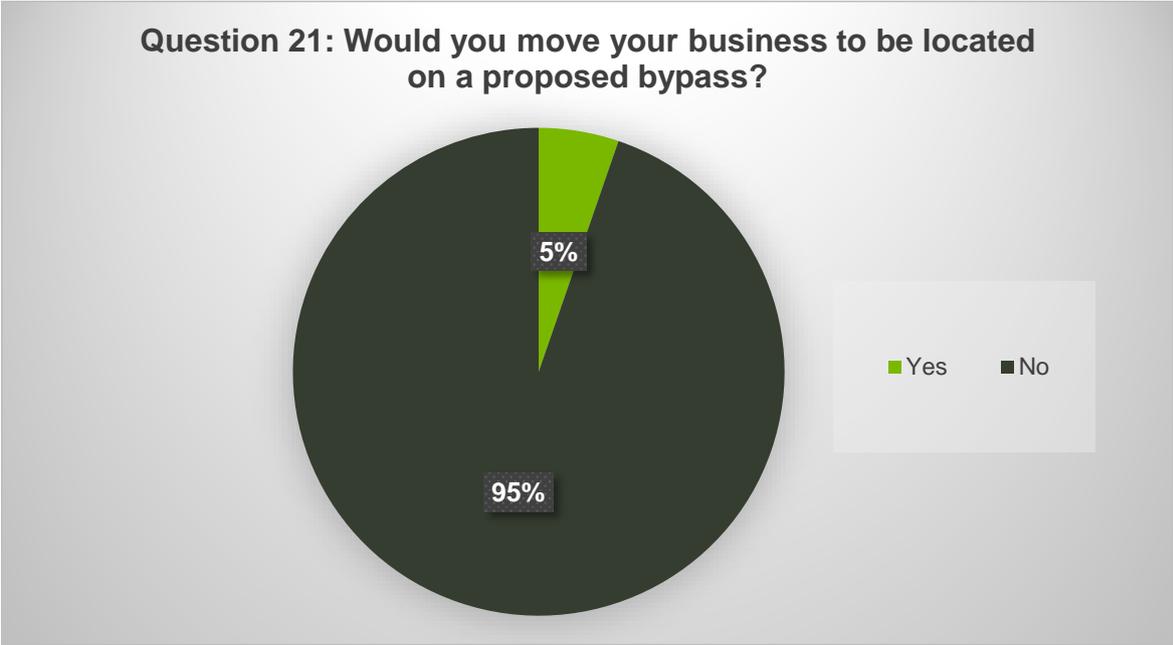


Figure 4-21 Moving business to the bypass

Question 22: Future plans

Businesses were asked an open-ended question about what their future plans are for their business and if a proposed bypass influence these plans. 32 recipients answered this question with the key themes amongst the answers provided being:

- Ensure that the business remains open and that staffing remains the same in the future. The community has a large number of unemployed people already. More unemployed people in town will have flow on effects such as increase in crime, mental health issues and drug use
- No future plans have been considered or stated
- The town needs to engage with the Transport for NSW and local and State governments to enable upgrading of existing and new facilities to improve the town. This includes improving the street appeal of the town. This will help to attract more visitors and market Coonabarabran to passing traffic that needs to be diverted to stop and shop
- Business is planning to remain as is, which may be affected by the bypass – having a negative impact
- Businesses had future plans for expansion/renovation/redcoration to build turnover. However, some businesses explained that the introduction of a bypass may change these plans
- To modify/adjust the business into a different style (more niche/boutique style/move toward local manufacture of more artistically influenced items)
- Hopes for the drought to break and trading to pick up again, potentially to employ others and to encourage locals back into the store and local spending
- Plans to sell the business due to declining trade or with hopes to retire
- Plans to grow/develop business, however concerned worried about the declining state of town
- Bypass would influence business and would influence our decision to continue trading
- Business has been affected due to fires, and business is not as busy. With not many people coming through the bypass will likely mean more people bypassing the town. Will attempt to continue as is
- Unsure.

Question 23: Other project related matters and feedback

Recipients were provided with the opportunity to provide any further questions, queries and comments. 30 recipients provided additional comments, the themes of these responses being:

- Consider reducing the speed limit through town to 40 kilometres per hour, particularly if the bypass is being developed with the objective to improve safety for the community and pedestrians. Consider the school and the childcare centre on the highway and how the reduced speed limit will influence these areas.
- Funding should be used elsewhere
- Consider upgrades to other areas of regional NSW such as other regional roads to eliminate accidents
- A heavy vehicle bypass would be better, in order to allow passenger vehicles to continue to come into town
- More community representation in planning and feedback should occur, from local businesses and residents
- Similar projects have occurred such as Orange that should be considered during planning and decision making
- Once the bypass occurs it will be hard for residents to leave as they may not be able to sell their property to others who also know about the bypass and decline of the town. In addition, property values would be affected because of the perceived impact of the bypass
- If the proposed bypass was to be constructed, all businesses would need support and assistance to either relocate or advertise along the bypass route

- Moving businesses to the bypass would take community away from the town and the main street, however if required and absolutely necessary to keep business operating, some businesses would move to the bypass.
- A bypass should be constructed, even if the town would undergo changes, it could adjust to suit its new look and benefit from this
- Clear and encouraging signage should be displayed prior to the bypass turn off to encourage travellers to come into Coonabarabran. There are examples of towns that are bypassed unknowingly, missing the town centre. Transport for NSW need a turn off lane with good signage to give the drivers the option to turn off and visit Coonabarabran
- More information on the full and final proposal is required. Community and residents decisions will be based on what the final proposal will be.
- If infrastructure is built on a bypass, there will be large negative changes, however if no infrastructure is built on the bypass change could be minimal. Those alternative stopping options will be detrimental.
- Funds need to be spent investing in the town and its amenities.
- Some businesses would not consider moving their business to be located on a proposed bypass unless it is paid for.
- Family businesses and residents have a strong attachment to town
- Employees are concerned about the bypass and how it will impact them
- The bypass is long overdue and will provide improved amenity to the town. Redirected traffic will improve noise amenity for those outside of the town also.
- The bypass will have a flow-on effect on all business within Coonabarabran. While the slower traffic may make the main street a little more attractive in the short term the lack of passing trade for other business houses will decrease money able to be spent in town. All businesses rely on this passing trade either directly or indirectly.
- Some businesses are dependent on what is located on the bypass.
- Concerned on what will happen if there is another town drought.
- The bypass will help alleviate traffic conditions in the town and shorten the trip between Melbourne and Brisbane, providing greater efficiency
- Safety concerns associated with the bypass, as less people will choose to take a break and increase potential accidents

4.2 Shopper survey

Question 1: Resident or visitor

Figure 4-22 shows the types of survey recipients that participated in the proposal. A total of 45 shoppers answered this question. The most common survey recipients were residents (about 88.89 per cent of recipients), followed by visitors (about 11.11 per cent of recipients).

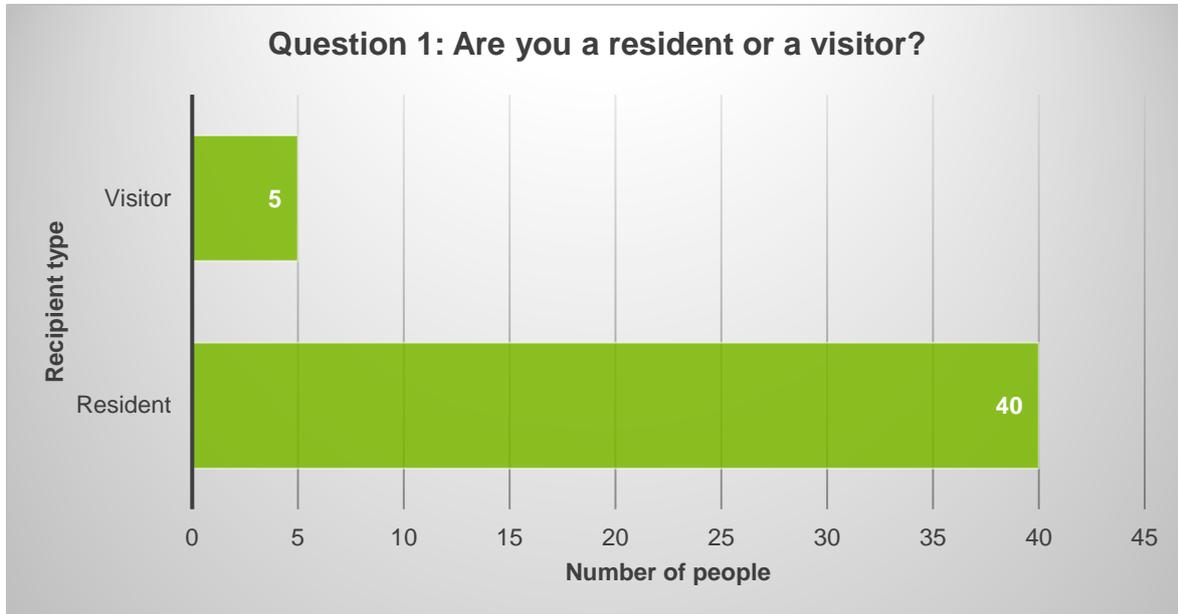


Figure 4-22 Types of survey recipients

Question 2: Reason for visit

Of the five visitors that completed the survey, they indicated the following reasons for their visits (Figure 4-23). Please note that some recipients selected more than one answer:

