

## Brighton Bypass – Northern Section – Summary of application for permit under the Aboriginal Relics Act (1975) to partially destroy TASI 10757.

### Project Description

The Northern section is a \$105M component of the \$176M Australian Government funded Brighton Bypass. Bypassing Brighton and Pontville will remove highway traffic from residential and business areas, dramatically improving safety and remove constraints on economic growth. Many crashes and some fatalities have occurred on this section of the highway.

National highway geometric and other requirements must be met. The route was selected to avoid Aboriginal sites known at the time.

Ongoing delays to the project threaten to cost millions of dollars. Major changes to the route would cost tens of millions of dollars.

### Scope of permit application

A permit is being sought to allow construction of a bridge and embankment west of the Jordan River in an area known as Heritage Section B. Aboriginal site TASI 10757 was discovered in this area and contains a highly significant levee deposit. The Aboriginal community claims the surrounding landscape has high cultural value and that a road and bridge should not be constructed. To allow construction to progress the following approval is required

- Permit to partially destroy TASI 10757 to allow construction of an embankment and bridge including a bridge above the levee with no disturbance to the levee

### Consultation

Recent consultation commenced in 2008 and Aboriginal Heritage Officers have been involved in all stages of the investigation.

TAC and TALSC have been consulted on investigation methodology and outcomes, reports, permits and the earlier construction proposal under this permit application. The groups have expressed their concern over the location of the bypass, but the project team has responded that no feasible and practical options are available and that the levee site will be protected from physical disturbance with the construction of a long span bridge over the levee.

### Investigation

Initial Heritage investigations of the Brighton Bypass in 2008 were followed by more detailed archaeological investigations in 2008-09 including 300 test pits and site specific investigations under permit. The third and final stage of investigations was a detailed program of works in 2010 under a separate permit with a methodology and permit terms agreed by the Aboriginal community.

The detailed investigation showed 90% of the highway route avoided known Aboriginal sites. Some areas initially identified as Aboriginal sites were found to not be sites. A permit was obtained for partial destruction of portions of two sites within the construction footprint. The area implicated in this permit application represents less than 5% of the length of the northern section of the Brighton Bypass.

The levee deposit is 26,000 to 37,000 years old, generally intact and stratified. It is important and should be conserved. TASI 10757 is a landscape unit containing the levee and expected to contain some artefacts, but it is disturbed and has less scientific value.

### Alternatives

Since the 1980s, alternatives for a bypass to the west of Brighton, one east to the Bowen Bridge, upgrading of the existing Midland Highway and others have been examined. Newly presented alternatives have also been examined and found to not meet most project requirements.

Other Aboriginal sites are expected to be widespread throughout the Brighton and Jordan River valley area with alternative routes unlikely to avoid sites. Other sites similar to the levee may also exist.

### Proposal

An earlier construction proposal for the levee was presented to and discussed with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council. This revised and improved proposal consists of:

1. A bridge over the South Rail line and William Street with a bridge abutment within TASI 10757 as currently defined, although no relics have been identified in this area;
2. An embankment in the disturbed area outside the area of high scientific significance (the levee) requiring excavation of some material;
3. Bridge abutments outside the area of high scientific significance (the levee) and a single 70m bridge span above the 65m wide levee with revised construction methodology now requiring no disturbance of the levee;
4. Three shorter (nom 32m) bridge spans to cross the lower Jordan River flood plain and river;
5. Modified construction below and above ground to reduce temporary and permanent impact to TASI 10757. The associated additional cost of the proposal is ~\$12M and is currently unfunded;
6. Possibility of conservation of 75% of the site outside the works (on private and Crown land) in addition to conservation of the levee within the works.

### Constraints

The highway alignment and the project itself are governed by many constraints that, as well as Aboriginal heritage, include:

- Council planning schemes and encroachment of urban development up to the proclaimed corridor (*Pink shading*)
- Threatened grassland communities, significant populations of threatened flora species and fauna habitat
- Linking to the heavy freight route of Tea Tree Road
- Linking efficiently to the future Bagdad Bypass
- Highway geometric requirements for safety and efficiency
- Eliminating most traffic and crashes from Brighton - Pontville
- Strict project benefit and other criteria
- Limited project budget

