



Transport for NSW

Great Western Highway Upgrade

Community Consultation Summary Report
Community Update | May 2020



Great Western Highway at Mount Victoria

The NSW Government is investing \$2.5 billion towards upgrading the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow.

The Great Western Highway Upgrade is vital to ensure that journeys in, around and through the Blue Mountains are safer, less congested and more reliable. Your input and local knowledge is the best way to ensure that the upgrade delivers the best outcomes for your communities.

In 2019 Transport for NSW (TfNSW) held the first round of community consultation on the proposed upgrade Program.

The Community Consultation Summary Report, published in May and available at nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway, summarises what you have told us so far and provides information around key areas that you are interested in, like safety, village and property impacts, the environment, road use and freight.

Our consultation

Between Thursday 7 November and Monday 16 December 2019 we invited residents, business owners and other stakeholders to tell us their thoughts and suggestions on the strategic corridor upgrade proposed between Katoomba and Mount Victoria, and the corridor reserved in 2013 between Mount Victoria and Lithgow.

During the consultation period, we received 1,759 responses from the community through feedback forms, email submissions and our online interactive map.

We also held 12 community information sessions in Katoomba, Medlow Bath, Blackheath, Mount Victoria, Hartley and Lithgow, which were attended by 1,045 people.



You raised the possibility of other options, including putting freight on rail rather than road, upgrading Bells Line of Road or other alternate routes and changes to speed limits.

Upgrading the Bells Line of Road would have a significant impact on the World Heritage Area. This, along with the challenging terrain and the fact that significant traffic volumes would still remain on the Great Western Highway, means upgrading Bells Line is not a viable alternate route, however upgrading the road remains a long term priority of the Government.

The Highway upgrade is being developed alongside long-term rail options. There is no substitute for upgrading the Great Western Highway, as we need both road and rail to meet future demands, ease congestion and increase safety. We are working to deliver consistent speed limits across the mountains.



You wanted to know more about the environment, with many submissions addressing the environment, Aboriginal and European cultural heritage, noise and pollution, visual amenity, community facilities, and potential impacts on recreation and tourism including bushwalking and rock climbing.

We are committed to minimising environmental impacts. Further survey work, technical studies and environmental assessments are necessary and will be a key part of our planning and development. The project will be subject to environmental assessment and approval under the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979*, and this process will also be open to community consultation.



You want to talk about road use, road safety, the types of trucks allowed on roads and the paths they take, and how through traffic interacts with local traffic and cyclists.

Improving safety of all road users is a priority for the project. Road design safety principles will allow us to minimise risks to all road users including pedestrians and cyclists.

The highway is being designed to carry the safest and most productive heavy vehicles, which means fewer heavy vehicles on the road and a safer road environment for local communities and motorists. This includes B-doubles up to 25 metres and more modern, productive vehicles up to 30 metres.



You want to know what impacts there will be on local property, including potential property acquisitions, and the impact on business and the local economy.

We understand concerns property owners have about property values and how the upgrade might impact villages. The project team aims to provide more certainty as soon as possible.

No decisions have been made about the location of the upgraded highway in Blackheath. Your feedback is vital in shaping the upgrade.



Many of you made submissions on the consultation itself, including feedback on the consultation process, interest and support for the project and interest in the Blackheath co-design.

Public feedback is vital to this project and will be key in shaping the upgrade. The first consultation was only the first of several for this project.

In response to feedback we have established the Blackheath Co-Design Committee to examine the complexity and number of options in Blackheath.

We will continue to consult with the community at all stages of the Project and there will be further opportunities for you to have your say.



You asked about ongoing funding for the project, including investment, commitment, a Business Case, cost-benefit analysis and further studies.

The NSW Government has committed \$2.5 billion towards upgrading the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow. This includes planning for the whole alignment and delivery of some sections of the project.

An economic appraisal will be completed as part of the Strategic Business Case currently being prepared. It will consider options for improving transport across the mountains including alternate route options and constraints, such as issues with the highway east of Katoomba. We will also consider other social benefits like safety, the reduction in congestion and benefits for local communities.



You want to know about impacts that construction might have, and how it will be managed during the project.

As we are in the very early stages of planning and design for the project it is too early to determine the construction impacts in any detail. A balanced approach will be adopted and work will be scheduled to minimise impacts to motorists, residents and businesses.