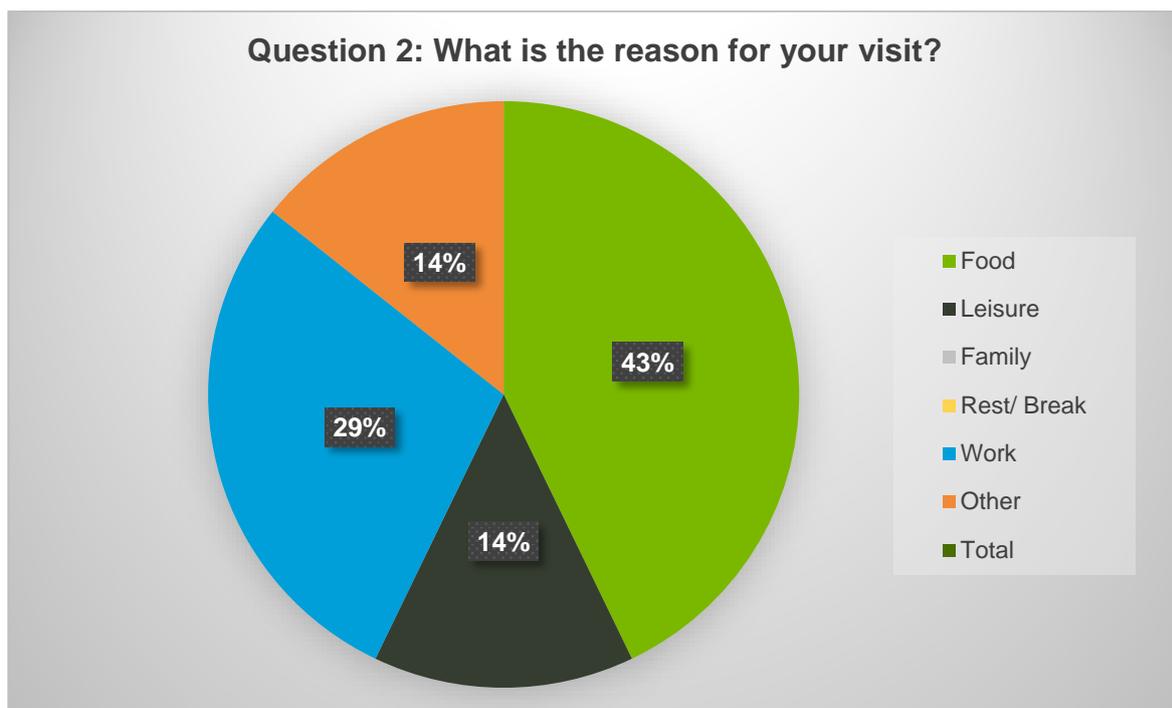


Figure 4-23 Reason for visit

Question 3: In town visitor stays

Of the five visitors that completed the survey, none of them were staying in town as shown in Figure 4-24. Based on feedback obtained during the surveys, many of these visitors were either passing through town on their route to other destinations or visited the town from surrounding regional areas. Some visitors also mentioned that they frequent other similar scale regional towns within the area to support the various local shops and businesses.



Figure 4-24 Recipients that were visiting staying in town

Question 4: Visitation frequency

Figure 4-25 shows how many times visitors visited Coonabarabran. The most common answer was fortnightly, followed by monthly and twice a year.

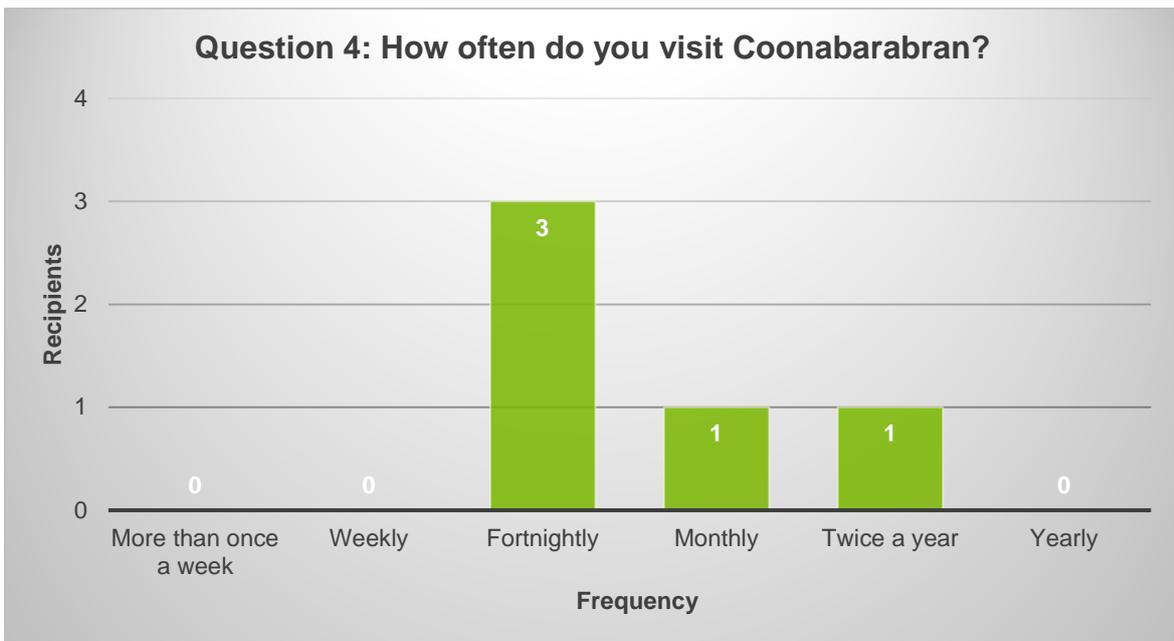


Figure 4-25 Frequency of visits

Question 5: Places visited in Coonabarabran

Visitors were asked which places they visited most when in Coonabarabran. The most common place that visited frequented was Woolworths, followed by local shops and businesses. Figure 4-26 shows the areas that were visited. Survey recipients were able to pick more than one answer in this multiple-choice question.



Figure 4-26 Places visited in Coonabarabran

Question 6: Time spent in Coonabarabran

Visitors were asked about how much time they intended on spending in Coonabarabran during their visit. All visitors responded to this question stating that they would spend around five hours in Coonabarabran during a single visit.

Question 7 and 8: End destination and next stop

Visitors were asked where their end destination was on their trip through Coonabarabran. The following options were provided on the survey:

- Dubbo
- Sydney
- Queensland
- Victoria
- Moree
- Narrabri
- Other

All recipients selected “other” from the options provided. When asked where their next stop following Coonabarabran was, survey recipients provided the following answers:

- Coolah (around 98 kilometres away)
- Orange (around 284 kilometres away)
- Tooraweenah (around 66 kilometres away)
- Baradine (around 51 kilometres away)

- Premer (around 69 kilometres away).

Journey time between these towns and Coonabarabran varied between 40 minutes and over three hours. The location and travel time of these areas indicates that regional visitors and well as visitors travelling on longer journeys (potentially between states and major cities) stop in Coonabarabran.

Question 9: Visitor behaviour post bypass

Visitors were asked if the proposed bypass of Coonabarabran would change their visitor behavior. Figure 4-27 shows that 80 per cent of visitors wouldn't change their visiting behavior, with only 20 per cent of recipients stating that they would still visit Coonabarabran, but less frequently.

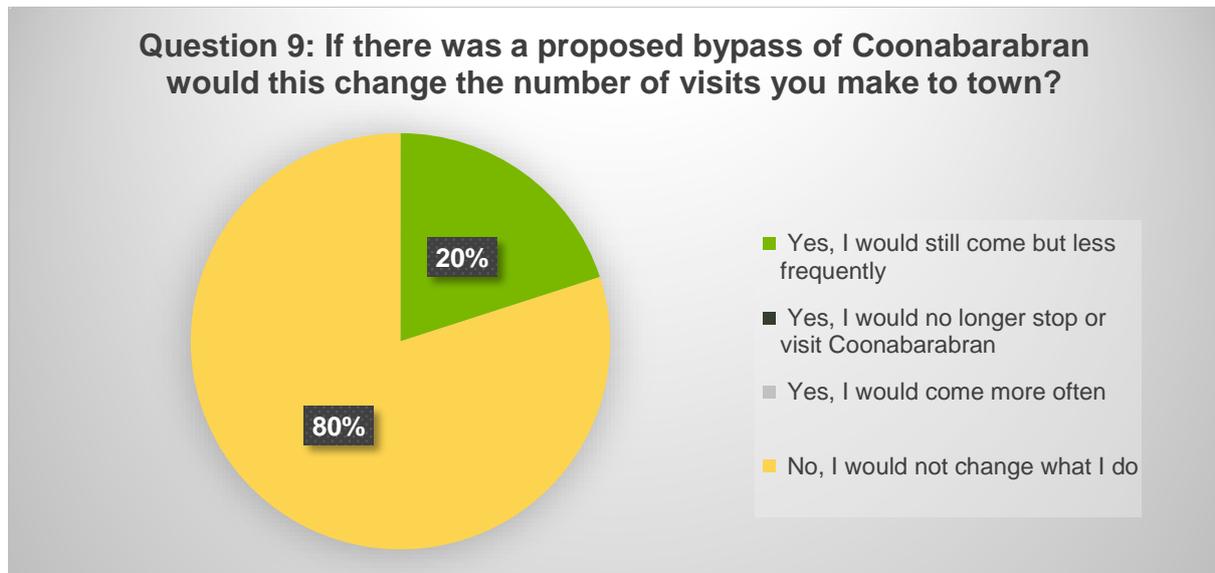


Figure 4-27 Visitor behaviour post bypass

Question 10: Visitor expenditure

Visitors were asked how much money they were likely to spend during their visit. As shown in Figure 4-28, most visitors spent between \$200 to \$500, with some spending between \$500 to \$1000.

