



# Wickham Transport Interchange Determination Report

## Transport Projects Division

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## Table of Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1.	Background .....	3
1.2.	Review of environmental factors .....	3
1.3.	Determination report .....	3
1.4.	Description of the Proposed Activity in the REF .....	4
<b>2.</b>	<b>Consultation and assessment of submissions .....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1.	Public display .....	5
2.2.	Response to key issues .....	7
<b>3.</b>	<b>Description and assessment of design changes following public display .....</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1.	Assessment of design changes .....	10
<b>4.</b>	<b>Consideration of the Environmental Impacts.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Conditions of Approval.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>13</b>
	<b>Appendix 1: Review of Environmental Factors.....</b>	<b>14</b>
	<b>Appendix 2: Submissions Report.....</b>	<b>15</b>
	<b>Appendix 3: Conditions of Approval .....</b>	<b>16</b>

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) is the NSW Government's lead public transport agency that ensures planning and policy is fully integrated across all modes of transport in NSW. It manages a multi-billion dollar budget allocation for rail, bus, ferry and taxi services and related infrastructure in NSW.

TfNSW is responsible for improving the customer experience of transport services, transport policy and regulation, planning and program administration, procuring transport services, and infrastructure and freight.

TfNSW is the proponent for the Wickham Transport Interchange Project (referred to as 'the Proposed Activity' for the purposes of this document).

## 1.2. Review of environmental factors

TfNSW prepared a review of environmental factors (REF) for the project, which detailed the scope of works and environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Activity (Appendix 1). The REF was prepared by GHD in accordance with the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (the EP&A Act) and clause 228 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000*.

The REF was placed on public display from 30 July 2014 to 30 August 2014, with 278 submissions from the general public and two submissions from State and local government (NSW Heritage Division and City of Newcastle Council) received by TfNSW during the public display period.

## 1.3. Determination report

Prior to proceeding with the Proposed Activity, the Secretary of TfNSW (or his delegate) must make a determination in accordance with the provisions of Part 5 of the EP&A Act.

The objectives of this Determination Report are to:

- assess the environmental impacts with respect to the Proposed Activity which are detailed in the REF and any proposed modifications, as detailed and assessed in this Determination Report
- identify mitigation measures to minimise potential environmental impacts
- determine whether potential environmental impacts are likely to be significant
- address whether the provisions of the Commonwealth *Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) applies to the Proposed Activity.

This report has been prepared having regard to, among other things, the objectives of TfNSW under the *Transport Administration Act 1988*:

- (a) to plan for a transport system that meets the needs and expectations of the public,

- (b) to promote economic development and investment,
- (c) to provide integration at the decision-making level across all public transport modes,
- (d) to promote greater efficiency in the delivery of transport infrastructure projects,
- (e) to promote the safe and reliable delivery of public transport and freight services.

#### **1.4. Description of the Proposed Activity in the REF**

An overview of the Proposed Activity, which is the subject of the Wickham Transport Interchange REF, is provided in the Executive Summary with full details set out in Section 5 of the REF. In summary, the Proposed Activity as outlined in the REF comprises:

- Construction and operation of a new station at Wickham, and a transport interchange for heavy rail, local buses, taxis and private vehicles (short term parking for passenger pick up and drop off) to the west of Stewart Avenue.
- Construction and operation of a train stabling facility to the north of Hamilton Station.
- The removal of train services between Wickham and Newcastle stations.

To continue operating the rail network to the west of the new station at Wickham, a number of modifications to rail infrastructure and services between the new station and Hamilton Station would also be required, including:

- Termination of the Newcastle Branch Line services at Hamilton Station for about two years during construction of the new station at Wickham and the stabling yard.
- Construction and operation of a new head shunt rail track, about 700 metres in length, between the Maitland Road overbridge and the new station at Wickham.
- Installation of new crossovers and turnouts to facilitate the movement of trains between the three rail tracks.
- Installation of ancillary infrastructure, including power supply, signalling and overhead wiring.