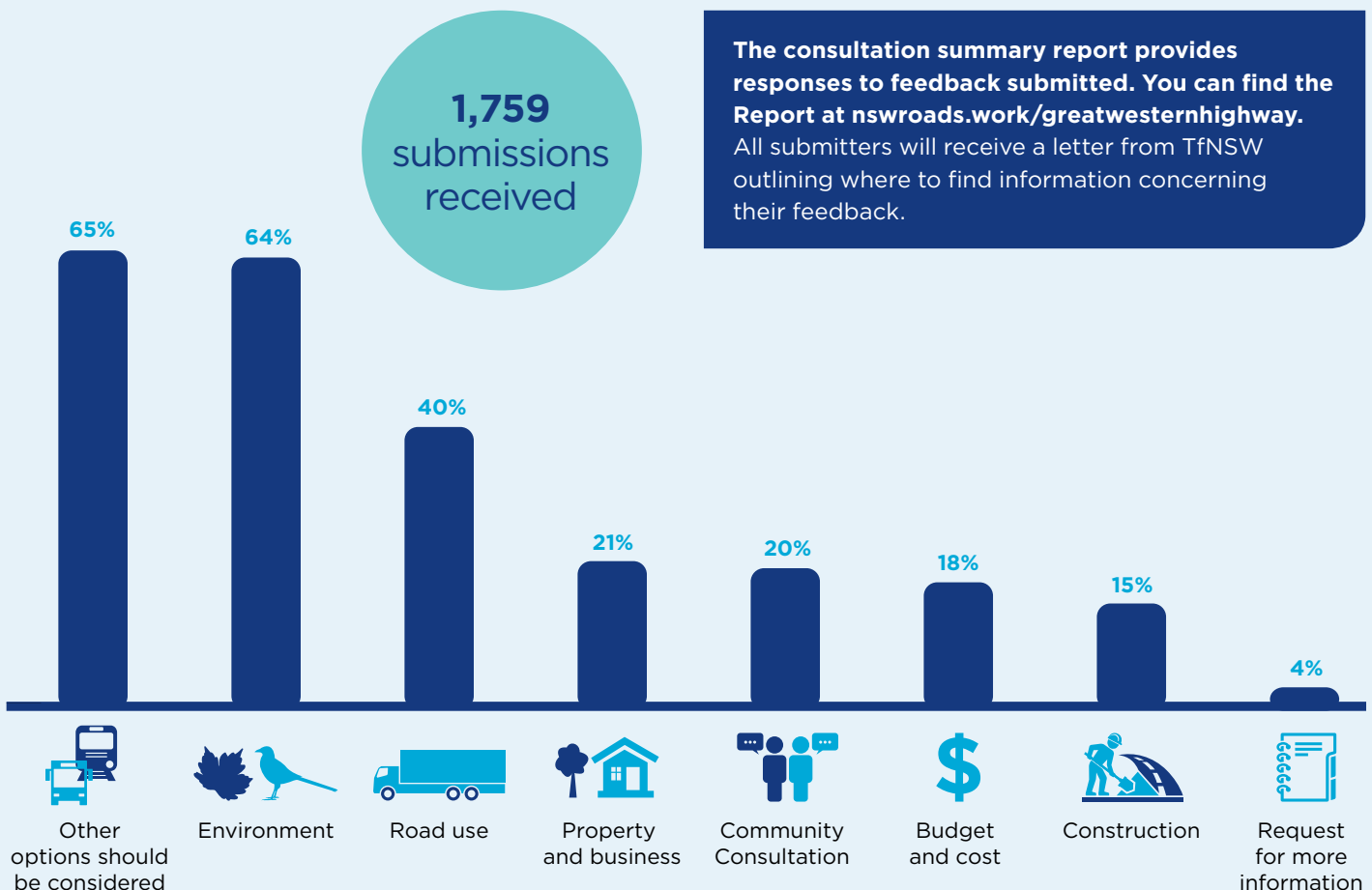
You're keen to know more about the studies and reports being done to support the project including investigations and information on the Evans and Peck Independent Review of the Mt Victoria to Lithgow Upgrade.

The Evans and Peck Independent Review was completed in January 2012 and is available on the Project web page. It only examined upgrades between Mount Victoria and Lithgow. The Review considered cost effectiveness, impact on the local community, and potential for directing funds to safety upgrades, including on the Bells Line of Road.

The Review is almost eight years old, and the Government has since met many of the Review's recommendations including safety upgrades between Hartley Valley and River Lett Hill, at Blackheath, Mount Victoria, and Forty Bends.

Upgrading the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow is a NSW Government commitment which will be developed through further studies and consultation.

The consultation summary report provides responses to feedback submitted. You can find the Report at nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway. All submitters will receive a letter from TfNSW outlining where to find information concerning their feedback.



Extreme weather resilience

The devastating bushfire season impacted directly on the Blue Mountains communities.

Volunteers, Emergency Services and National Parks and Wildlife personnel spent months protecting the Blue Mountains.