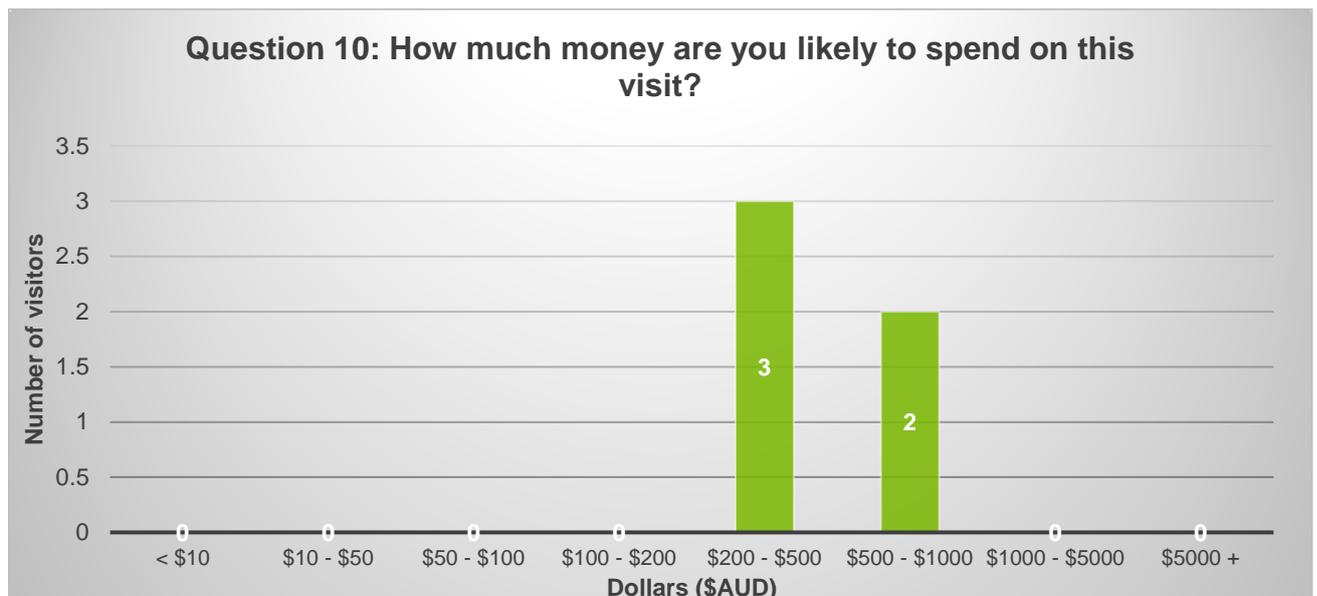


Figure 4-28 Visitor expenditure

Question 11: Customer insights about making Coonabarabran a more attractive place to stay/visit

Figure 4-29 represents visitor responses about how they would make Coonabarabran a more attractive destination. Recipients could provide more than one answer to this question. The most popular answers are as follows:

- Development (43 per cent of respondents selected this answer)
- Food (29 per cent of respondents selected this answer)
- Amenity (14 per cent of respondents selected this answer)
- Tourism (14 per cent of respondents selected this answer).

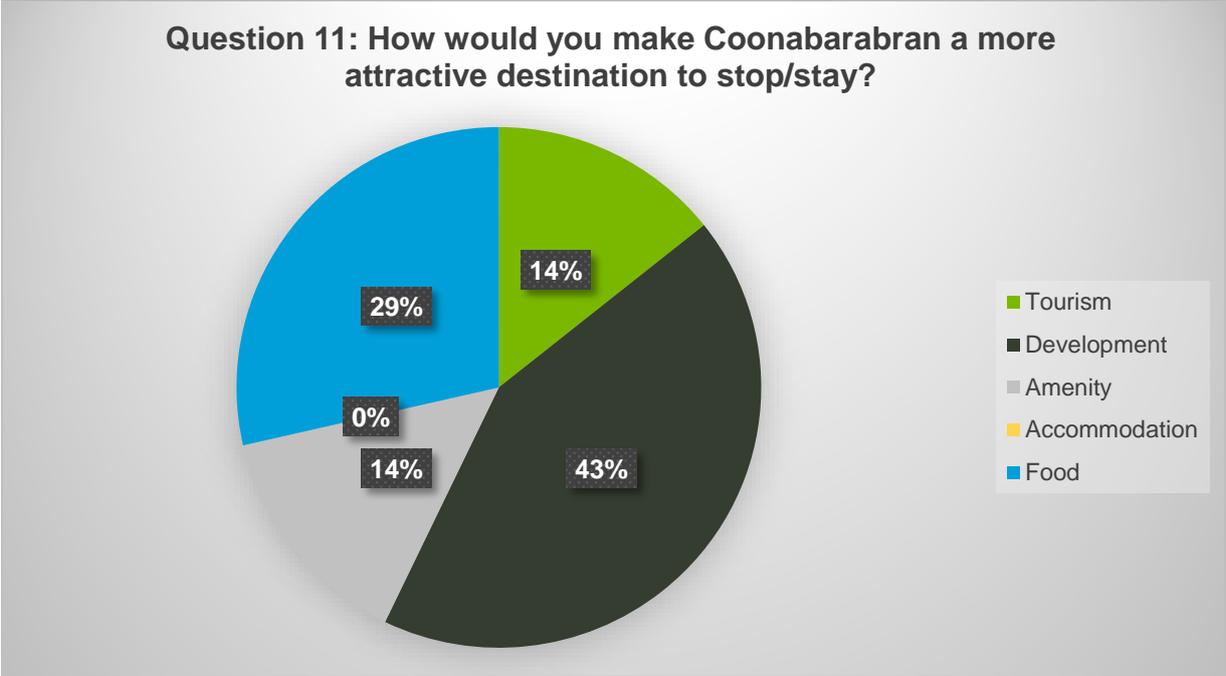


Figure 4-29 Customer insights about making Coonabarabran a more attractive place to stay/visit

Question 12: Living in Coonabarabran

Figure 4-30 shows the duration that residents have lived in Coonabarabran. Of the 39 residents that answered this question, results indicated that most residents have lived in Coonabarabran for more than 10 years, with 22 residents living in Coonabarabran for more than 20 years.

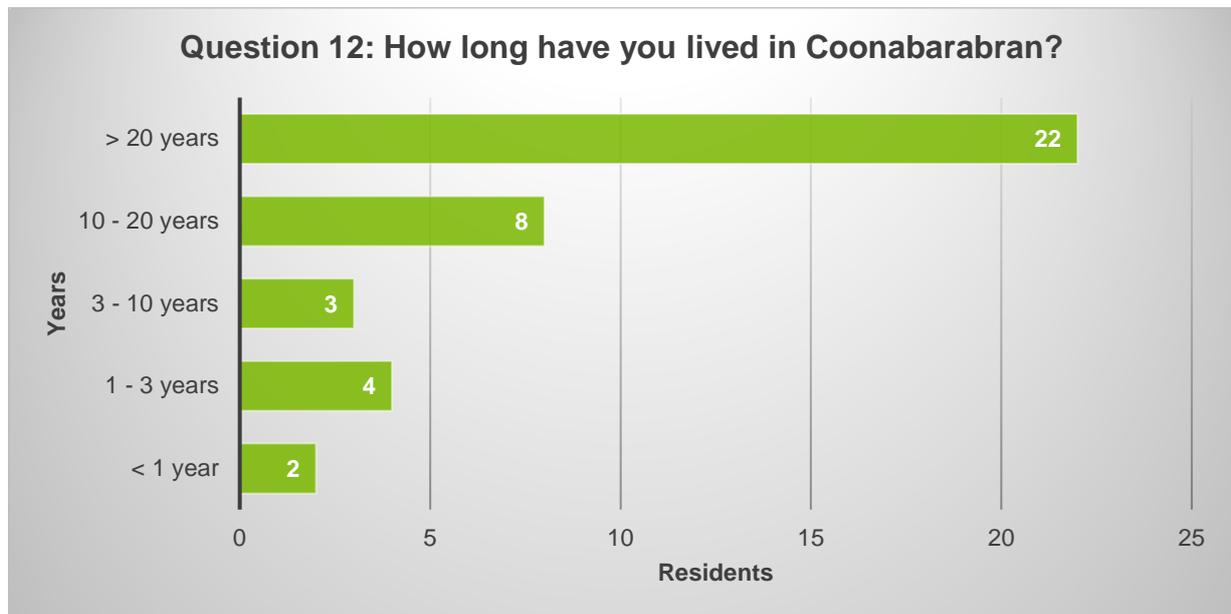


Figure 4-30 Duration of residential living

Question 13: Previous residence or local residence

Residents living in Coonabarabran were asked where they lived previously, or if they grew up in Coonabarabran (Figure 4-31). Out of the 39 recipients that answered this question, 10 grew up and have continued to live in Coonabarabran, with an additional three living in the Warrumbungle Shire local government area (LGA) prior to living in Coonabarabran. Most of the recipients that answered this question lived in Sydney before they moved to Coonabarabran, with majority of others coming from other regional towns or areas (as shown in the figure below).

