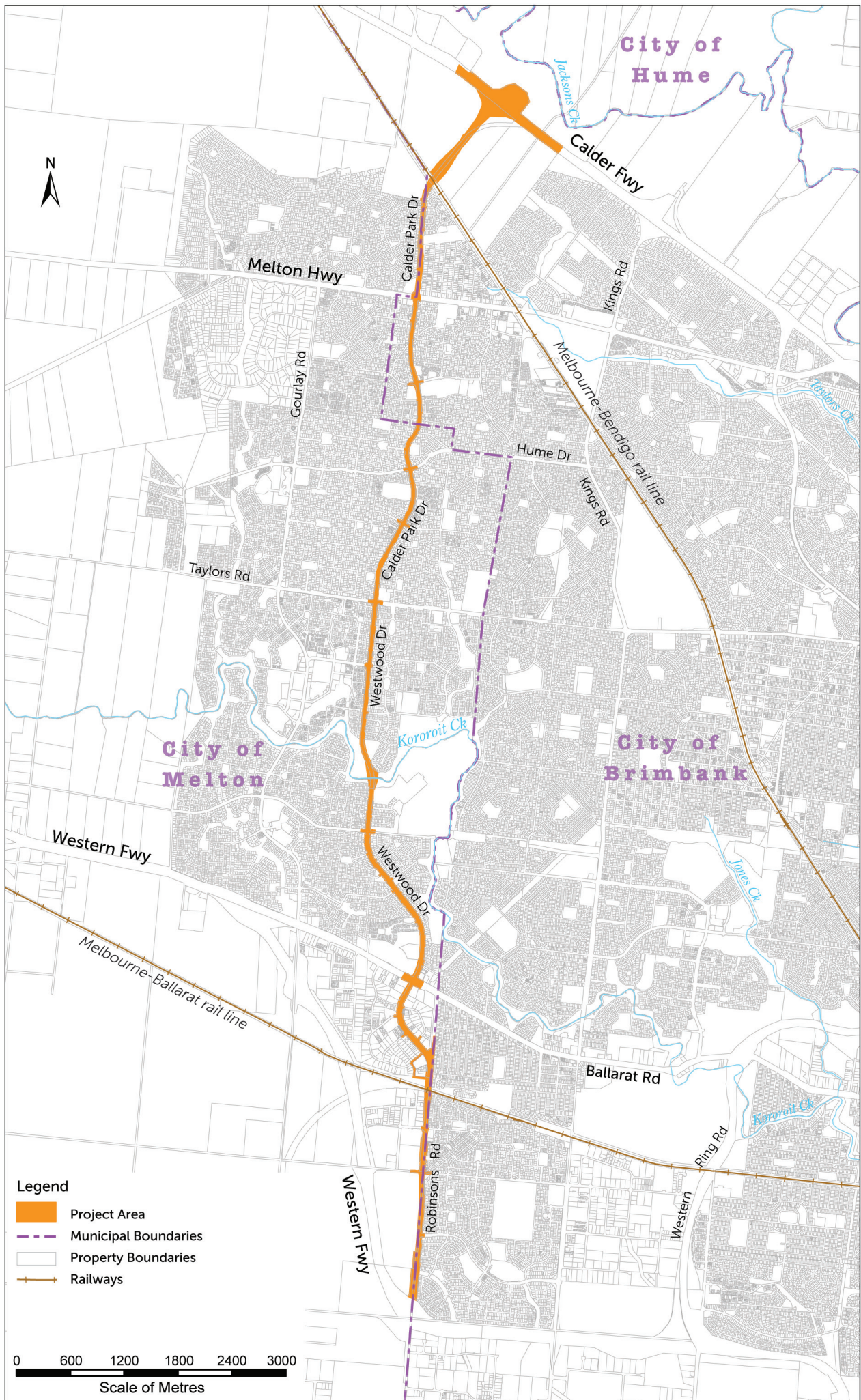


# Palmers Road Corridor (Western Freeway to Calder Freeway) Environment Effects Statement Summary Brochure







**Figure 1** Palmers Road Corridor (Western Freeway to Calder Freeway)



# Summary Brochure

## Purpose of EES report

On 13 November 2009, the Victorian Minister for Planning determined under the Environment Effects Act 1978 that an Environment Effects Statement (EES) needed to be prepared by VicRoads for the Palmers Road Corridor Project - Western Freeway to Calder Freeway ('the Project'). The purpose of the EES is to provide a detailed description of the Project and to investigate its potential effects on the environment, to inform the public and stakeholders and then to enable an assessment of the Project by the Minister for Planning.

The upgrade of the Palmers Road Corridor has been identified as a long term Project to be implemented in stages. The focus of this EES is on the assessment of environmental effects of the Palmers Road Corridor between the Western Freeway and the Calder Freeway.

Robinsons Road, Westwood Drive and Calder Park Drive are local roads currently under the management of the Cities of Brimbank and Melton. The existing roads are two-lane undivided roads with no connection at Kororoit Creek. Consequently, there is a need to connect Westwood Drive and upgrade the roads in the future to a six lane arterial to provide the additional capacity for these roads to function as arterial roads.

## Project rationale

The aim of the Project is to provide a high standard north-south transport link in Melbourne's west. The western suburbs of Melbourne are experiencing significant growth in residential development and employment. This expansion places pressure on the existing road networks and must be supported by suitable transport infrastructure. The Project would provide a high level of accessibility in these areas, and will assist in the reduction of traffic through local streets and residential areas.

The Project would provide a link between the Western Freeway, Western Highway, Melton Highway and Calder Freeway. The Palmers Road Corridor is to be progressively upgraded to an ultimate six-lane divided carriageway arterial road to deliver significant road safety, capacity and efficiency benefits in response to the projected traffic volumes in a rapidly growing area in Melbourne's west.

