

# Duplication of Midway Point and Sorell Causeways

Community Consultation and Feedback  
2023



## About the project

The duplication of the Midway Point and Sorell Causeways (the project) is a part of the Tasmanian Government's South East Traffic Solution (SETS). The SETS is a \$349.5 million funding package to reduce traffic congestion on the Tasman Highway between Hobart and Sorell.

The duplication of the Midway Point and Sorell Causeways has a \$209.5 million funding commitment.

The duplication of the Midway Point and Sorell Causeways will provide the following benefits:

- Improved traffic flow: four lanes across both causeways will improve travel time reliability for commuters and tourists travelling between Hobart and the southeast region.
- Improved safety: the new causeways will be built to withstand severe weather, improving upon the existing causeways which have seawalls in poor condition. Four lanes across the causeway will also reduce the risk of head on crashes with wider lane widths and a central flexible safety barrier.

## Consultation summary

One purpose of this consultation was to inform the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) referral for the project in accordance with statutory requirements. Feedback received during this consultation is being used to develop the project's EPBC Act submission and will help guide decisions for the next design phases.

Consultation was also conducted to seek community input and identify areas in which the project could be improved.

Consultation on the draft concept design for the Midway Point and Sorell Causeways ran for three weeks, opening on Monday, 28 February 2022 and closing on Friday, 18 March 2022.



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The public consultation opportunity was advertised via a link on the Transport website, a RoadsTas Facebook post and a media release from the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, issued on the day of consultation opening.

An email was also sent to key stakeholders, and residents of Sorell, Midway Point, Cambridge, Penna, Forcett, Lewisham, Dodges Ferry and Carlton received a letter inviting them to participate.

## Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) is administered by the Australian Government's Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). The EPBC Act is focussed on matters of national environmental significance.

Three Matters of Environmental Significance have been identified as part of this project:

- wetlands of international importance (Pitt Water - Orielton Lagoon)
- listed threatened species and ecological communities
- migratory species protected under international agreements

Under the EPBC Act, actions that have, or are likely to have, a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance require approval from the Australian Government's Environment Minister.

### Assessment process

Actions that require approval under the EPBC Act must undergo an environment assessment process, as set out in the EPBC Act, and supplemented by the EPBC Regulations.

The process first involves a 'referral', followed (if needed) by an assessment stage.

DCCEEW has published a fact sheet and video explaining the environmental assessment process on its website (<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/epbc>). The website also has a public notices database which contains a list of current EPBC Act referrals and approval decisions.

Once a project has received approval, the approval may specify several conditions. This can include, for example, the preparation of management plans, which may also require approval from the Australian Government's Environment Minister.

## Feedback summary

A total of 422 pieces of feedback/comment were received during the community consultation period. This does not include any online reactions (such as likes or dislikes) without comment.

Feedback was received through the following channels:

- Meetings with officers from Clarence City Council and Sorell Council
- 152 comments from 86 individuals via the Social Pinpoint interactive map
- 268 comments on the RoadsTas Facebook post (including tags, shares and replies)
- 2 direct emails.

The feedback received across all platforms stressed the importance of future-proofing the causeways to support growth, as well as improving local access.

## Council meetings

The project team met with officers from Clarence City Council and Sorell Council in February 2022. At these meetings, the project team provided council officers with an overview of the project and obtained and documented their initial feedback and concerns.

Both councils expressed an interest in the approximate timeframes for this project and wanted to understand more about how the project tied in with other upgrades being completed as part of SETS. Sorell Council also provided input and feedback regarding the Tasmanian Live-Bearing Seastar and the project's potential impact on the area's water quality.

Both councils confirmed that the project would require a Development Application (DA).

## Social Pinpoint

The project's interactive map (hosted by Social Pinpoint) was visited 7,167 times by 2,700 unique users.

In line with feedback received from both Councils, many participants expressed an interest in the approximate timeframes for this project and wanted to know more about how the project tied in with the other upgrades being completed as part of SETS.

Other key themes raised by commenters on Social Pinpoint included maintaining access to the causeways for recreational use, such as fishing, cycling and pedestrian access, and how environmental impacts were being identified and mitigated. Many commenters supported the extension of the causeways to meet the new Southern Sorell Bypass, with stakeholders also asking how the project would impact on the intersection of the Tasman Highway with Nash Street (Sorell).

## Facebook

The RoadsTas Facebook post for this project, published on 28 February 2022, reached approximately 38,233 users, with 8,947 post engagements.

Key themes raised on Facebook included potential traffic delays during construction, sea spray mitigation measures, maintaining access to the causeways for recreational use, and the need for the Tasman Highway to be fully duplicated between Sorell and Cambridge. Many commenters requested that the project be completed as soon as possible.

## Direct emails

One of the emails received during the consultation period related to the Tasmanian Live-bearing Seastar and provided the project team with additional information on the mitigation measures used to protect the sea star during the construction of McGees Bridge.

The other email received related to the functionality of Social Pinpoint.