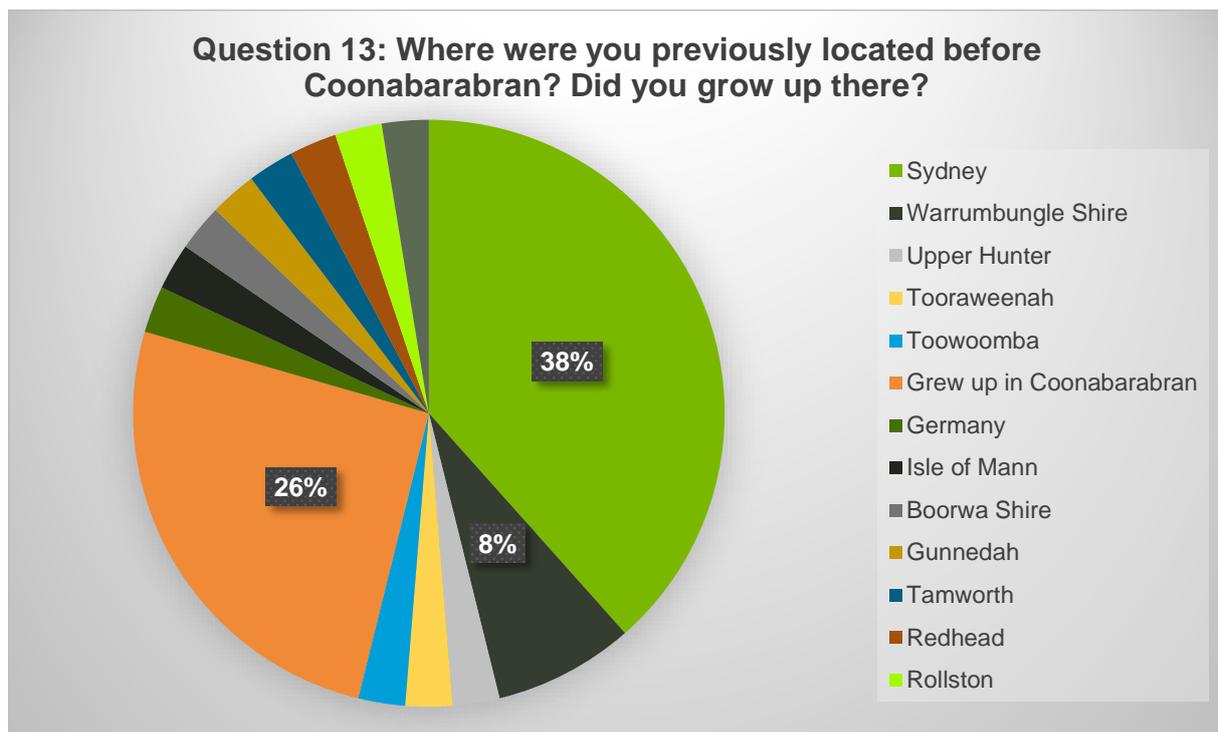


Figure 4-31 Duration of residential living

Question 14: Perceived impacts of the proposed bypass

36 recipients answered this question out of the residents and visitors that completed the survey. During the survey, some recipients chose not to answer this question as they explained that impacts were conditional based on other factors. As discussed previously, some recipients stated that impacts would have differing short term and long-term impacts. Other recipients chose not to answer this question. Of those that answered this question in the survey (as shown in Figure 4-32), the most common perceived impact from the proposed bypass was that it will have a large negative impact. The next most common perceived impact from the proposed bypass was that it would have a small positive impact.

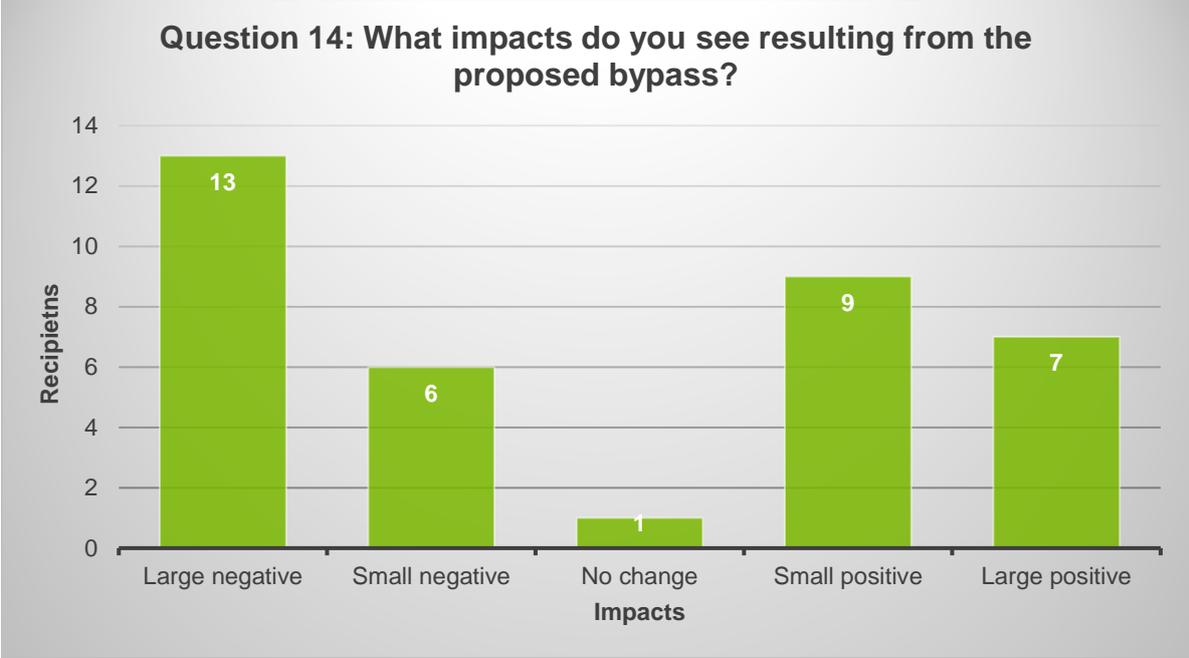


Figure 4-32 Perceived impacts of the proposed bypass

Question 15: Current issues for local businesses in Coonabarabran

38 recipients gave their opinion on what they saw as the current issues for local businesses in Coonabarabran. Based on the responses provided by these recipients, main themes and responses were put into categories (Figure 4-33). Recipients that answered this question identified that the main current issues for local businesses in Coonabarabran were:

- Drought
- Lack of businesses and number of closing businesses in the town
- Lack of and loss of passing trade
- Poor financial status of the town, lack of customer spending and economic decline
- Lack of town vision, customer focus marketing and adaptable strategies
- Low and declining population size.

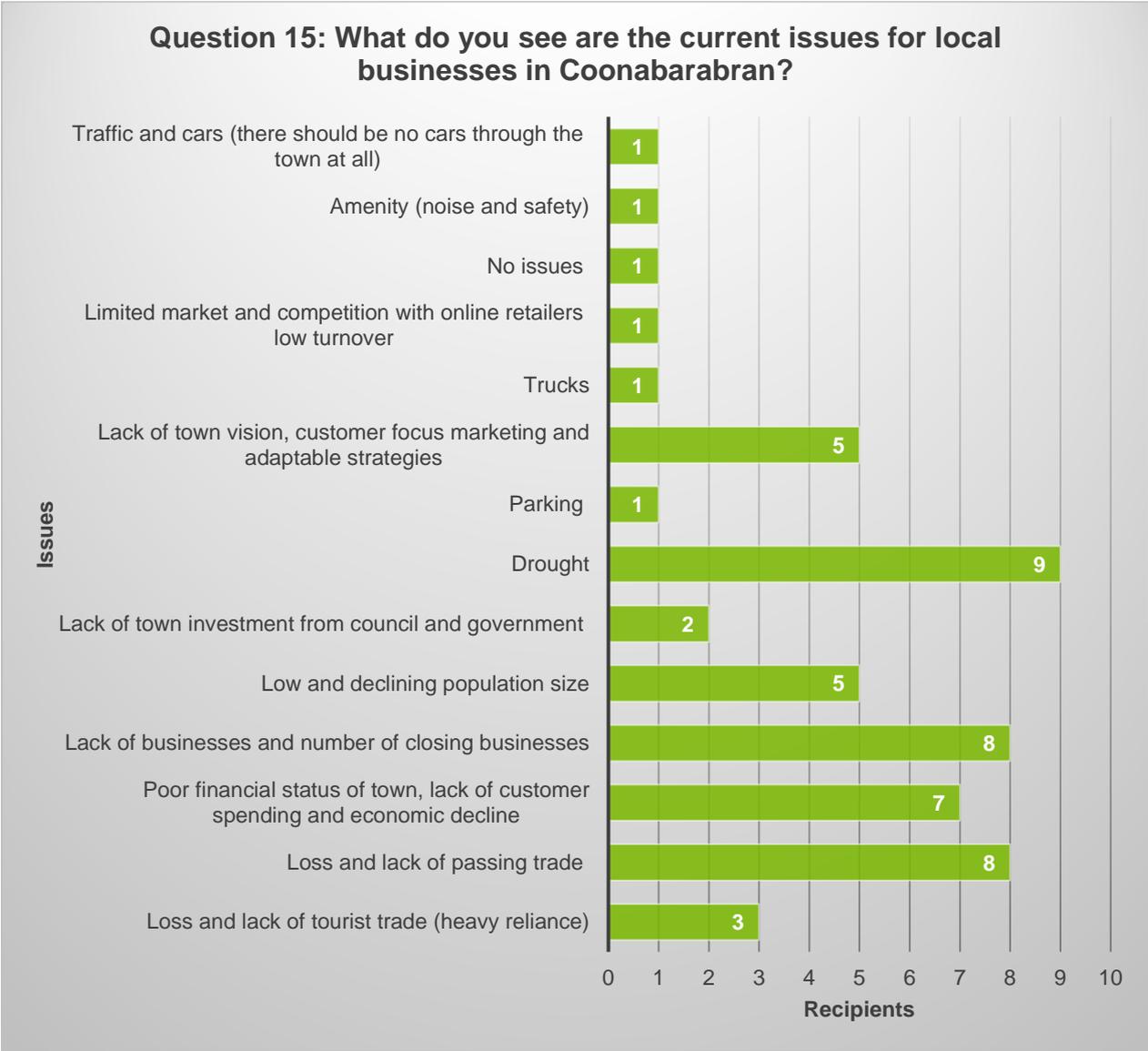


Figure 4-33 Current issues for local businesses in Coonabarabran

Question 16: Perceived improvements from the proposed bypass

Figure 4-34 shows the perceived improvements of the proposed bypass. 41 people provided responses to this question. Recipients were also able to provide more than one answer. The main improvements identified by survey recipient responses were:

- Improved amenity, safety and quality of life (air pollution and noise) – 15 recipients
- Better for the traffic in the main street – 10 recipients
- Less trucks and heavy vehicle traffic – nine recipients.

Of the 41 recipients who provided answers to this question, nine people stated that there would be no improvements as a result of the proposed bypass.