The Project is supported by *Plan Melbourne* (Victorian Government, 2014), *Western Melbourne Transport Strategy* (Lead West, Western Transport Alliance, AECOM, 2012), *Growth Corridor Plans Managing Melbourne's Growth* (Victorian Government, 2012), *Growth Area Framework Plans: Melton – Caroline Springs* (Victorian Government, 2006), *Melton East Strategy Plan* (Shire of Melton, 1997) and the *Outer Western Suburbs Transport Study* (Victorian Government, 2001).

## Project approvals

The Project requires approval under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, amendments to the Brimbank Planning Scheme (Amendment 157) and Melton Planning Scheme (Amendment C143) under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and an approved Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*. Approvals under other legislation for components of the project are also required and outlined in the EES report.

The draft planning scheme amendments (PSAs) and draft CHMP are being exhibited concurrently with the EES and public comments are sought on the PSAs as well as the EES during the exhibition period. The PSAs include application of a Public Acquisition Overlay to land that needs to be compulsorily acquired for the Project, and provide an exemption from all planning permit requirements for the Project (subject to the Project meeting any other recommendations of the Minister's assessment of the project's environmental effects).

A CHMP has been developed for the Project, and will be submitted to the Registered Aboriginal Party and the Office of Aboriginal Affairs for evaluation and approval following the EES process.

The Project requires approval under the EPBC Act due to the potential to impact on matters of national environmental significance. The Federal Minister for the Environment will make a decision under the EPBC Act on the Project and this assessment will be based on separate documentation to the EES.

## Project options

In deciding that an EES was required for the Project in 2009, the Minister for Planning required that alternative routes be considered in a preliminary report. The following alternatives have been considered as part of this EES:

- Gourlay Road Corridor to the west
- Kings Road Corridor to the east
- Palmers Road Corridor

Corridors further east or west of the three corridors were not considered as any primary arterial developed further afield would not serve this area effectively and would result in additional congestion on the three corridors.