Some modifications to the road network would also be required, involving the removal of the railway crossing boom gates and signals at Stewart Avenue and the closure of Railway Street at the rail corridor.

The interchange design makes allowance for the future provision of light rail. The Newcastle Light Rail project will be subject to a separate environmental impact assessment/ planning approval process.

## 2. Consultation and assessment of submissions

### 2.1. Public display

The REF was placed on public display from 30 July 2014 to 30 August 2014 at six locations, as well as on the TfNSW and NSW Government 'Have Your Say' websites. Community consultation activities undertaken during this period included:

Activity	Detail
Contact mechanisms	All details of community members and stakeholders who contacted the proposal team, issues raised, and responses provided were recorded in the consultation database.
Community newsletter	<p>The flyer included information on the status of the proposal and details of the public display locations and community information sessions.</p> <p>The flyer was distributed to properties along streets within 200 metres of the proposal site between Wickham and Hamilton stations, and was also handed out to train passengers during the morning and afternoon peak periods at Civic and Newcastle stations on 30 and 31 July 2014.</p>
Letter to government agencies and utility providers	<p>A letter was distributed to key agencies to provide them with information on the public display of the REF and invite submissions. Agencies consulted included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roads and Maritime Services (RMS)</li> <li>• Sydney Trains</li> <li>• NSW TrainLink</li> <li>• Department of Planning and Environment</li> <li>• Mine Subsidence Board</li> <li>• Hunter Water Corporation</li> <li>• utility providers</li> </ul>
Letter to the Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC)	A letter was issued to the Awabakal LALC informing them of the preliminary findings of the due diligence assessment and seeking their involvement in further assessments.
Email to Save Our Rail	An email was sent to the Save Our Rail organisation offering a briefing with members of the project team.
Poster	A poster was developed to advertise the community information sessions. The posters were provided for display at Hamilton, Wickham, Civic and Newcastle train stations.
Advertisement	Advertisements were placed in The Newcastle Herald and The

Activity	Detail
	Maitland Mercury newspapers to provide information about the display locations and information sessions.
Community information sessions	<p>Five community information sessions were held at the following locations, dates and times:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 August 2014 4:00pm – 8:00pm Croatian Wickham Sports Club, 18A Albert Street, Wickham.</li> <li>• 6 August 2014 4:00pm – 8:00pm Southern Cross Hall, 841 Hunter Street, Newcastle West.</li> <li>• 13 August 2014 3:00pm – 7:00pm Maitland Town Hall, 285-287 High St; Maitland</li> <li>• 14 August 2014 4:00pm – 8:00pm Gallipoli Legion Club, 3-5 Beaumont Street, Hamilton.</li> <li>• 16 August 2014 11:00am – 3:00pm Croatian Wickham Sports Club, 18A Albert Street, Wickham.</li> </ul> <p>The information sessions were conducted as informal drop-in sessions, staffed by representatives from GHD, TfNSW, RMS and UrbanGrowth NSW. The sessions provided participants with the opportunity to speak with the proposal team, discuss issues and concerns and provide feedback on the REF.</p>
Advertisement	An advertisement was placed in local newspapers to provide information about the display locations and information sessions.

A total of 280 submissions were received during the public display period. These comprised 278 submissions from community members and stakeholders, and two submissions from State and local government (NSW Heritage Division and the City of Newcastle Council).

Submissions raised a variety of issues in relation to the Proposed Activity. A breakdown of the key issues raised in submissions is provided in the table below. It should be noted that most submissions raised more than one issue, the number of issues identified is greater than the total number of submissions received.

**Overview of key issues raised in submissions**

Key issue category	Number of submissions identifying the issue	Percentage of submissions identifying the issue
Strategic justification and scope	197	70
Traffic and transport	122	44
Social impacts	116	41
Issues unrelated to the proposal	86	31
Consultation	62	22
REF document	36	13
Visual and urban design	39	14
Objection	33	12
Support	27	10
Noise and vibration	16	6
Heritage	8	3
Air quality	7	3
Other environmental issues	6	2
Proposal construction	3	1
Sustainability and waste	3	1

A summary of all issues raised and associated responses is provided in the Submissions Report at Appendix 2.