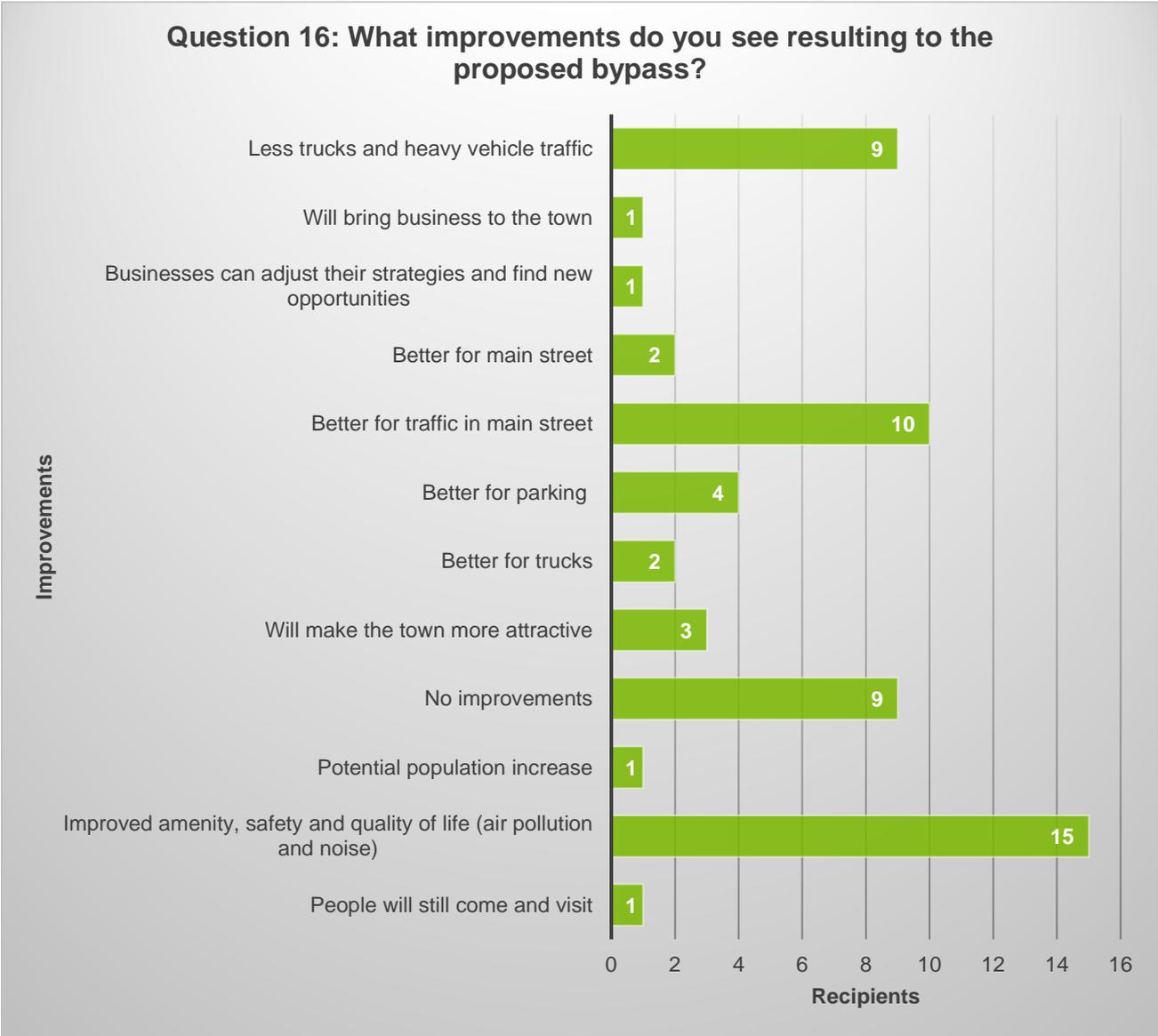


Figure 4-34 Perceived improvements of the proposed bypass

Question 17: Potential change of activities following the bypass

Recipients were asked if their shopping and use of facilities would change if there was a proposed bypass (Figure 4-35). 41 recipients answered this question, with majority of respondents stating that their behaviour would not change if there was a proposed bypass. Some shoppers stated that they would use the shops, cafes and restaurants and facilities more.

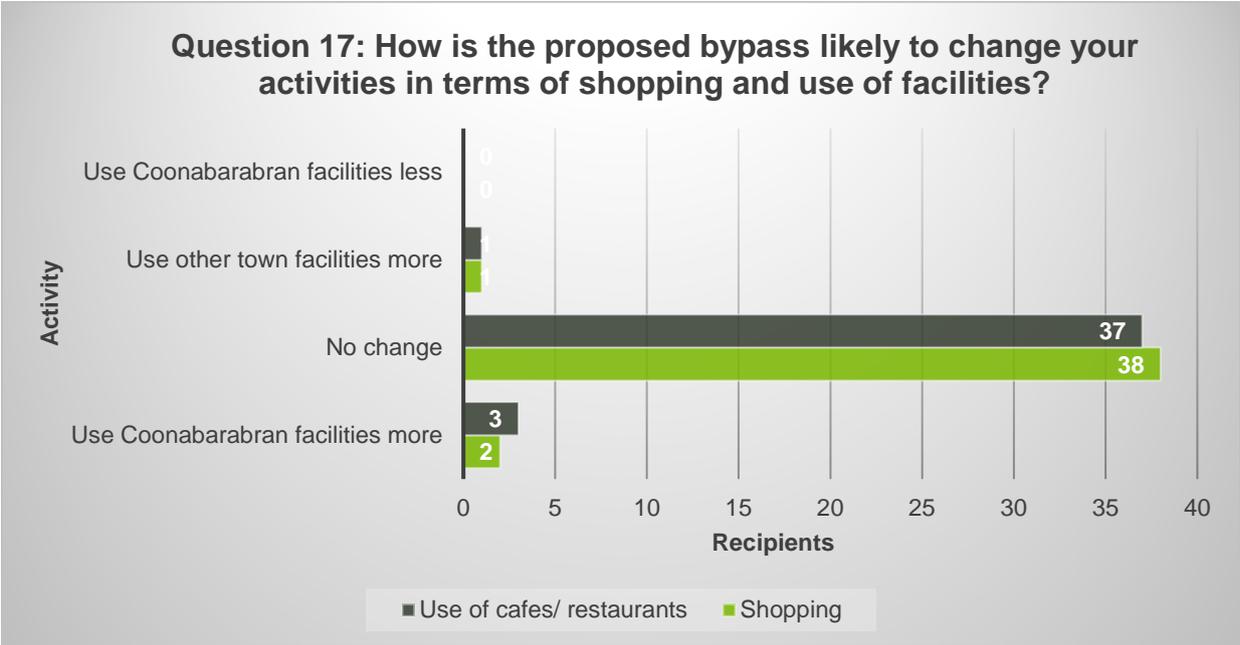


Figure 4-35 Potential changes in shopping and use of facilities

Question 18a and 18b: Main places of interest in town

Shoppers were asked what their main places of interest are in town. This was an open-ended question, allowing recipients to provide more than one answer. Of the 38 recipients that answered this question, 36 recipients stated that they visit the Woolworths, IGA and BWS. As shown in Figure 4-36, other recipients stated they visited local food places, the post office, chemist/pharmacy and various local shops. When answering this question, many respondents stated that they try to shop locally as much as possible to support the businesses in town. Others also stated that they often shop everywhere in town because they are residents.