The Kings Road and Gourlay Road Corridors are not suitable alternatives. This is due to constraints such as the limited width of the existing road reserve, the number of friction points at intersections with local streets, the location of activity centres, existing levels of local traffic and designation as part of the Principal Public Transport Network (PPTN).

The Palmers Road Corridor is a core element of the Growth Corridor Plan for Melbourne's west. The land use pattern has been designed so the Palmers Road Corridor can accommodate a six lane primary north-south arterial, with almost no direct property access.

Transport modelling shows a road connection across Kororoit Creek is critical to the arterial road network. Modelling also shows that at two and four lanes the Palmers Road Corridor will not meet the demand in the future and the six lane option provides a level of service with significantly less congestion, especially in the peak periods. With six lanes the Palmers Road Corridor will become the major north south route located between the adjacent Outer Metropolitan Ring Road and the Western Ring Road.

### Project description

The Project Area, for the purposes of the EES is shown on figure 1. The Project involves reserving a 16 kilometre long and 40-60 metres wide corridor for the future development of a continuous north south arterial road from the Western Freeway to the Calder Freeway. This corresponds with and connects the corridors of existing local roads: Robinsons Road, Westwood Drive and Calder Park Drive.

The Project will ultimately involve construction of a six-lane divided road (i.e. three-lanes in each direction), with off-road shared bicycle and pedestrian facilities on both sides of the road. Two existing railway crossings would be removed, one at the Melbourne-Bendigo rail line crossing with Calder Park Drive and another at the Melbourne-Ballarat rail line with Robinsons Road. Two bridges would be constructed over Kororoit Creek and it is also proposed to construct a raised interchange where the route connects with the Calder Freeway in the north.

The upgrade of the Palmers Road Corridor has been identified as a long term Project to be implemented in stages, with the initial Kororoit Creek bridge and Calder Freeway interchange planned to occur in the short term.

As the ultimate development is not proposed until 2046, minor changes to the alignment may occur during the detailed design stage. However, the level of detail in the existing design is considered sufficient for an assessment of potential project impacts.

### Consultation

Consultation with the community has been an integral part of the planning investigations. VicRoads has undertaken consultation with relevant stakeholders, potentially affected parties, the community and organisations in order to identify and respond to their concerns.

In 2013, a Consultation Plan was prepared for the EES and the PSAs which outlines how VicRoads would consult further with and seek input from stakeholders, interest groups and the wider community on the Project.

A Technical Reference Group (TRG) was established with Government stakeholders and other key agencies with meetings held in 2013 and 2014. The purpose of the TRG was to obtain specialist technical input on any issues, to review and provide advice on the consultant's reports, provide updates in relation to policy changes and identify approval/permit requirements.

Two community information days were held in June 2013 to provide an opportunity for the community, including those directly affected along the corridor, to ask questions, provide input to the EES and PSA processes and provide feedback on the route.

The community has generally been supportive of the Project. Key issues raised by the community included impacts on amenity as a result of noise, construction dust and increased traffic, impacts on access and pedestrian safety and concerns regarding the impact on the value of homes in the area. Key design changes have occurred as a result of community and stakeholder consultation.

**Table 1 - Summary of rating scale**

Rating	Description
<b>Very Well</b>	Negligible adverse effects Applicable standards met Strong policy compliance Best practice (incl. mitigation measures)
<b>Well</b>	Minor adverse effects Minor exceedances at small number of locations Good policy compliance Improved practice (incl. mitigation measures)
<b>Neutral</b>	Moderate adverse effects Minor exceedances at a large number of locations Partial policy compliance Standard practice (incl. mitigation measures)
<b>Poor</b>	Moderate-major adverse effects Major exceedances at a small number of locations Policy non-compliance Poor practice (incl. mitigation measures)
<b>Very Poor</b>	Major adverse effects Major exceedances at a large number of locations Major policy non-compliance Very poor practice (incl. mitigation measures)

## Evaluation framework

The Scoping Requirements for the Palmers Road Corridor Project – Western Freeway to Calder Freeway (Victorian Government, 2013) sets out the range of environmental, social and economic matters to be investigated and documented in the EES. The Evaluation Framework for the Project used a rating scale which is summarised in Table 1. The assessment against each of the evaluation objectives is outlined in Table 2.

