

18. Social

The Social Impact Assessment (SIA) examined the existing social and community conditions in the study area and the potential impacts that the Project could have on individuals and communities.

The SIA identified that the community within the study area has strong social linkages and a high degree of resilience. Community attitudes towards the Project were mixed. Community members expressed concerns about potential amenity impacts, including an increase in noise levels and impacts on visual amenity. Concerns were also raised about the potential social impacts of property acquisition, severance of agricultural land and changes in access arrangements to local properties and valued places such as Seppelt's Winery, Best's Winery, Stawell Park Caravan Park, Sisters Rocks and Grange Golf Club. The Project would not significantly affect access to any major community facilities or any tourism attractors, but may in fact encourage people to visit local towns and community services and facilities more frequently due to improved road safety and travel times. It is anticipated that the majority of the local community would accept slightly longer travel distances as there will be a trade-off against:

- Reduced travel times due to the improved road conditions;
- Safer driving conditions; and
- Safer access to and from side roads and properties.

The SIA considered the potential social impacts of the bypass of Great Western. The bypass is situated to the north-east of the township, with a half diamond interchange near Delahoy Road for north-bound traffic and a half diamond interchange near Briggs Lane / Bests Road for south-bound traffic. The community of Great Western raised concerns about the impact of the potential loss of passing trade due to the bypass, but also acknowledged that the bypass could increase amenity and safety within the town, which may encourage increased development. The SIA notes that a signage strategy could be developed to promote the town to travellers and tourists, to support businesses within the town.

The SIA identified that the key social impacts from the Project are expected to be:

- Changes in access arrangements and a slight increase in travel times for some individuals due to restrictions on some local road and property access, although these impacts are expected to be offset by an

increase in safety, particularly in Great Western township; and

- Amenity impacts including increased noise levels for some individuals during construction and operation, and changes to visual amenity for some individuals.

Overall, the social impacts of the Project are considered to be low. However, for some impact pathways including amenity during construction and operation and accessibility changes for individuals, there is still a residual risk rating of medium.

The SIA identified that most community members are tolerant of short-term amenity impacts from construction as they are cognisant that they would ultimately benefit from the Project. VicRoads would compensate owners of property that is acquired in accordance with the *Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986*.

18.1 EES Objectives

The EES objectives relevant to the Social Impact Assessment are:

- *To protect residents' well-being and minimise any dislocation of residents or severance of communities, to the extent practicable.*

This chapter discusses the potential social effects of the Project, particularly on nearby residents and surrounding communities. It includes an assessment of the following factors specified in the EES Scoping Requirements:

- The existing social and community conditions in the vicinity of the project and relevant alternatives, including the settlement pattern, the distribution of residents in the vicinity of the site, and their demographic characteristics, and patterns of community interaction and social foci;
- Potential effects on local residents and communities during the construction stage;
- Potential effects on places with particular cultural, recreational or aesthetic values, particularly with regard to significant regional locations;
- The potential for residents and communities, or parts of communities in the vicinity of the project to be affected through dislocation, severance of accessibility or reduction of their amenity (in relation to visual amenity, noise other changes to the character of the area) resulting from development of the proposed project or relevant alternatives; and
- Proposed measures to address potential adverse social effects, having regard to these, the likely residual effects on local residents and communities.

The EES also needs to identify native title interests and briefly outline the process by which these interests are being addressed in light of the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*.

This chapter is based on a Social Impact Assessment report completed by GHD Pty Ltd (2012h), which is included in Technical Appendix O.

18.2 Study Area

A study area has been defined for the purpose of the Social Impact Assessment (SIA) which is different to the project area, which encompasses a corridor extending up to 1500 metres (m) either side (east and west) of the edge of the existing highway, except around Great Western where the project area extends up to 1800m. This is because the community of the study area extends well beyond the Western Highway. It includes all of the people who live in proximity to the Western Highway but also people who live on the roads running off the Western Highway and who rely on it for access.

The SIA study area is based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census Collection Districts (CCDs) which intersect or border the Western Highway, see Figure 18-1.

The Local Government Areas which encompass the study area are:

- Ararat Rural City; and
- Northern Grampians Shire.

18.3 Methodology

The methodology for the Social Impact Assessment included the following activities:

- Reviewed records of previous consultation activities undertaken by VicRoads.