## State Growth response to feedback

Feedback	State Growth response
The dual lanes in each direction should be extended to meet the new Sorell Bypass, and the Nash Street intersection should be upgraded to tie into these works.	Upgrading the connection between the eastern end of the Sorell causeway and the Sorell Southern Bypass (which includes the Nash Street intersection) to two lanes in each direction will be considered once the causeways are duplicated.
There needs to be a separate and safe connection for cyclists and pedestrians through to Clarence.	A new 2.5 m shared use pathway for pedestrians and cyclists will be provided on both causeways to contribute to this connection through to Clarence.
The shared pathway should be made wider (3 metres).	The proposed 2.5 m wide shared use pathway is appropriate for the expected volumes of pedestrians and cyclists. The 2.5 m width complies with current Austroads design guidelines.
Protection needs to be installed to protect causeway users from sea-spray.	As part of this project, the new road will be raised, which will help to protect the highway from sea spray, erosion, inundation during large storm events and sea level rise.
Access/parking needs to be included in final design for recreational use (fishing, cycling, pedestrians etc) so that recreational users do not park in other areas near the causeway.	The pathway on the southern side of McGees Bridge will be retained for fishing. Appropriate access and parking facilities are being considered as part of the design process. Adjacent landowners and businesses will be consulted with as part of this process to ensure that their concerns are considered.
Installation of a boat ramp for public use.	Installation of a publicly accessible boat ramp is outside of the scope of this project.
Environmental impacts need to be carefully mitigated.	<p>The Department acknowledges that this project will have an impact on the surrounding environment. The project team is working hard to ensure that impacts are kept to a minimum and relevant environmental investigations are underway.</p> <p>As outlined above, this project is subject to approval under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999</i> (EPBC Act), as well as various state-based environmental approvals.</p> <p>The EPBC Act is focussed on matters of national environmental significance. Three Matters of</p>

	<p>Environmental Significance have been identified as part of this project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wetlands of international importance (Pitt Water Orielton Lagoon)</li> <li>• listed threatened species and ecological communities</li> <li>• migratory species protected under international agreements</li> </ul> <p>Under the EPBC Act, actions that have, or are likely to have, a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance require approval from the Australian Government’s Environment Minister.</p> <p>Proposed mitigation measures will be included as part of the EPBC Act referral.</p>
<p>What are you doing to protect the live-bearing seastar?</p>	<p>One Matter of National Environmental Significance (MNES) that has been identified in the project site is the Tasmanian Live-bearing Seastar (<i>Parvulastra vivipara</i>).</p> <p>For the Midway Point Causeway, populations and habitat for this species occur on the northern side of the existing causeway. As such it is proposed that most of the construction works to widen the causeway will be undertaken on the southern side.</p> <p>The Sorell Causeway has smaller areas of seastar habitat and smaller but denser populations, and these occur on the southern side of the existing causeway. As such it is envisioned that most of the construction works will be completed on the northern side of the existing causeway, to avoid impact to habitat for this species.</p> <p>During construction, there is risk of indirect impact to this species. This includes the chance of sedimentation leading to smothering the habitat for this species and loss of populations. To mitigate this risk, it is proposed that seastars from the causeways will be temporarily relocated during construction. Potential receiver sites for relocated sea stars are currently under investigation.</p> <p>A working group with experts in this field has been established to ensure minimal disturbance to the sea stars. Further information regarding mitigation measures will be made available in future consultation.</p>

<p>The Department should consider linking Lake Vue Parade (Midway Point) with the highway to reduce congestion at the Penna Road intersection.</p>	<p>The Department of State Growth has recently completed upgrading the intersection of the Tasman Highway and Penna Road which will minimise congestion for traffic entering the highway from Penna Road. This upgrade was designed to suit predicted future traffic volumes using the Penna Road intersection and is expected to provide an improved level of service until at least 2040.</p>
<p>Impacts on public transport and whether this project would improve public transport services.</p>	<p>Current and future public transport needs will be considered as part of our standard project design process.</p> <p>Construction of a dedicated public transport lane is outside of the scope of this project.</p>
<p>Impacts on water flow under causeways and water quality.</p>	<p>The existing culverts under the Sorell causeway will be lengthened in accordance with the new road width to ensure water flow is maintained between Orielson Lagoon and Pitt Water.</p>
<p>Timing of construction in conjunction with other projects.</p>	<p>We aim to coordinate construction of road projects to minimise traffic impacts, whilst choosing an appropriate balance with the competing need to do the work as soon as possible.</p>

## Next steps

While we understand the importance of the SETS program for the Sorell and southern beaches community, duplication of the causeways is a complex project that requires significant time to:

- investigate threatened species and habitat;
- complete the engineering design and environmental management plans; and
- obtain environmental approvals;

before construction can commence.

The EPBC Act referral is scheduled for submission in early 2024, the submission will include the feedback received from this round of consultation.

Feedback received during this round of consultation will also be used to inform the project's design.

Discussions with key stakeholders have already started and will continue throughout development of the design.

Discussions with nearby landowners and residents will also start in the coming months, so that their feedback can be considered as the design is developed.

Further consultation with the wider community will occur during development of the design.