## Potential environmental, social and economic effects

### Road safety and capacity

Transport modelling of future travel demand has demonstrated a need for the upgrade of the Palmers Road Corridor. Without the upgrade, traffic conditions on the existing road network in the Cities of Brimbank and Melton (and the surrounding wider road network) would deteriorate, thus inhibiting accessibility and mobility for local residents, visitors and the business sector.

Construction of the bridge over Kororoit Creek and the new Calder Park Drive interchange with the Calder Freeway would provide significant improvements in connecting road users within and beyond the Cities of Brimbank and Melton. The Palmers Road Corridor would become the primary north-south arterial between the Western Ring Road to the east and the proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring Road to the west. The upgrade would provide sufficient capacity to attract traffic away from adjacent corridors providing for public transport routes and would improve efficiency and reliability of services along these corridors. Surrounding residents would also experience more efficient access to the wider transport network.

A high level of safety would be achieved for users of the corridor with separated carriageways, dedicated off road cycle and pedestrian paths and controlled crossing facilities at all signalised intersections. Two level crossings with the Melbourne-Ballarat and Melbourne-Bendigo rail lines would be removed.

### Amenity and environmental quality

For the large majority of residences along the Palmers Road Corridor, modelling of the 2-lane road (with Westwood Drive connection) to a duplicated 6-lane road in 2046, showed that the traffic noise levels potentially change by -1 to +9dB(A). With the majority of residences predicted to experience an increase of between +1 to +3 dB(A). A 3 dB(A) change in road noise is just perceptible.

Application of the VicRoads Traffic Noise Reduction Policy (2005) to the proposed Calder Park Drive realignment on the approach to the interchange with the Calder Freeway, found that noise levels would be less than the threshold (63 dB(A)) and therefore no noise attenuation measures are required at residences in this area. Elsewhere along the Corridor, the Policy indicates that noise attenuation would not be required.

An air quality assessment using the VicRoads Air Quality Screening Tool developed in consultation with the EPA predicted that the concentrations of key air pollutants associated with vehicle emissions are within the requirements of the State Environment Protection Policy (Air Quality Management) using the predicted traffic volumes in 2046.

Noise and air quality issues associated with construction activities will be managed through the implementation of measures consistent with 'Environmental Guidelines for Major Construction Sites - Publication 480' (EPA Victoria, 1996) and 'Guidelines for Noise Control - EPA Publication 1254' (EPA Victoria, 2008).

### Social, land use and infrastructure

The long term planning for the area has ensured that land is available to support the Project and has therefore greatly minimised the need for property acquisition. As a result, no residential dwellings would be acquired as part of the Project. However, acquisition of some small parts of vacant residential land is required. No commercial buildings will be acquired, however, some businesses along Westwood Drive would be affected by property acquisition. This would be concentrated along the western side of Westwood Drive and affect land owned by businesses such as a petrol station, warehouses, a pool store and a truck driver education centre. Land is also required from the Calder Park Motor Sports Complex (situated on the western side of Calder Park Drive) and vacant industrial land (situated on the eastern side of Calder Park Drive).

North-south connectivity in the Study area would be substantially improved for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians when the Kororoit Creek Bridge is developed. Pedestrian safety would be increased when existing roundabouts are replaced with signalised crossing points, encouraging east-west and north-south pedestrian movements. These changes would increase access and mobility for residents of the study area. The use of open courts and other less informal opportunities for east west pedestrian and cyclist movements across the corridor would become impractical over time as traffic volumes increase or when the road is widened.