- Reviewed local and State government social and planning policy relevant to the study area to identify any strategic development objectives to be considered in the options assessment process.
- Compiled a social profile of the study area based on Census data, Council information, stakeholder interviews, community feedback and other relevant data. This included a review of valued places, community services and key community facilities. The demographic profile component is mostly based on 2006 Census data only limited 2011 data was available.
- Meetings with Council officers, local community groups and affected residents.
- A review of cultural and social values based on the records from the previous research and existing information on the community of the study area (for example from Council reports and policies).
- Participation in consultation activities, including landowner consultation sessions and working with the VicRoads community engagement team to develop feedback forms.
- Analysis of feedback forms, interviews and other consultation records.

A detailed description of the assessment methodology is included in Technical Appendix O.

18.4 Legislation and Policy

The legislation and government policies relevant to the SIA are discussed in Table 18-1.

Table 18-1 Relevant Social Legislation and Policies

Legislation/Policy	Description
National	
<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>	This Act notes the principles of ecologically sustainable development which should be applied in all project assessments. Section 136 of the Act also states that the Minister must consider economic and social matters in deciding whether or not to approve the taking of an action requiring assessment and approval under the Act, and what conditions to attach to an approval.
<i>Native Title Act 1993</i>	Amongst other objectives, this Act exists for the recognition and protection of native title. In formalising the <i>Native Title Act 1993</i> the High Court: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) rejected the doctrine that Australia was terra nullius (land belonging to no-one) at the time of European settlement; (b) held that the common law of Australia recognises a form of native title that reflects the entitlement of the indigenous inhabitants of Australia, in accordance with their laws and customs, to their traditional lands; and (c) held that native title is extinguished by valid government acts that are inconsistent with the continued existence of native title rights and interests, such as the grant of freehold or leasehold estates ('Preamble', <i>Native Title Act 1993</i>).

Legislation/Policy	Description
State	
<i>Transport Integration Act 2010</i>	<p>This Act highlights the need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social and economic inclusion (Section 8) ▪ Economic prosperity (Section 9) ▪ Integration of transport and land use (Section 11) ▪ Safety and health and wellbeing (Section 13).
<i>Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008</i>	<p>This Act recognises the State's role in promoting, protecting and reducing inequalities in public health and wellbeing. It promotes collaboration between all levels of Government and industry, business, communities and individuals.</p> <p>The following objectives in the Act (Part 2, Section 4) need to be considered in the social impact assessment of the Project:</p> <p>Part 2, Section 4 Objective</p> <p>(1) The Parliament recognises that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the State has a significant role in promoting and protecting the public health and wellbeing of persons in Victoria ▪ public health and wellbeing includes the absence of disease, illness, injury, disability or premature death and the collective state of public health and wellbeing ▪ public health interventions are one of the ways in which the public health and wellbeing can be improved and inequalities reduced ▪ where appropriate, the State has a role in assisting in responses to public health concerns of national and international significance. <p>(2) In the context of subsection (1), the objective of this Act is to achieve the highest attainable standard of public health and wellbeing by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ protecting public health and preventing disease, illness, injury, disability or premature death ▪ promoting conditions in which persons can be healthy ▪ reducing inequalities in the state of public health and wellbeing. <p>The Act also defines the following principles:</p> <p>Part 2, Section 7 Principle of primacy of prevention</p> <p>(1) The prevention of disease, illness, injury, disability or premature death is preferable to remedial measures.</p> <p>Part 2, Section 10 Principle of collaboration</p> <p>(1) Public health and wellbeing, in Victoria and at a national and international level, can be enhanced through collaboration between all levels of Government and industry, business, communities and individuals.</p>
<i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i>	<p>This Act has the objective of securing 'a pleasant, efficient and safe working, living and recreational environment for all Victorians and visitors to Victoria'. It also addresses the protection of public utilities for the benefit of the community.</p>
<i>Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010</i>	<p>The purposes of the <i>Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010</i> are to advance reconciliation and promote good relations between the State and traditional owners and to recognise traditional owner groups based on their traditional and cultural associations to certain land in Victoria. This includes recognising traditional owner rights and conferring rights on traditional owner groups as to access to or ownership or management of certain public land, as well as decision making rights and other rights that may be exercised in relation to the use and development of the land or natural resources on the land. Traditional owner groups are represented within the study area.</p>
Central Highlands Regional Strategic Plan	<p>The Central Highlands Regional Strategic Plan is the key overarching regional policy for the two municipalities covering the study area together with adjacent municipalities.</p> <p>The Strategic Plan considers that the planned upgrade of the Western Highway would strengthen the region's comparative advantage against other regions in the State, as it would strengthen links with the rapidly growing western region of Melbourne.</p> <p>The Project can contribute to the overall goals of the Plan by minimising impacts on agricultural productivity, improving transport access for residents and businesses, enhancing the experiences of tourists and making the Western Highway safer for all road users.</p>
State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF) Ararat & Northern Grampians Planning Schemes	<p>The SPPF is the planning policy which underpins all land use planning in Victoria. It consists of a series of clauses which set out specific policies for specific areas of planning. The relevant planning schemes for the Project are those for the Ararat Rural City and the Northern Grampians Shire. The following clauses from the framework are relevant in determining the appropriate social objectives for the Project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clause 10 Operation of the State Planning Policy Framework ▪ Clause 11 Settlement ▪ Clause 16 Housing ▪ Clause 18 Transport ▪ Clause 19 Infrastructure.