The fires highlighted the need to ensure resilience and connectivity in the Mountains during an emergency.

Your submissions also highlighted the extreme weather that road users often face using the highway.

Planning for the upgrade of the highway will have a focus on improving the resilience of the road as a connection, not only through bushfire seasons, but also through other extreme weather conditions like high winds, snow, ice and fog.



Grose Valley fire burning east of Mount Victoria

We're listening

Taking late submissions

We realise that many of you were impacted by the bushfires.

Many residents contacted us with late submissions that they had not had time to prepare during the height of the bushfires.

Our project team were glad to accept these submissions, and we kept on taking them for as long as we could.

Safety matters

Lives saved on eastern upgrade

The upgrade of the Great Western Highway to four lanes east of Katoomba has greatly improved road safety, with fatalities reduced by 77 per cent.

Since the upgrade, the crash rate involving articulated trucks where someone is hurt has dropped by 71 per cent, showing that duplicated highways are much safer for heavy vehicles and those sharing the road with them.

Modern trucks are safer trucks

Modern, more productive, trucks have been shown to make roads safer.

The highway is being designed to carry the safest and most productive heavy vehicles, which means fewer heavy vehicles on the road and a safer road environment for local communities and motorists. This includes B-doubles up to 25 metres and modern, more productive vehicles up to 30 metres.

Despite being larger vehicles, they are safer than the shorter general access vehicles, such as the 19-metre semi-trailers currently on the Great Western Highway.

A modern 26-metre A-double produces 46 per cent less emissions than a 19-metre semi-trailer, requires 55 per cent fewer trips to transport the same amount of freight, and can stop and turn in the same space.

Benefits at a glance

Modern vehicles have the highest safety standards and can carry more freight, meaning:

- fewer trucks on the road to move the same amount of freight
- fewer emissions
- reduced congestion
- reduced transport costs, which is money back to the consumer.

Upgrade a national infrastructure priority

In February, Infrastructure Australia announced that the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program has been added to its Infrastructure Priority List as a 'Priority Initiative' for 2020.

The Infrastructure Priority List is the authoritative guide to the priority infrastructure investments Australia needs to secure a sustainable and prosperous future. The Priority List has a strong record of driving national investment and has become a key reference point for governments at all levels.

Blackheath Co-Design Committee established

The Blackheath Co-Design Committee was established to help find the best highway route in Blackheath.

Most of the options to upgrade the Great Western Highway from Katoomba to Lithgow are restricted by steep terrain, the rail line, and the Blue Mountains National Park and World Heritage area.

The Committee will help us to find the best routes for Blackheath.

Members will look at options and provide local input, and we will use this to help identify preferred route(s) to consult with the wider community in the latter half of 2020.

This will give Blackheath residents a lot more certainty about impacts in their neighbourhood.

We invited members from key stakeholder groups, and any Blackheath resident could also apply.

The Co-Design meetings will be chaired by Alistair Lunn, TfNSW Director – Western Region, with the support of professional facilitators from KJA, one of Australia’s leading stakeholder engagement and communication consultancies.



The Co-Design Committee will help identify route options for Blackheath

Medlow Bath to be fast tracked

The first section of the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program to begin construction will be in Medlow Bath.

We are currently advertising for a specialist design firm who will work with the project team and the Medlow Bath community to prepare a design and undertake an environmental assessment for the upgrade.

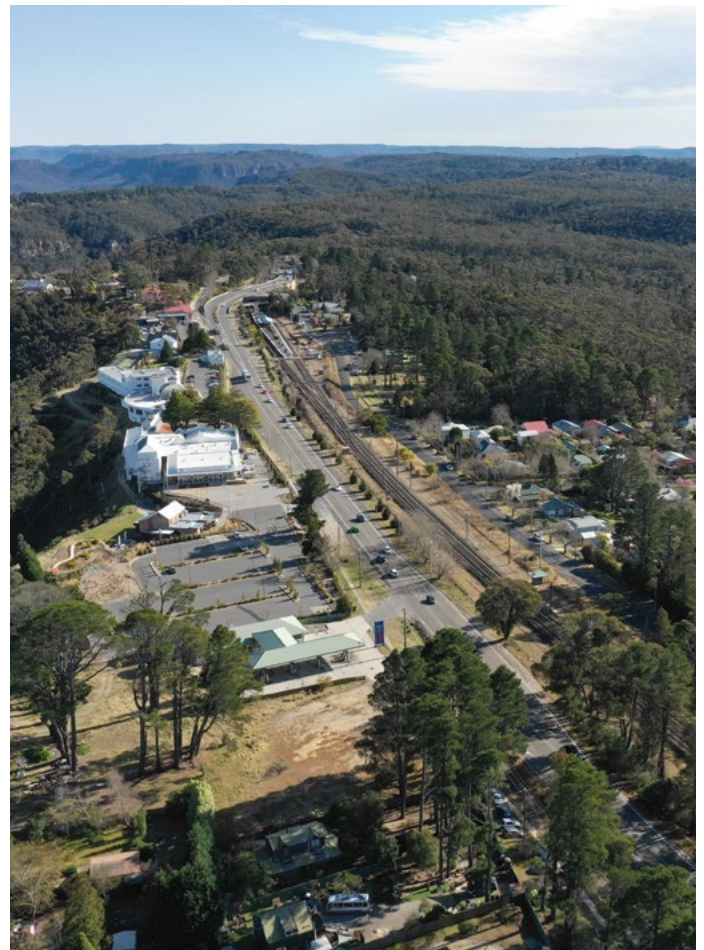
We will set up online consultation sessions for stakeholders and the community to see the plans and provide feedback and comment as the design is developed.