### Visual and landscape values

The Project would not impact significantly upon the Organ Pipes National Park or on the key visitor destinations in the park including the Visitors Centre, Organ Pipes, Rosette Rock and Tessellated Pavement. Potential effects would be managed through mitigation measures such as retention of remnant vegetation, planting adjacent to the Organ Pipes National Park, the use of planting to screen the interchange and other elements of the road.

The proposed bridge over Kororoit Creek and associated road infrastructure would impact on the Kororoit Creek valley and visual amenity, through the introduction of built infrastructure into a valley with natural and heritage values. These impacts can be mitigated somewhat by providing maximum open, light spaces beneath the bridge structures and planting indigenous vegetation on the embankments.

Minor acquisition of the Banchory Grove Nature Conservation Reserve is proposed and the Ravenhall Magazine and Storage Facility will be impacted. Mitigation measures include the reconstruction of the drystone wall as a paving band along the original alignment where possible. Crushed rock will be used to fill gaps within the road reserve to the Banchory Grove Nature Conservation Reserve boundary to prevent weed infestations of the grassland.

### Biodiversity and habitat

The upgrade of the Palmers Road Corridor is not expected to have a significant impact on flora or fauna species listed under the FFG and EPBC Acts. The Project would require minimal removal of native vegetation. A general offset of 2.425 Biodiversity Equivalence Units is required to compensate for the removal of 2.64 habitat hectares of native vegetation and two scattered trees. Matters of national environmental significance for this Project would be assessed via preliminary documentation through a separate process to this EES.

The Project has the potential to impact on ecological values within the Project Area, such as through the loss of vegetation/habitats, habitat fragmentation and edge effects, noise and dust pollution, increases in fauna mortality and aquatic disturbance. Impacts have been avoided and minimised on native vegetation, listed flora and fauna species and ecological communities throughout the planning and design process. The Project will be managed in accordance with a Contractor Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). Given that the Project Area has been relatively disturbed and that mitigation measures and offset requirements would be implemented, adverse impacts would be limited.

### Catchment values

Potential impacts to surface water and catchment values, identified during construction and operation of the Palmers Road Corridor include activities that affect the function and quality of waterways and flood plains, such as increased flood levels at waterway crossings and reduced water quality due to contaminants entering the waterway. These potential impacts would be managed under a CEMP.

Waterway crossings would be designed in accordance with Melbourne Water requirements (channel profile, floodplain and revegetation) and construction would be undertaken in accordance with VicRoads Environmental Risk Management Guidelines (2012) and the State Environment Protection Policy (Waters of Victoria) requirements for receiving waterways. To further protect waterways and floodplain function appropriate design standards including Water Sensitive Road Design measures would be implemented.

### Cultural heritage

There are no heritage overlays directly affecting the Project Area and no heritage places of State cultural significance (VHR listed places) within the Project Area. There are three sites listed on the Victorian Heritage Inventory within the Project Area. One of these sites no longer seems to exist (VHI7822-0188 CS-H4 Cobbled Road). Mitigation or management measures have been proposed for the Ravenhall 2 Magazine and Storage Facility (H7822-0174) Robinsons Road, Ravenhall and the Drover's Hut (H7822-0160) north of Kororoit Creek.

The Project Area includes several large areas of Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity. Most of the known cultural heritage is in association with waterways. The project cannot avoid impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage due to the nature of road and bridge construction. Where harm cannot be avoided specific measures will be required. These measures are being developed through the cultural heritage management plan process in consultation with the Wurundjeri, the registered Aboriginal party for the section north of the Melbourne-Bendigo rail line crossing and the Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and appropriate Traditional Owners for the remainder of the Project Area.

### Evaluation objectives and assessment

Overall, the Project can be considered as rating "Well" when taking into account the ratings for each of the draft evaluation objectives set out to guide the EES investigations. The assessment against each of the evaluation objectives is outlined in Table 2.

The Technical reports in Appendices to the EES provide more details of the investigations that resulted in the assessment against each specific EES objective. The specialist findings are summarised in the EES report.