**2.2. Response to key issues**

The key issues raised by submissions were:

- Strategic justification
- Interchange design and parking
- Local traffic changes
- Potential reduction in public transport use
- Closure of Railway Street

**Strategic justification**

In 2012, the NSW Government released the *Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy* and plans to revitalise the Newcastle City Centre, boost economic activity and reinforce the city's role as a regional centre. To achieve these aims, in December 2012, it was decided that the Newcastle Branch Line would be truncated between Stewart Avenue and the existing Newcastle Station. This would involve the closure of the existing stations at Wickham, Civic and Newcastle and the construction of a new station on the western side of Stewart Avenue. The station would operate as the new terminus of the branch line and interchange between transport modes. The truncation would remove the barrier between north-south movements in Newcastle and allow for better connectivity between the foreshore and the city centre.

As part of the NSW Government's 2013-2014 Budget, the *Newcastle Urban Renewal and Transport Program* was announced as part of the strategy to drive the economic growth and

renewal of Newcastle. The program has two major components – the cessation of rail services to Newcastle city centre and provision of a new transport interchange at Wickham and to provide light rail as a replacement transport solution. TfNSW is leading the project development work for the Newcastle Urban Renewal and Transport Program. UrbanGrowth NSW is coordinating the implementation of the renewal strategy and the transport program and undertaking public domain works in association with the proposed rail works.

The proposed construction of a new light rail system was announced by the NSW Government in July 2013. In previous projects in Australia and overseas, light rail has been a successful catalyst for urban renewal. The planning and design of the Newcastle Light Rail project is currently ongoing. Further details relating to the light rail project will be presented in a future environmental impact assessment/ planning documents in 2015.

The Wickham Transport Interchange project and heavy rail truncation has been positioned as the priority project so that existing crossings can be improved and new connections established.

### **Interchange design and parking**

The new station and its associated interchange facilities have been designed to cater adequately for existing and expected future patronage. The REF presents historical patronage information collected by the Bureau of Transport Statistics as well as more recent data collected specifically for the project. The patronage demand model developed for the project and used to design the facility considered all transport modes and relevant factors such as proposed future land use, population growth and development in Newcastle. Facilities for rail passengers as well as shuttle buses were designed for the highest recorded peak hour usage plus an allowance for future growth (rather than average or daily historical figures).

The suggestion of a dedicated, off-street bus interchange either to the north or south of the new Wickham interchange is not viable due to limited space. Also, modelling has shown that passenger demand does not warrant this design solution, and the future light rail will make the bus interchange redundant. Public buses operate along Hunter Street, which is a short walk from the interchange.

Availability of parking is generally a concern for businesses, workers, residents and visitors in the city centre. Parking is not being provided at the Wickham Interchange because, much like the existing Newcastle Station, for inbound journeys, it is designed to be a destination station or end point where the majority of people will journey to for employment, education, recreation and other facilities, or change to light rail. It is not envisaged that commuters will drive to the station and park to board a train much like the existing stations at Hamilton, Wickham, Civic and Newcastle.

For outbound services on the Hunter and Central Coast Lines, the interchange will provide options for connections to rail by taxis, private vehicles, buses and the future light rail, in addition to walking or cycling to closer destinations. People who currently park at a station and then use rail services would continue to access the existing station they use which provide suitable facilities.

### **Local traffic changes**



Operation of the interchange will result in minor local increases in traffic. These additional traffic movements are outlined in Section 7.3.2 of the REF.

Further detailed traffic modelling of the road network in the city centre and surrounding the Wickham Transport Interchange area was undertaken following the preparation of the REF.

In summary, during construction of the new interchange in the AM peak period, the intersection performance is either unchanged or improved at all intersections. Most intersections in the Wickham area show no significant difference compared to existing conditions.