Legislation/Policy	Description
Local	
Rural City of Ararat Council Plan 2009-2013	<p>This Council Plan sets the direction for Council for the current time period. The plan sets out a series of strategic directions for the community which are built on four pillars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Our People ▪ Our Culture ▪ Our Economy ▪ Our Environment.
Rural City of Ararat, Municipal Public Health and Well-being Plan 2009-2013	<p>Further objectives around access to transport are set out in the Municipal Public Health and Well-being Plan (MPHWP) dated 2009-2013. The over-arching objective is to improve social connectedness. The Plan notes that people are most commonly connected to family, schools, work and different types of community groups, clubs and organisations. Social inclusion is a key determinant of mental health and wellbeing. Transport connections and accessibility play an important role in developing and maintaining social connections. This issue is therefore important to assess in a Social Impact Assessment.</p> <p>The transport-related objectives in the MPHWP are focussed on public transport. They are to achieve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased usage and utilisation of public transport ▪ Improved public transport services for the municipality. <p>As the Western Highway is a major public transport route, this objective is directly relevant to the current Project.</p>
Northern Grampians Shire Council Plan 2009	<p>The Council Plan documents several strategic objectives for development of the Shire's communities. These goals, and the specific objectives which may relate to the Western Highway Project, are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure inclusiveness and access for all people ▪ Ensure appropriate management and development of roads, bridges, footpaths and shared paths ▪ Plan and implement road safety and traffic management improvements ▪ Support the provision of adequate tourism infrastructure to encourage business development.
Great Western Community Plan 2009-2013	<p>The Great Western Community Plan sets out the key development priorities of the community of Great Western. The Plan lists eight priority issues which are affecting the future of Great Western. The Priority Issue 1 – The Effects of the Bypass on Great Western, is most relevant to the Project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Priority Issue 1: The Effects of the Bypass on Great Western <p><i>The community have embraced the proposal of a bypass as a positive step in the future of Great Western as a town.</i></p> <p><i>The bypass will happen; Great Western must make the best of the bypass. This can be achieved by making the town more appealing for visitors, and sustaining businesses with limited resources such as the shops, restaurants, wineries. The community has identified advantages of traffic issues which will allow for the community to develop as a village that can grow as a result of the proposed bypass.</i></p> <p><i>Liaison with VicRoads must continue through the project development to maximise the efforts to ensure the town can prosper from a bypass, including things such as making sure the turn-off from the highway into Great Western encourages visitation and signage promotes the town's assets and activities.</i></p> <p>This Priority Issue 1 of the Plan demonstrates that the community understands that the bypass would significantly affect the future of the town. Several of the other priority issues are also related to transport and township presentation.</p>



