



Australian Government

BUILDING OUR FUTURE



Transport for NSW

Great Western Highway Upgrade Program

Little Hartley to Lithgow (West Section)

Review of Environmental Factors – Biodiversity fact sheet

November 2021



Transport is committed to minimising environmental impacts during construction and delivery of the upgrade

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

Transport for NSW (Transport) is committed to minimising impacts to the natural environment.

We have carried out extensive biodiversity studies along the Little Hartley to Lithgow upgrade corridor, and our investigations are continuing to make sure we fully understand the flora and fauna in the area.

Transport is presenting a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) and concept design for the Little Hartley to Lithgow upgrade for community consultation from **22 November** to **21 December 2021**.

We invite the community and other interested stakeholders to submit feedback to help inform next steps for the proposal.



Biodiversity assessments

Following background research and habitat suitability assessments, Transport carried out targeted vegetation, flora and fauna field surveys in March, April, May and August 2021.

Around 73 per cent of the proposal corridor is made up of mostly cleared grassland on rural and rural-residential land.

The upgrade would require the removal of 75.19 hectares of native plant community types. Around 18 hectares is Tableland Basalt Forest in the Sydney Basin and South Eastern Highlands Bioregion, which is listed as Endangered under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act). Around six hectares is classified as White Box - Yellow Box - Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland, which is listed as Critically Endangered under the BC Act. Of this, 3.6 hectares is consistent with the listing under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

There are potentially nine threatened flora species within the upgrade area. During spring/summer 2021 we will carry out targeted surveys to give us the best chance of detecting whether these species are growing in the proposal corridor.

Ten threatened fauna species were recorded during field surveys: Squirrel Glider, Greater Glider, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Little Bent-winged Bat, Large Bent-winged Bat, Large-eared Pied Bat, Brown Treecreeper, Eastern False Pipistrelle, Greater Broad-nosed Bat, and Scarlet Robin.

We will conduct additional targeted surveys of Purple Copper Butterfly, which has previously been identified in the upgrade area, Booroolong Frog, and Gang-gang Cockatoo in spring 2021.

We did not identify any of the mapped habitats for threatened fish species listed under the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* (FM Act). It is unlikely that any threatened species listed under the FM Act occur in the waterways that intersect the corridor area or directly downstream.

The Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (REF Appendix D) assesses the potential direct and indirect biodiversity impacts and identifies mitigation measures to avoid, manage or reduce these impacts.

As the upgrade would remove native vegetation and potential fauna habitat, Transport will need to offset these impacts under the EPBC Act and BC Act.



Squirrel Glider, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Purple Copper Butterfly (left to right)

Reducing the impact of our work

A Flora and Fauna Management Plan will be prepared and the detailed design for the road will minimise native vegetation and habitat removal, particularly around mapped Purple Copper Butterfly habitat.

We will re-establish native vegetation and use modified limbs salvaged from removed vegetation as much as possible to provide habitat for native fauna, and use nest boxes if needed.

As the main cause of increased fauna injury and death after the upgrade is open to traffic is anticipated to be vehicle collisions, we will provide fauna exclusion fencing connecting to three new fauna underpasses.

We will extend the two existing large culverts at Boxes Creek and Butlers Creek to include fauna-friendly design elements to encourage fauna crossing. The combined drainage culvert and fauna underpass at Whites Creek will also remain, along with the three existing fauna rope bridges.

We will make sure fencing and fauna underpasses are maintained in order to ensure these measures remain effective.

When we are building

We have been able to minimise the clearing of native vegetation and the impacts on habitat by following the existing highway alignment as much as possible.

Transport will carry out pre-clearing surveys to help reduce injury or death to local fauna when we are removing vegetation. Most of the native and threatened fauna species within the proposed upgrade area are able to move quickly, and typically leave vegetation when we begin clearing.

Noise and vibration may temporarily disturb fauna, but these impacts are only expected in the construction footprint and unlikely to have a significant, long-term impact on fauna.

When we need to work at night, we will use the lowest intensity lighting we can for the task, and lights will be turned off when not needed.

Local fauna would likely relocate from areas next to the highway that are indirectly impacted by noise and light to more suitable habitat further afield while we are building the road.



Existing combined drainage culvert and fauna underpass at Whites Creek

What is an REF?

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

What is a concept design?

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

View the REF and concept design

You can view the Little Hartley to Lithgow REF and concept design at:

- our virtual consultation room at nswroads.work/gwhwestconsult
- Lithgow City Council Administration Centre
- Lithgow Library Learning Centre

Have your say

We are planning to hold a mixture of online and COVIDSafe face-to-face consultation sessions.

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

Speak to the project team

General online sessions

Tuesday 30 November 6.30pm–8.00pm

Saturday 11 December 12.30pm–2.00pm

Targeted online sessions

Coxs River Road/Baaners Lane

Thursday 2 December 6.30pm–8.00pm

Jenolan Caves Road/River Lett Hill

Thursday 9 December 6.30pm–8.00pm

Face-to-face sessions

Saturday 4 December 1.00pm–3.15pm*

Lithgow Civic Ballroom – Tony Luchetti Showgrounds, George Coates Avenue, Lithgow

Tuesday 7 December 5.30pm–7.45pm*

Hartley Community Hall, Corner Great Western Highway and Mid Hartley Road, Hartley

*Book a 45 minute time slot

Register for a consultation session at

nswroads.work/gwhwestconsult

Bookings are essential for face-to-face sessions, which will be held pending COVID restrictions or the occurrence of local cases at the time of the events. QR code sign in and proof of double vaccination status will be required.

Contact us on **1800 953 777** or

gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au to book a personal phone consultation if you prefer.

How to make a formal submission

We welcome all feedback on the Little Hartley to Lithgow REF and concept design.

To have your input formally considered, and receive a response in the consultation report, use our online submission form at nswroads.work/gwhwestconsult, email us at gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au, or mail a printed submission to the address below.

Consultation is open from 22 November to 21 December 2021. All formal submissions must be received or postmarked by midnight, 21 December.

Contact us

Sign up for our eNewsletter online at nswroads.work/gwhd and you'll never miss a project update.



nswroads.work/gwhd



gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au



1800 953 777



Great Western Highway
Upgrade Program

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