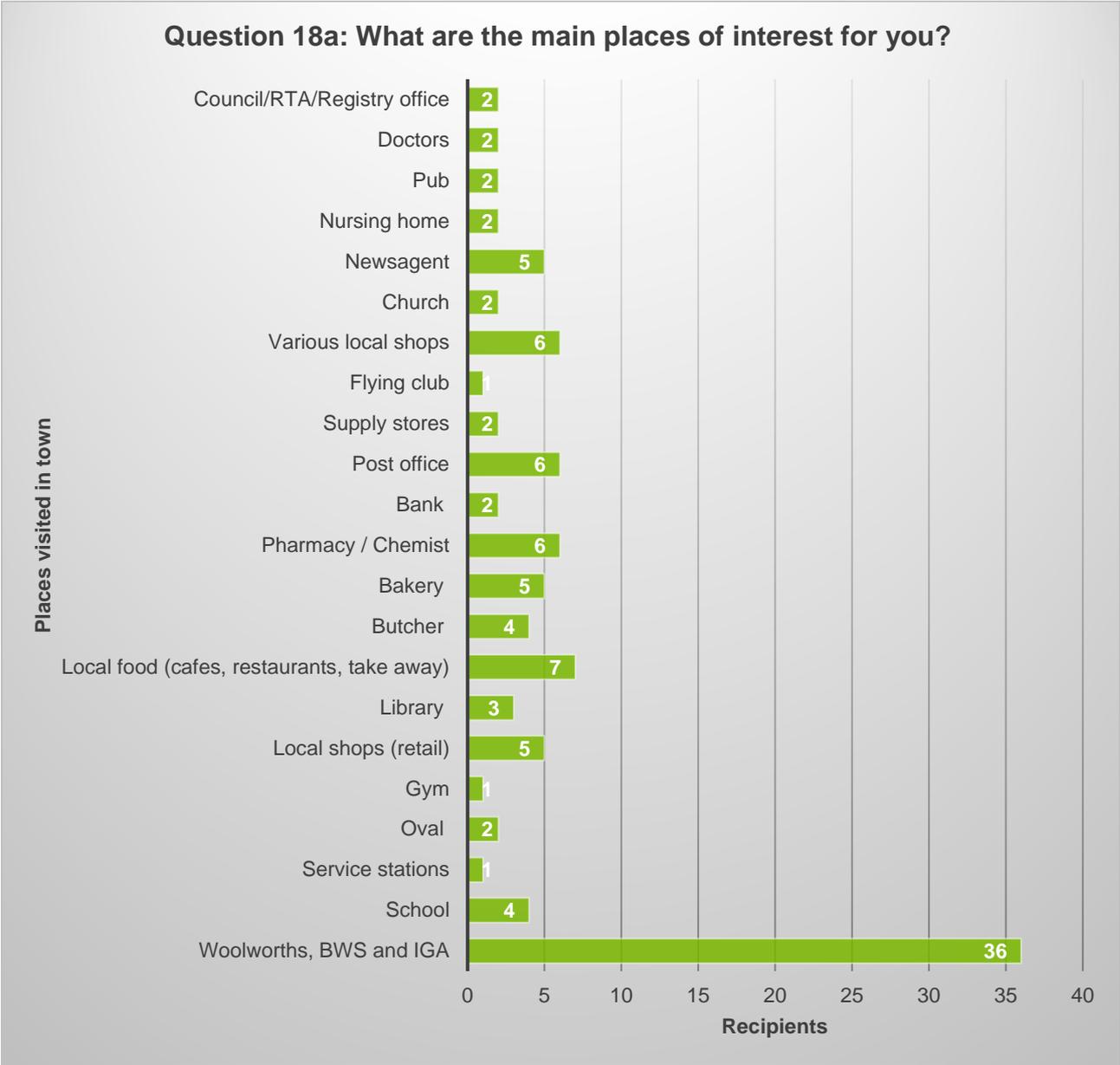


Figure 4-36 Places visited in town

Some shoppers that answered this question also provided insight into how often they visit the shops and facilities in town. Of the 17 recipients that provided answers to this part of the question, most people came into town daily to shop and use the local facilities. Figure 4-37 shows the responses to this question.

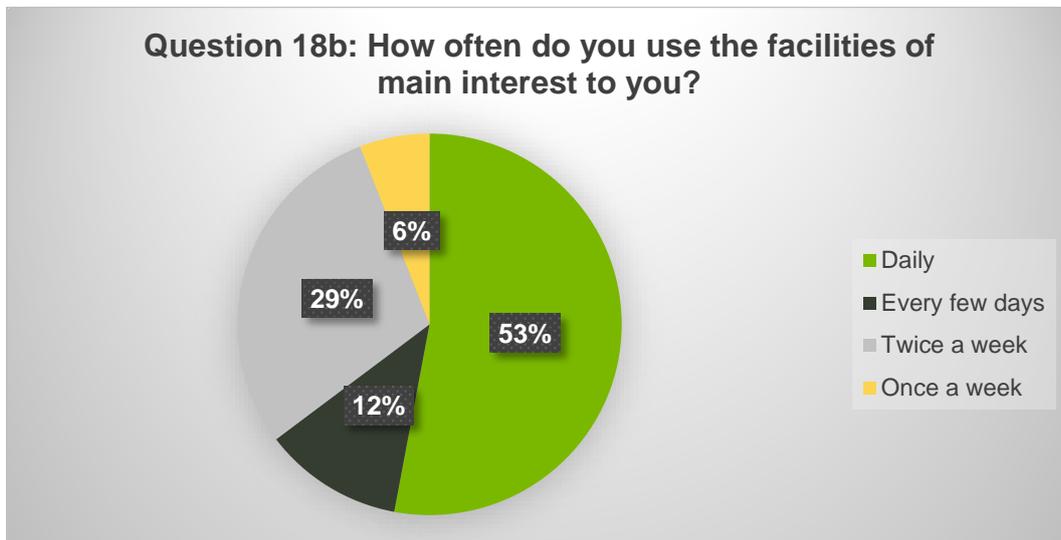


Figure 4-37 Frequency of town visits

Question 19: Position on the proposed bypass

Shoppers were asked if they supported the proposed bypass. Figure 4-38 shows the results of this question, with 62 per cent of shoppers stating that they supported the proposed bypass, and 38 per cent of shoppers stated that they did not support the proposed bypass.

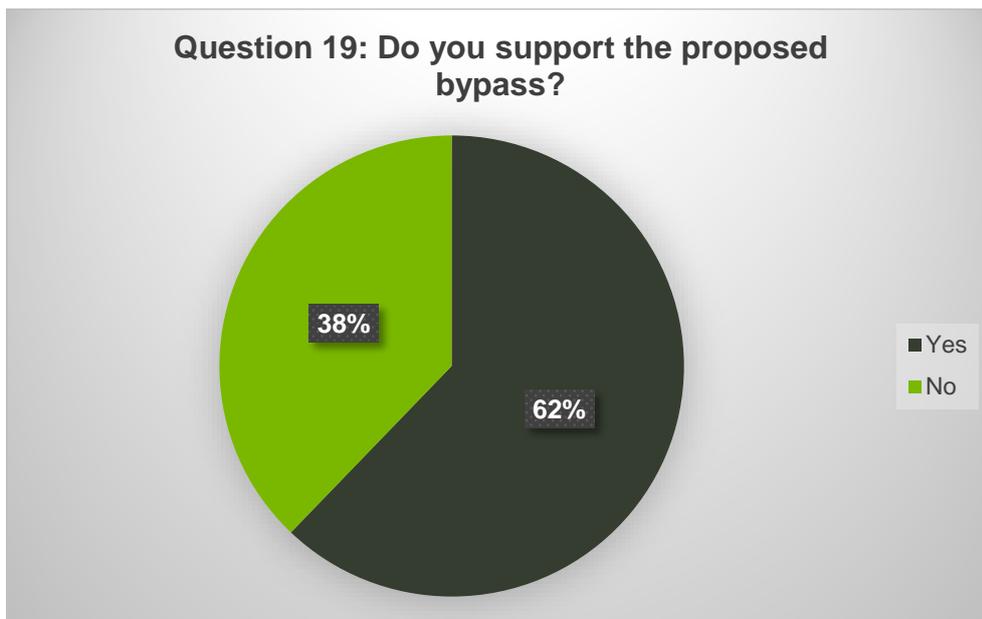


Figure 4-38 Position on the proposed bypass

Some of the recipients that answered 'no' to this question provided the following reasons for not being in support of the bypass:

- It will continue to impact the already struggling town
- Negative affect on businesses – the town will lose cafes, service stations and accommodation in particular
- The bypass will take the character of the town away
- Coonabarabran is a small town which will become a ghost town
- It will continue to impact property as it has already with some residents losing property to the bypass already
- It will impact the town as it has impacted other small towns who have also been bypassed and not been able to recover

- There is already not much happening at Coonabarabran (in decline) and there is already low traffic, the bypass will impact this further
- The bypass should be located further west
- The preferred option is not preferred by some locals who would prefer the traffic to go through the town
- There is no current issue with the b-doubles and the current condition of the road
- A bypass won't improve the town
- If businesses are located on the bypass it will reduce business in the town
- The bypass will have a negative effect on the local business community.

Question 20: Additional comments and feedback:

Survey recipients were also provided with the opportunity to provide additional feedback upon completion of the survey. The following section provides an overview of comments and feedback from shoppers:

- Focus needs to be put on providing funds for other initiatives such as to revamp/rejuvenate the town and strategise how to do this, improve the current drought situation,
- Concerns about the design of the highway, particularly the intersections across the highway and traffic management
- Don't see the benefit of the proposed bypass as there haven't been any issues with trucks and safety. If trucks are removed from the town, caravans will also stop travelling into town
- Preference of option three
- The bypass should be built as soon as possible
- With the large vehicles travelling through town, it is difficult to cycle as it feels unsafe
- 45-degree parking is difficult and unsafe, particularly if there are large trucks behind vehicles trying to park
- Expected negative short-term impact in terms of tourism and through traffic, however positive longer term impacts would benefit the town in terms of being a quieter place to stay
- Suggestion to develop a heavy vehicle bypass with a checking station only, to reduce the impact on the businesses in town
- Suggestion to keep businesses and large service centres off the bypass to allow traffic to come into town and use facilities
- Queries regarding why such large vehicles are allowed in town such as b-doubles
- Inland rail is proposed to take trucks off the road, bypass would also take the trucks out of the town. This would benefit trucks because they would become more efficient
- Suggestions to move the proposed bypass more west of the town
- The proposed bypass is too far away from the town and should be closer
- If done correctly, the bypass would benefit the town, providing a rest stop that will bring in business. If done poorly, the bypass will drain business from the town. Therefore, it could have a positive or negative impact
- A positive would be the short term jobs the bypass construction would provide, however after that concerned about what will happen to the town
- Continuous surveys across various proposals and years of bypass infrastructure designs.
- The bypass will make the town more accessible for those who visit and live in Coonabarabran
- Suggestion of a service centre for fast food outlets and cafes in a position where the view of the Warrumbungles and Coonabarabran entices travellers to want to visit and return. If the visitor centre was relocated to that area visible from the bypass, could also benefit bringing people in.

Appendix A - Shopper Survey



Transport
for NSW

1. Are you a resident of Coonabarabran, or a visitor?

- Resident
- Visitor

If you are a resident, please progress to question 15 to complete the survey

2. Current address, town or postcode?

3. Employment field?

- Automotive
- Accommodation
- Customer service
- Food services
- Health care and social assistance
- Agriculture and forestry
- Professional service
- Education and training
- Retail trade
- Public administration and safety
- Other (please specify): _____.

