3 Visual impact assessment

3.1 Visibility of the proposal

The visual envelope map (Appendix 1 Map 3) shows the areas from where the proposal is theoretically visible and where it would be hidden by changes of ground level such as hills and valleys. Since this map ignores the screening effect of vegetation, some areas shown to have views to the proposal in fact have these views interrupted by trees and other vegetation.

During fieldwork it was observed that views to the existing bridge were limited by vegetation to the area within a 200 m radius of the bridge with some additional glimpses of the existing bridge available between trees from parts of Polacks Flat Road approximately one kilometre from the bridge. Table 1 summarises the viewing opportunities. Based on visual envelope mapping, fieldwork observations and communications with landowners, it appears that the existing bridge is not visible from inside or immediately outside any private residences.

The proposal site was observed to not be visible from West Kameruka Road because of screening by mature eucalypts along the banks of the Bemboka River. Similarly, views to the road approaches proposed for widening are limited to the immediate highway vicinity by the screening effects of the topography, roadside vegetation and curves in the road.

The proposal will not be visible from the village of Bemboka and only indistinctly, if at all, from Pipers Lookout on Brown Mountain which is approximately 20 km away.

Table 1: Opportunities to view the proposal site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type of viewpoint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travelling east along the Snowy Mountains Highway for approximately 150 m leading up to the existing bridge and in close proximity to road areas to be widened.</td>
<td>Transport route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelling west along the Snowy Mountains Highway for approximately 180 m leading up to the existing bridge and in close proximity to road areas to be widened.</td>
<td>Transport route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelling south along Polacks Flat Road approximately 900 m north of the existing bridge (glimpses only).</td>
<td>Transport route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelling along the unnamed access track between the Snowy Mountains Highway and the Bega Valley Shire Council water tanker pump out site.</td>
<td>Transport route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving and walking along the driveway of the closest house southeast of the existing bridge and recreating along the river downstream from the existing bridge.</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in farmland south of the bridge</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 Key viewpoints and visual impacts

3.2.1 Introduction

Key viewpoints have been selected from the viewing opportunities listed in Table 1 for further evaluation of the visual impacts of the proposal. These viewpoints are either representative of a range of views or target a specific view. Map 4 (Appendix 1) shows the location of the key viewpoints.

3.2.2 Assessment of individual viewpoints

The existing visual conditions have been described for each viewpoint, followed by prediction of the visual effects of the proposal, opportunities for mitigation of visual effects and an assessment of the significance of the visual effects based on sensitivity and magnitude of the effect.

Photographs of the view for each viewpoint are provided along with photomontages and visual records of the possible visual effects of the proposal.
### Reasons for selection

- Representative of publicly available views in bridge vicinity when travelling east on State highway
- Bridge has State heritage significance
- View seen by many people

### Baseline information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>On Snowy Mountains Highway approximately 130 m west of existing bridge</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Expected viewers | Many residents, workers and tourists travelling in private vehicles or on public transport passing through the area on State highway  
Occasional recreational cyclists |

### Existing views

- Fleeting view seen as part of a sequential view
- Viewing distance is short and enclosed by roadside vegetation (earlier views in sequence are even more enclosed by narrow road cutting through hill)
- Road and top surface of bridge in foreground are dominant linear elements
- Poplars on both sides of bridge are strong vertical elements
- Vegetation including mature eucalypts filters and screens views to middle and background
- River is not visible
- Refer to Figure 3.1

### Predicted visual effects

| Predicted effects | The width of the road and bridge will double to occupy a large proportion of the foreground. All of the top of the proposed bridge will be visible.  
The proposed sediment basin may also be visible on the right hand side of the view and could be a highly contrasting element, depending on choice of materials.  
The proposed western spill basin is likely to be screened by the proposed earthworks but could be a highly contrasting element as viewers approach the bridge, depending on choice of materials.  
The proposed eastern spill basin is likely to be screened by vegetation.  
Tree removal on the right hand side of the bridge will increase the visual prominence of the proposed infrastructure.  
The viewpoint will focus on the proposed development due to its scale and proximity to the viewer. |
<table>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refer to Figure 3.2.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mitigation opportunities

- There would be an adverse cumulative visual effect if the proposed sediment basin and spill basins are finished with obviously man-made materials such as concrete, geotextile or riprap and are fully exposed to view.
- It is **recommended** and assumed that the proposed sediment and spill basins will be fully vegetated with native grasses on all surfaces.
- It is **recommended** that native screen planting be established between the road and proposed sediment and spill basins.

Assessment of visual impact significance

**Sensitivity**

- The view is from a busy transport route which is designated a State highway and incorporates a bridge with State heritage significance. The view is seen by many people for a short time and does not appear to be a tourist destination.
- Viewers are expected to be less sensitive to changes in this view because it will be seen fleetingly while they are travelling through the affected landscape. In addition, it provides increased transport amenity for the viewers, which is likely to make the visual effects more acceptable.

  Rating: Low sensitivity

**Magnitude**

- The proposal will introduce large scale changes to the view with the doubling of the road and bridge width and removal of trees.
- The materials and forms being introduced are consistent with existing materials and forms, which will help to reduce the magnitude of the visual effect.
- The widened bridge will be obvious due to its close proximity to the viewer but not seen from far away due to screening by topography and vegetation.

  Rating: Low (assuming mitigation measures implemented)

**Significance of visual effects**

- The changes involve expansion of features already present in the view and will be seen fleetingly by viewers who are likely to be less sensitive to change in this view. Provided that the sediment and spill basins are fully vegetated and screened to avoid introducing highly discordant elements, the visual effects are expected to be low in significance.

  Rating: Low significance
Figure 3.1: V1 Snowy Mountains Highway – western approach (looking east)

Figure 3.2: V1 notes on visual effect