In the PM peak period, the level of improvement at the intersections and the reduction in the travel times is not as significant as the AM peak with little difference observed from the existing situation. At the intersection of Thorsby Street/Hannell Street, a very slight reduction in level of service from A to B is expected.

Following the opening of the Wickham Transport Interchange in 2016, the surrounding road network would continue to operate in a similar manner as during the construction phase.

### **Changes to public transport use**

The REF recognised that changes to travel patterns and increases to journey times of rail passengers would likely result from the proposal. Whether these factors are sufficient to change the behaviour of existing rail passengers is unable to be accurately predicted. However, the interchange design recognises the need to provide convenient access to various transport options and seeks to facilitate interchange between a number of transport modes in a convenient manner.

Removal of the heavy rail line to the east of Stewart Avenue would also result in a substantial improvement in access to bus services in Hunter Street for those who currently drive to businesses in Honeysuckle Drive. Pedestrian access by employees and customers of businesses in Honeysuckle Drive to bus services in Hunter Street is currently inhibited by the rail corridor. The removal of this barrier may attract a mode shift from cars to buses for a journey to work in this location.

Once implemented, the future urban renewal and light rail projects are expected to increase public transport use in Newcastle, as transit-oriented development allows for shorter trips between a more dense set of attractions. This mode shift will reduce the need for parking in the city, as commuters are able to make better use of existing public transport services instead of relying on driving for most trips.

### **Closure of Railway Street**

The Railway Street rail crossing provides pedestrian, cyclist and vehicle access from Hunter Street across the railway corridor to businesses and residential areas in Wickham. This crossing also allows access to the bus network which runs along Hunter Street from areas to the north of the railway. The closure of this crossing would result in increased walking distances for pedestrians crossing the rail corridor in this location.

### 3. Description and assessment of design changes following public display

As a result of the submissions received during the public display of the project, the following design changes have been made to the Proposed Activity. In summary, the design changes to the Proposed Activity comprise the following:

- Installation of additional NSW TrainLink staff facilities at Hamilton station;
- Provision of bus shelters at Hamilton; and
- Extension of anti-throw screens on the Maitland Road overpass.

#### 3.1. Assessment of design changes

As part of the ongoing design development since the REF, the following design changes have been identified. These design changes are assessed in further detail in the WTI Submissions Report.

##### **Operational facilities and associated works to allow for operation from Hamilton Station**

Additional facilities for operational staff would be required during the two year construction period until the new interchange is completed. Buildings would be a mix of demountable structures and buildings erected on-site; where possible facilities would also be located in existing station buildings. A wide range of minor works would be undertaken around the station to minimise impacts to passengers. The impacts of constructing and operating NSW TrainLink facilities would be minor and generally consistent with the impacts identified in the REF.

Some of the works at Hamilton Station would occur within the curtilage of the Hamilton Station Group which is listed on the State Heritage Register (SHR). A heritage impact statement has been completed for all works at Hamilton Station and has been submitted as part of an application under section 60 of the *Heritage Act 1977* to the NSW Heritage Division. TfNSW received approval on 10 November 2014.

The works are generally minor (and in some cases temporary), and would predominately occur outside of the SHR curtilage. The impacts of these works are considered to have a negligible impact on the station's built fabric, overall heritage significance or visual setting.

During operation, the demountable buildings would be used as offices and would be visually similar to surrounding railway buildings and land and therefore are not considered to result in any visual impact.

At all times, the construction works and work areas would be cordoned off from the public and kept secure. No public access to any of the premises would be allowed. Where necessary, hoardings would be erected and revised access routes provided to limit inconvenience to train passengers.

Detailed work method statements and/or a conservation management plan would be prepared by the construction contractor prior to construction works commencing. All conditions of the NSW Heritage Division approval would also be implemented.

### **Provision/upgrade of bus shelters at Hamilton Station**

In order to provide for passenger comfort at the proposed shuttle bus stops at Hamilton Station, an upgrade or provision of bus shelters would be required. The impacts of these bus shelters are considered minimal as they would be positioned to minimise inconvenience to pedestrians and be in close walking distance from the train station. Impacts would be reduced where possible through positioning the shelters at existing shelter locations (upgrade of structures).