4. Age?

5. Reason for visit?

- Food
- Leisure
- Family
- Rest/break
- Work
- Other

6. Are you staying in town?

- Yes
- No

7. How frequently do you visit Coonabarabran?

- More than once a week
- Weekly
- Fortnightly
- Monthly
- Twice a year
- Yearly

8. Which places have you visited in Coonabarabran? Which places are you visiting in Coonabarabran?

9. How long do you intend on spending in Coonabarabran?

- Minutes
- Hours
- Overnight
- Days
- Weeks
- Other

10. Where is your end destination?

- Dubbo
- Sydney
- Qld
- Vic
- Moree
- Narrabri
- Other

11. Where is your next stop after Coonabarabran?

12. If there was a proposed bypass of Coonabarabran would this change the number of visits you make to town?

- Yes, I would still come but less frequently
- Yes, I would no longer stop and visit Coonabarabran
- Yes, I would come more often
- No, I would not change what I do

13. How much are you likely to spend on this visit?

- <\$10
- \$10-\$50
- \$50-\$100
- \$100-\$200
- \$200-\$500
- \$500-\$1000
- \$1000-\$5000
- More than \$5000

14. How would you make Coonabarabran a more attractive destination to stop/stay?

- Tourism
- Development
- Amenity
- Accommodation
- Food

15. How long have you lived in Coonabarabran?

- < 1 year
- 1 – 3 years
- 3 – 10 years
- 10 – 20 years
- > 20 years

16. Where were you previously located before Coonabarabran? Did you grow up there?

17. What impacts do you see resulting from the proposed bypass?

- Large negative change
- Small negative change
- No change
- Small positive change
- Large positive change

18. What do you see are the current issues for local businesses in Coonabarabran?

19. What improvements do you see resulting to the proposed bypass?

20. How is the proposed bypass likely to change your activities in terms of:

	No change	Use Coonabarabran facilities more	Use Coonabarabran facilities less	Use other town facilities more
Shopping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of cafes/restaurants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. What are the main places of interest for you and how often do you use them?

22. Do you support the proposed Coonabarabran bypass?

- Yes
- No

23. Did you attend the community consultation or previously provide feedback on the project?

- Yes
- No

24. Do you have any further questions, queries or comments you would like to add?

25. Contact details (optional)

If you would like to complete the survey online, please use the QR code below to access the survey. Position a smartphone camera over the QR code to be directed to the online survey. The survey will be open until Monday 11 February 2020 and should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.



Appendix B - Business Survey



Transport
for NSW

1. Date

2. Contact name

3. Business name

4. Business address

5. Business trading hours

6. Business type (please tick one box only):

- Automotive
- Accommodation
- Customer service
- Food services
- Health care and social assistance
- Agriculture and forestry
- Professional service
- Education and training
- Retail trade
- Public administration and safety
- Other (please specify): _____

7. How long have you been operating this business?

- Less than one year
- One to three years
- Three to five years
- Five to ten years

- More than ten years
8. Are you an owner occupier or a tenant?
- Owner occupier
 - Tenant
 - Unsure
9. How many employees do you have
- Full time: _____
 - Part time: _____
 - Casual: _____
10. Approximate number of customers per day? (please indicate the number next to each option below)
- In store _____
 - Online _____
11. Please indicate your peak trading periods (you may select more than one answer if applicable)
- 6am - 9am
 - 9am - noon
 - Noon - 2pm
 - 2pm - 5pm
 - 5pm - 10pm
 - No peak periods.
12. Where is the closest competing business?
-
13. Where do the majority of your customers travel from?
- Coonabarabran (Suburb)
 - Warrumbungle Shire (Local Government Area)
 - Regional NSW
 - Greater Sydney
 - Other (please specify): _____
14. How dependent is your business on passing trade? (customers who go into a shop/business because they see it when pass, not because they planned to go there)
- Not dependent
 - Slightly dependent
 - Moderately dependent
 - Highly dependent
 - Any further comments:
-

15. Is there any seasonal variation in the proportion of customers you receive who are passing through town?

- Yes
- No

16. If yes, when do you receive more highway passing trade? (eg school holidays, weekends)

17. How dependent is your business on Newell Highway exposure (visibility)?

- Not dependent
 - Slightly dependent
 - Moderately dependent
 - Highly dependent
 - Any further comments:
-

18. How do customers hear about your business? You may select more than one answer if applicable

- Social media promotions
- Website – online stores
- Signage
- Radio advertising
- Print media
- Direct mail
- Word of mouth
- Other (please specify): _____

19. Are you aware of the Coonabarabran Bypass project?

- Yes
- No

20. During construction, do you think that the Coonabarabran Bypass project will be positive for businesses within the area? (themes include construction worker expenditure, locally sourced equipment/materials)

- Strongly agree
- Agree somewhat
- About the same
- Disagree somewhat
- Strongly disagree
- Not Sure / Don't know

21. Do you predict any of the following benefits from the operation of the Coonabarabran Bypass on your business? You may select more than one answer if applicable.

- Easing congestion
- Improved safety
- Maintenance or improved local and regional road network

- Increased business opportunities due to improved amenity in the town centre
- Better access to businesses and properties
- Decreased travel time for service delivery vehicles
- Decreased travel time for customers
- Not sure
- Other (please specify): _____

22. Do you predict any of the following impacts from the operation of the Coonabarabran Bypass on your business? You may select more than one answer if applicable.

- Loss of passing trade or customers (locally and regionally)
- Changes to property access
- Increased travel times for customers
- Increased travel time for service delivery vehicles
- Not sure
- Other (please specify): _____

23. Why/how do you think your business may be impacted during construction and operation of the bypass? Please include any positive and/or negative impacts.

24. Are there any other project related matters that your business would like to discuss?

25. If you would like to be added to the project mailing list to receive further updates on this project, provide your email details below

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to life*



Appendix B Publication summaries

Economic Evaluation of Town Bypasses (Roads and Maritime Services, 2012)

Roads and Maritime Services have published previous studies on the economic evaluation of town bypasses. The most recent report was prepared by Bruno Parolin of the University of NSW in 2012. Parolin investigates findings and assumptions of the original study (1993) and undertakes a re-evaluation. The towns of Gunning, Yass and Goulburn from the original study are investigated as select small, medium and large sized communities (respectively) on the Hume Highway. The three towns are described as being of close proximity to larger centres within the region and of being strategically located on the Hume Highway between Sydney and Melbourne.

Population numbers differed across the three towns during the post-bypass environment. The evaluation stated that the largest city, Goulburn, had a 6.1 per cent decrease in population between 1991 and 2006 and had continued to slightly decline in numbers since the bypass. Yass experienced a 10.1 per cent increase in population between 1996 and 2006, following the opening of the bypass in 1994. This resulted in new residential developments in the town. Gunning, located between Goulburn and Yass, declined by 2 per cent between 1991 and 2006, with the bypass opening in 1993. However, between 2001 and 2006, the population increased by 20 per cent.

Consideration of the type of trade and population demographics in an area helps to understand the role of businesses, shopper activity and local community needs. In the original study, it was identified that towns were initially catering for highway travellers, but also catering for the rural community as 'agricultural and rural service centres'. The re-evaluation study discusses the decline of the Australian agricultural sector and the reasons for decline including drought, low profitability and declining commodity rates. This has an effect on expenditure of these residents which in turn has a negative impact on business turnover in town.

Employment sectors most closely aligned with highway generated trade including retail trade and accommodation, cafes and restaurants increased employment across all three case study towns in the post-bypass period between 1996 and 2006. The present study indicated that in the longer-term few businesses were affected by the bypass, with a redirect of their focus to advertising and promotion to remain competitive. Businesses stated that the bypass had a long-term positive effect on their business and that the amenity of the town also contributed to this.

Overall, the evaluation concluded that in the longer term, communities including the smallest community in the study (Gunning) recover to varying degrees of negative impacts of bypass roads. Economic impacts are considered to be short-term, particularly in the first year of bypasses operating. Small towns are considered most at risk of economic impacts; however, this needs to be considered in association with the dependence on highway generated trade and the location of towns, influencing their ability to recapture trade. The proximity to a larger centre was shown to be of benefit to highway related businesses, especially at the medium and smaller places, such as Yass's proximity to Canberra.

The importance of local community, local councils and governments is discussed in the re-evaluation. In the three towns investigated, future growth considerations and local initiatives were implemented. This included pursuing main street programs such as beautification, adding parking spaces and enhancing heritage character. This was a focus point in encouraging locals and visitors to come into town.

Economic Evaluation of Town Bypasses – Review of literature (Roads and Maritime Services, 2011)

The literature review investigates the approaches and methodologies used in the assessment of highway bypass roads. It aims to address the findings of previous studies (from 1994 onwards) and identify key themes across these studies.

The review of literature identifies the positive and negative impacts associated with highway bypasses. Generally, the reduction in travel time and improvement in amenity contrast with the business community that serves highway travellers.

Based on a series of studies completed in the United States, bypasses have been observed to have a positive longer-term impact on trade, retail sales and overall town economy. Negative impacts appear to be of short-term duration and typically affect smaller communities. The size of towns has proven to be a key variable affecting highway trade.

Land use and land value has also been investigated in previous studies. Many studies have identified that business opportunities including the establishment of new business locations or re-location of businesses along highways have occurred often at the expense of businesses within town main streets. In regard to land value, studies showed that communities experienced land value increases following the construction of a bypass. This is also dependent on other factors including the type of land, property features and proximity of that property to the bypass. The notion of distance of a town from a bypass is also a factor that is discussed in the review as the distance of a town from a bypass may result traffic being less likely to stop.

Industry and employment is discussed in the review with a focus on industry type, industry restructuring, interaction with larger nearby centres and highway service centres. In some instances, in Australia, highway service centres have proven to provide employment and business opportunities. In other instances, highway services centres have proven to be detrimental to in town businesses, as travellers opt to stop at more convenient locations along the bypass.

Social impacts are categorised into two areas across most studies. Quality of life is explored in most studies in terms of safety, access and visual amenity and environmental amenity is also investigated in regard to air quality and noise pollution. These characteristics of the social environment influence the perception that the community has on positive and negative impacts of a bypass.

Mitigation and leadership roles are defined as fundamental in the planning of bypass infrastructure. Proactive and facilitation of adjustments is critical to the long-term economic performance of towns following the construction of a bypass. Collaborative planning efforts that provide the opportunity for communities, stakeholders and governments to communicate and contribute is pivotal.