Calder Park Drive



Table 2 - Draft evaluation objectives and assessment

Draft Evaluation Objective	Key Technical Investigations	Rating
<b>Road Safety and Capacity</b> To improve the road-based transport capacity and connectivity in western Melbourne, by developing a six-lane dual carriageway arterial road along the Palmers Road corridor between Western Freeway and Calder Freeway, while maintaining the connectivity of the existing local transport routes.	Transport Modelling – Palmers Road Corridor EES (AECOM, 2015) Access Management – Palmers Road Corridor EES (AECOM, 2015)	Very Well
<b>Amenity and Environmental Quality</b> To minimise adverse noise and other amenity effects on nearby residents and land uses, to the extent practicable.	Traffic Noise Assessment – Palmers Road Corridor EES (AECOM, 2015) Air Quality Assessments – Palmers Road Corridor EES (VicRoads, 2013)	Neutral
<b>Social, Land Use and Infrastructure</b> To minimise adverse social and land use effects, including impacts on existing infrastructure.	Social Impact Assessment – Palmers Road Corridor EES (AECOM, 2014)	Well
	Land Use Planning – Palmers Road Corridor EES (AECOM, 2014)	Very Well
<b>Visual and Landscape Values</b> To avoid adverse effects on the landscape and recreational values of the Organ Pipes National Park and minimise visual effects on open space areas.	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Palmers Road Corridor EES (Spiire, 2014)	Well
<b>Biodiversity and Habitat</b> To avoid or minimise adverse effects on native vegetation and listed flora and fauna species and ecological communities, and address opportunities for offsetting potential losses consistent with relevant policy.	Flora and Fauna Assessment, and Biodiversity Offset Analysis – Palmers Road Corridor EES (Ecology and Heritage Partners, 2014)	Well
<b>Catchment Values</b> To maintain the functions and values of surface water and floodplain environments.	Surface Water Memorandum – Palmers Road Corridor EES (AECOM, 2013)	Neutral
<b>Cultural Heritage</b> To avoid or minimise effects on Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage values.	Historic Archaeology and Cultural Heritage (Dr Vincent Clark & Associates, 2014)	Well
	Draft Cultural Heritage Management Plan (Number 12662) (Dr Vincent Clark & Associates, 2014)	Neutral
<b>Overall evaluation</b>		Well

## Environmental management framework

This EES includes an Environmental Management Framework (EMF) for the Project that outlines the process and procedures proposed for managing the environment during design, construction and operation.

VicRoads would develop a Project Environment Protection Strategy (PEPS) and contract specification(s) which would incorporate environmental management measures as described in the EES report and other requirements identified through the Minister's Assessment and conditions of subsequent approvals. These documents would inform the detailed design and construction of the Project, including the development of the Contractor(s) Environmental Management Plan. The implementation of VicRoads procedures would ensure that construction activities undertaken would be consistent with the EMP.

## Integrated and sustainable transport

The Project directly supports and delivers, a key feature of planning policies including the *Melton East Strategy Plan* (GHD, 1997), which underpins the layout and development of the land in and around the Palmers Road Corridor. The Project considers and addresses the objectives and decision making principles in the *Transport Integration Act 2010*.

The Project would deliver a safe and efficient arterial road that would improve connectivity through the west of Melbourne. The improved connectivity would benefit residents and businesses alike, attracting investment and improving the safety and amenity of activity centres.

Based on the evaluation of the assessments discussed throughout the EES, the proposed upgrade of the Palmers Road corridor is rated "well" in relation to achieving a balance of economic, social and environmental outcomes that contribute to ecologically sustainable development and provide a net community benefit over the short and long-term.

## Summary

The Project would improve accessibility and mobility within and beyond the Cities of Brimbank and Melton with limited impact on private properties and amenity.

The potential amenity and environmental quality, social, landscape and visual, biodiversity and cultural heritage effects of the proposed road development would be appropriately managed through design measures and implementation of the EMP for the Project.