The visual impacts of the new bus structures are not considered to be significant as they would be similar to other shelters used across Newcastle. Structure locations would be selected to minimise any visual impacts.

Shelters to be positioned according to the following criteria:

- Position shelters in the location of existing shelters where possible, which can then be upgraded;
- Position to minimise distance to the train station; and
- Position to avoid impacts on pedestrian flows on the footpath.

### **Extension of anti-throw screens on Maitland Road overpass**

The anti-throw fencing on Maitland Road overpass would be extended by six metres on the northern side (both east and west) of the bridge. The fencing would be similar to the existing fencing at this location. There would be a minor impact to traffic (cyclist and pedestrian access) during the works. This would be minimised by conducting the works over the weekend.

Visual impacts associated with the extension of screens are considered to be minimal as the bridge currently contains similar screens and the extension of these screens will not significantly alter the existing visual amenity.

The mitigation measures provided in the REF would adequately address potential traffic and other impacts from the works.

## 4. Consideration of the Environmental Impacts

### ***Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979***

The REF addresses the requirements of section 111 of the EP&A Act. In considering the Proposed Activity, all matters affecting or likely to affect the environment are addressed in the REF, the Determination Report, and associated documentation.

In accordance with the checklist of matters pursuant to clause 228(3) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulations 2000*, an assessment is provided in Section 6 and Appendix A of the REF.

In respect of the Proposed Activity an assessment has been carried out regarding potential impacts on critical habitat, threatened species, populations or ecological communities or their habitats, under section 112 of the EP&A Act.

The likely significance of the environmental impacts of the Proposed Activity have been assessed in accordance with the Department of Planning's best practice guideline '*Is an EIS Required?*' It is concluded that the Proposed Activity is not likely to significantly affect the environment (including critical habitat) or threatened species, populations of ecological communities, or their habitats. Accordingly, an environmental impact statement under Part 5.1 is not required.

### ***Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999***

As part of the consideration of the Proposed Activity, all matters of national environmental significance (NES) and any impacts on Commonwealth land for the purposes of the EPBC Act have been assessed. In relation to NES matters, this evaluation has been undertaken in accordance with Commonwealth Administrative Guidelines on determining whether an action has, will have, or is likely to have a significant impact. A summary of the evaluation in accordance with the Administrative Guidelines is provided in Section 3.5 and Appendix A of the REF.

It is considered that the Proposed Activity described in the REF is not likely to have a significant impact on any Commonwealth land and is not likely to have a significant impact on any matters of NES.

## 5. Conditions of Approval

If approved, the Proposed Activity would proceed subject to the Conditions of Approval included in Appendix 3.

## 6. Conclusion

The REF included a comprehensive assessment of the likely environmental impacts as a result of the proposal. Potential impacts were identified and addressed in the REF and mitigation measures have been recommended where appropriate.

The REF was placed on public display from 30 July 2014 to 30 August 2014.

A total of 280 submissions were received which included 278 submissions from the community and two submissions from government agencies. This Submissions Report has documented and considered the submissions received and outlined TfNSW's response.

Since display of the REF, additional investigations have been completed and modifications to the proposal have been identified. This Submissions Report has assessed the findings of the investigations and the potential environmental impacts of the intended modifications.

It can be concluded that the Proposed Activity is not likely to significantly affect the environment (including critical habitat) or threatened species, populations of ecological communities, or their habitats. Consequently, an environmental impact statement is not required to be prepared under Part 5.1 of the EP&A Act.

It is also considered that the Proposed Activity does not trigger any approvals under Part 3 of the EPBC Act.

The environmental impact assessment (REF and Determination Report) is recommended to be approved subject to the proposed mitigation and environmental management measures included in the Conditions of Approval.

## Appendix 1: Review of Environmental Factors

## Appendix 2: Submissions Report

## Appendix 3: Conditions of Approval