The Karuah Highway Bypass, Economic and Social Impacts: The 5 Year Report (Urban Regional Planning Program, University of Sydney, 2009)

The Karuah Bypass was opened in 2004 with the objectives to improve safety and travel time for motorists along the Pacific Highway. A report was completed in 2005 and then again in 2009 by the University of Sydney. The five-year study was developed to determine the social and economic impacts of the bypass and find trends before and after the development of the bypass. The study describes Karuah as vulnerable to bypass impacts for the following reasons:

- small population (population below 5,000)

- remoteness and operation as an independent economic entity
- high-level of highway dependency for businesses
- pre-existing socio-economic issues including unemployment and low paid workforce
- having a dispersed and poorly defined town centre with low aesthetic quality.

Based on the traffic surveys carried out in 2009, it was determined that traffic volumes in Karuah's main street declined considerably since the first report. Only nine per cent of traffic travelling north and seven per cent of traffic traveling south entered the town. In addition, only one to two per cent of vehicles that travelled along the Pacific Highway stopped in Karuah. The study also discussed the potential for travellers to stop in Bulahdelah as an alternative, which was not bypassed at the time of the survey.

Businesses have had mixed adaptations to the introduction of the bypass. Some businesses closed in the medium term (within 5 years of the bypass opening). Several new retail and restaurant businesses opened following the establishment of the bypass, catering for niche markets without the reliance of passing trade. Of the major operators, six of the eight operators reported large decreases in revenue following the opening of the bypass. A loss of 35 jobs since the opening of the bypass occurred, with part time jobs impacted most. Businesses also adjusted to the changes by increasing marketing, changing products and services and adjusting employment. Businesses that adapted to these changes saw substantial benefits.

The local council established initiatives and programs with the community and other government agencies to mitigate the effects of the bypass. This included signage, promotions, foreshore facilities and streetscape improvements. Despite the efforts of the council, many community members were dissatisfied by the lack of changes within the town.

The 2009 report indicates that the bypass has had a large effect on the town of Karuah. Benefits of the bypass include the improved amenity in the form of noise and traffic improvements. Local access to the town centre by driving and active transport has become more convenient. The primary school has also experienced benefits of less noise and traffic around the school, making it a more enjoyable and safer environment. Alternatively, businesses relying on passing trade have suffered as a result of the bypass. Closures, decreases in revenue and employment have all resulted. Businesses have had to adapt to servicing local and regional consumers to be profitable.

The Effects on Small Towns of Being Bypassed by a Highway: A Case Study of Berrima and Mittagong - Working Paper 11 (Bureau of Transport and Communications Economics, Canberra, 1994)

Forming the first of a series of case studies, this study examines the regional development effects of bypass infrastructure investment in NSW. The study investigates the town of Berrima and Mittagong in the Southern Highlands Region, which were both bypassed along the Hume Highway as part of the Hume Highway Upgrade Project.

Pre-bypass economics of both towns were defined as 'broadly similar', with the main industries being tourism (accommodation and related establishments) and retail. Both towns also provided scenic and recreational tourist attractions in the Southern Highlands. Differences between the two towns included the residential population and the appeal of the towns. In 1986, the population of Berrima was 655 people, compared to 4240 people in Mittagong. The study noted that economic effects of

highway-passed towns are usually more adverse in smaller towns. Berrima held more tourist appeal with more well-preserved colonial buildings

Berrima became more appealing to tourism following the completion of the bypass due to the reduced heavy vehicle traffic and noise reductions, resulting in the ability for pedestrians to access the town with more ease and safety. Around 80 per cent of visitors provided feedback in a post bypass survey pleased with the improved amenity of Berrima. Traffic substantially declined in Mittagong, which resulted in other opportunities for on street angle parking and streetscape improvements including pedestrian crossings.

Estimated effects for tourism, retail, employment all increased positively in the medium term for Berrima. In the longer term, land and property values and employment estimates were larger as a result of the bypass. This includes increases in the number of businesses Berrima, which increased by half around 50 per cent since the bypass opened. The study classifies this as 'bypass-driven expansion'. The Berrima example shows that towns have the ability to profit in their environment following the introduction of a bypass.

In the short term, Mittagong's economy appeared to suffer in both the tourism and retailing sector. Although the study did not obtain statistics on businesses that closed, most businesses adversely affected were assumed to have a wait-and-see approach.

In the longer term, both towns were estimated to have expected population and visitor increases based on the attractiveness of safer and calmer environments. However, in some cases compensation for initial losses can be small and sometimes harmful, particular in the case of traffic serving businesses.

The study explores the regional development positive and negative effects of bypass infrastructure to the broader economy and surround regions. The reduction in transport costs, competition effects in other towns and support of economic expansion are also discussed.

Bypassed Towns Signage Trial – Evaluation Report (Roads and Maritime Services, 2018)

In 2018, Roads and Maritime Services developed an evaluation report to investigate the effectiveness of signage initiatives for bypassed towns. The aim of this investigation was to determine if signage can contribute to improving visitation into local towns (Roads and Maritime Services, 2018).

The evaluation report includes research into three regional towns in NSW that were subject to signage trials. Consultation and feedback from road users, communities and local businesses was also gathered for the report. Both qualitative and quantitative data was captured and used to determine the effectiveness of the signage.

The findings of the investigation were separated into social impacts, financial impacts and communication and engagement with stakeholders to determine the overall result. The key outcomes of the investigation were:

- social impacts were 'highly effective' with communities, businesses and travelling road users seeing value in the use of signage to promote and attract road users to bypassed towns
- characteristics of the signage was also considered to be highly effective, regarding photos, visibility and sizing

- increases in patronage and revenue due to signage resulted in mixed responses, with local businesses deeming the signage effective and non-effective
- businesses and travelling road users were not aware that the signs were a Roads and Maritime Services initiative and did not think there was effective engagement and knowledge of the signs prior to the installations.

Based on the outcomes of the investigation, it is evident that signage can be effective if consideration of signage characteristics is implemented, an understanding of local communities is applied to signage design and consultation with communities is undertaken prior to installation. Acknowledging the strengths, values and elements of a place that the community is proud of are fundamental when installing signage, to successfully promote destinations and encourage visitation.

Appendix C Quantitative data

The following data has been sourced from the *Census of Population and Housing* (ABS 2016).

Indicator	Source	Coonabarabran State Suburb		Warrumbungle Shire LGA		New South Wales	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
Population							
Usual residence	G01	3290		9384		7,480,228	-
Proportion of people aged 14 years or younger	G01	611	18.6%	1679	17.9%	1,386,330	18.5%
Proportion of people aged 65 years or older	G01	866	26.3%	2450	26.1%	1,217,641	16.3%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population	G07	453	13.8%	917	9.8%	216,176	2.9%
Overseas born	G09ef	195	5.9%	553	5.9%	2,072,458	27.7%
Advantage/disadvantage							
index by decline	SEIFA	889	-	912	-	1011	-
People with need for assistance	G18	311	9.5%	681	7.3%	402,048	5.4%
Housing and households							
Total dwellings	G32	1391	-	4280	-	2,889,057	-
Separate house	G32	1119	80.4%	3299	77.1%	1,729,820	59.9%
Terrace/flat etc.	G32	89	6.4%	128	3.0%	860,410	29.8%
Total households	G31	1240	-	3517	-	2,604,314	-
Family households		808	65.2%	2345	66.7%	1,874,524	72.0%
Non-family households		435	35.1%	1179	33.5%	729,784	28.0%
Average household size	QS	2.2	-	2.3	-	2.6	-
Housing tenure - mortgage	QS - Average monthly mortgage repayments	\$1,079	-	\$923	-	\$1,986	-
Housing tenure - rent	QS - Average weekly rent	\$180	-	\$160	-	\$380	-
Households with no vehicles	G30	115	9.3%	229	6.5%	239,625	9.2%
Average motor vehicles per dwelling	QS	1.7	-	1.9	-	1.7	-
Travel							
Travel to work by car (as driver - one method)	G59	699	63.7%	1849	55.4%	1,953,399	57.8%
Travel to work by train (one method)	G59	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	252,786	7.5%

Indicator	Source	Coonabarabran State Suburb		Warrumbungle Shire LGA		New South Wales	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
Travel to work by bus (one method)	G59	11	1.0%	19	0.6%	133,903	4.0%
Travel to work by car (as passenger - one method)	G59	75	6.8%	131	3.9%	144,820	4.3%
Travel to work by walking (one method)	G59	81	7.4%	290	8.7%	154,289	4.6%
Travel to work by cycling (one method)	G59	4	0.4%	5	0.1%	23,332	0.7%
Travel to work by motorbike/scooter (one method)	G60	9	0.8%	43	1.3%	21,159	0.6%
Travel to work by truck (one method)	G59	37	3.4%	87	2.6%	32,908	1.0%
Employment and industry							
Labour force	G43b	1201	-	3618	-	3,605,881	48.2%
Median household income (\$)	QS	\$896	-	\$878	-	\$1,486	-
Unemployment	G43b (unemployed looking for work - labour force status)	104	8.7%	285	7.9%	225,546	6.3%
Industry of employment							
Retail trade	G53 (top 6)	122	11.1%	257	7.7%	326,396	9.7%
Accommodation and Food Services	G53 (top 6)	98	8.9%	184	5.5%	422,195	12.5%
Public Administration and Safety	G53 (top 6)	149	13.6%	261	7.8%	282,491	8.4%
Education and training	G53 (top 6)	136	12.4%	382	11.5%	239,222	7.1%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	G53 (top 6)	60	5.5%	921	27.6%		
Health Care and Social Assistance	G53 (top 6)	175	16.0%	406	12.2%	197,331	5.8%
Place of residence							
Same address as 5 years ago as in 2016	G42	1846	59.1%	5266	59.1%	3,775,527	53.8%
Different address 5 years ago as in 2016	G42	908	29.1%	2521	28.3%	2,734,848	39.0%
Same statistical area (SA2) 5 years ago	G42	473	15.2%	1059	11.9%		