VicRoads would compensate affected landholders in accordance with the *Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986*. Native vegetation losses would be offset in accordance with current Commonwealth and State policies and a CHMP would be implemented to manage impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage

Overall, the Project was rated as "Well" by specialist consultants, having minor adverse effects and good policy compliance.

## Exhibition of EES and PSAs

The EES and supporting documentation, including the PSAs, draft CHMP and technical reports have been placed on exhibition for public comment from **30 July 2015 to 31 August 2015** and may be examined during normal business hours at the following locations:

<b>Brimbank City Council Keilor Office</b> 704B Old Calder Highway Keilor, Victoria	<b>Brimbank City Council Sunshine Customer Service Centre</b> 6-18 Alexandra Avenue Sunshine, Victoria
<b>Brimbank City Council Watergardens Service Centre</b> Watergardens Town Centre (located within the Sydenham library) 1 Station Street, Taylors Lakes, Victoria	
<b>Melton City Council Melton Civic Centre</b> 232 High Street Melton, Victoria	<b>Melton City Council Caroline Springs Civic Centre/Library</b> 193-201 Caroline Springs Boulevard Caroline Springs, Victoria
<b>VicRoads Metro North West Region</b> 499 Ballarat Road Sunshine, Victoria	<b>State Library of Victoria</b> 328 Swanston Street Melbourne, Victoria

The amendments can also be inspected free of charge at the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning website at [www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/publicinspection](http://www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/publicinspection).

## Obtaining and purchasing copies of the EES

The EES, draft PSAs and supporting documents can be viewed and downloaded from the VicRoads Palmers Road Corridor EES Project website ([www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/planning-and-projects/melbourne-road-projects/](http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/planning-and-projects/melbourne-road-projects/)

palmer-road-corridor). Note: If you experience any problems downloading any of the exhibited documents or require assistance accessing them please contact VicRoads on the phone number or email below.

Free copies of both the EES Summary Brochure and a DVD of the complete EES Main Report and Technical Appendix are available from VicRoads. Hard copies of the EES Main Report and Technical Appendix can be purchased for \$75 each. Contact VicRoads by email [palmercorridor@roads.vic.gov.au](mailto:palmercorridor@roads.vic.gov.au) or call **(03) 8391 7126**.

## How to lodge a submission

Interested persons and organisations wishing to comment on the EES and the Amendments are invited to make written submissions by 5.00pm on **31 August 2015**.

Submissions can be made online at: [www.delwp.vic.gov.au/palmers-road-corridor-ees](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/palmers-road-corridor-ees)

The online submission coversheet must be completed.

Parties wishing to post in a written submission will need to contact **Planning Panels Victoria on (03) 8392 6393** to obtain a hard copy of the submission coversheet.

All submissions must state the name and address of the person making the submission. Anonymous submissions will not be considered. Submissions will be treated as public documents.

## Inquiry and panel process

The Minister for Planning will appoint an Inquiry under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* to consider the exhibited documents and public submissions in response to it and then prepare a report for the Minister. The same persons may also be appointed as a Panel under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

The Inquiry will hold a Directions Hearing in the week commencing 21 September 2015 to establish necessary arrangements and timetable for the public hearing. Public hearings are expected to begin in the week commencing 19 October 2015. Requests to be heard by the Inquiry must be received by the end of the Directions Hearing. All submitters who wish to present to the Inquiry are asked to note these arrangements and commence preparations in advance.

Information on the Inquiry process and timetable for the hearings will be published on the Internet as it becomes available – [www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/planning/panels-and-committees/current-panels-and-committees](http://www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/planning/panels-and-committees/current-panels-and-committees).

## Further Information

VicRoads community information display will be held on

■ **Wednesday 5 August 2015 between 3pm-8pm** meeting rooms 1 and 2 and

■ **Saturday 15 August between 10am - 1pm** meeting rooms 3 and 4

at Caroline Springs Library and Civic Centre  
193-201 Caroline Springs Boulevard,  
Caroline Springs.