This will be an opportunity for the Medlow Bath community to talk closely with the project team and designer about how we can get the best outcomes for the local community.

If you are unable to join our online consultation sessions, our project team will be available to discuss plans over the phone.

Transport for NSW is following NSW Health advice and changing the way we approach community consultation in response to the Coronavirus outbreak.

We understand how crucial it is that the community have their say on all our projects and while this isn't business as usual we will ensure community consultation is carried out.



TfNSW is engaging contractors to design the Medlow Bath upgrade

Next steps

Transport for NSW is preparing a Strategic Program Business Case for the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program between Katoomba to Lithgow which will consider options for addressing the service needs, which include improving transport within and across the mountains.

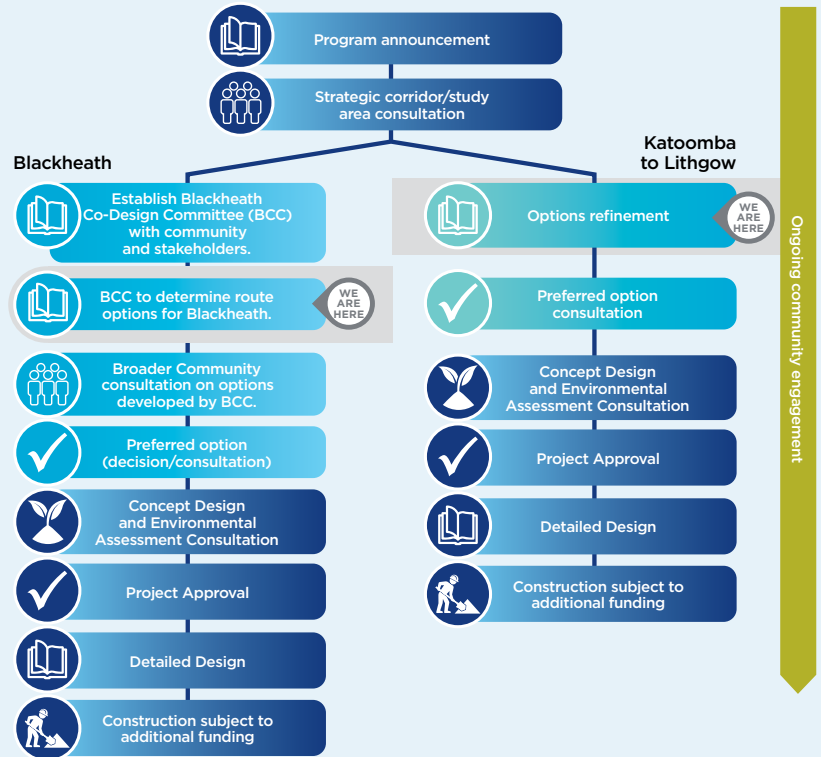
The Strategic Business Case is expected to be completed at the end of 2020. This time will allow all other contributing studies, such as transport connectivity, safety and freight analysis, to be completed and contribute to a robust and evidence based Case.

The Blackheath Co-Design Committee will meet in May, most likely by video conference to protect the health and safety of all Committee members.

The Project Team and independent facilitators KJA are moving forward with the co-design so that we can provide more certainty to Blackheath residents as soon as possible.

There will be wide community consultation on the preferred Blackheath options in the latter half of 2020.

To make sure you never miss an update, please contact us so that we can add you to our project distribution list.



Contact the Great Western Highway Upgrade team

Never miss an update

Please be sure to sign up to our distribution list. By signing up you'll never miss an update about the project. You can call, email or write to us to let us know your details.



nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway



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