Grange Golf Club south of Stawell



Stawell Park Caravan Park

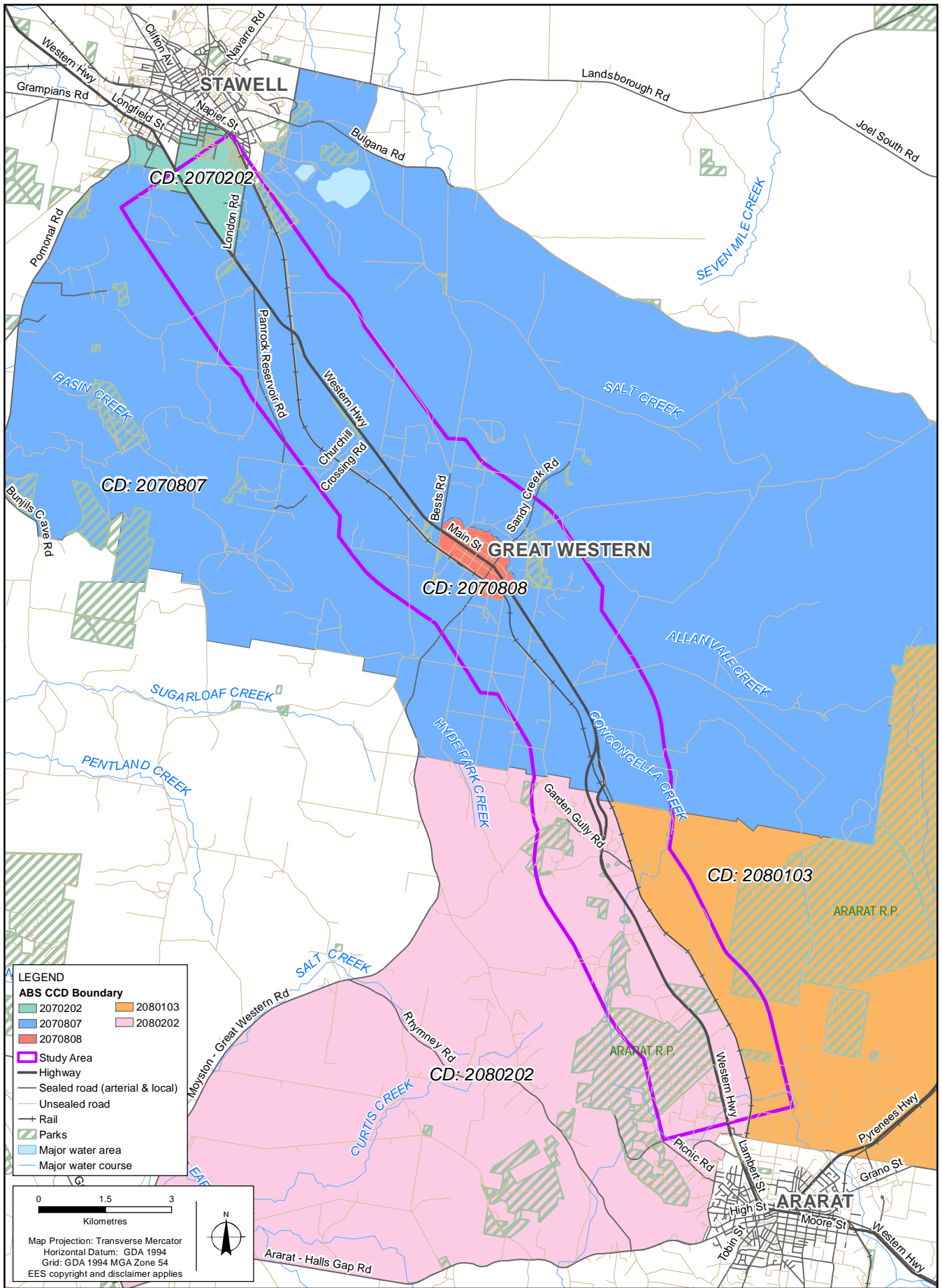


Figure 18-1 Census Collection District Boundaries

18.5 Existing Conditions

18.5.1 Local Communities

The only township within Section 3 of the study area is the township of Great Western. The balance of the study area passes through agricultural land. However the study area starts on the outskirts of Ararat and ends on the outskirts of Stawell, and so the relationship of the study area community with these townships has also been considered in the SIA.

18.5.2 Great Western

Great Western is located on the Western Highway, midway between Ararat and Stawell. It is part of the Northern Grampians Shire. In 2011, Great Western had a population of 570 (ABS Census 2011, State Suburb Data). The Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) of the Northern Grampians Planning Scheme notes that development of Great Western is restricted by its physical features. The area immediately to the north of the township is flood prone and has poor, rocky soils, which are suitable for viticulture but not suitable for septic waste disposal. Residential development in the township has been limited due to the lack of a sewerage system. However, the Great Western Sewerage Scheme is expected to be delivered this financial year (2012-2013).

The main community facilities in Great Western are:

- Three churches:
 - Christ Church Anglican Church (monthly service)
 - St. Columban's Roman Catholic Church (former)
 - Methodist and Uniting Church (former)
- Great Western Primary School

- The Eric F. H. Thomson Sports Reserve, which has football and netball facilities. The town has a football and netball team which competes in the Mininera and District League.

The town is a focal point of one of Australia's internationally renowned wine growing regions (Grampians Wine Region) and is considered to be one the State's most attractive wine villages. Key wineries in Great Western include:

- Seppelt's Winery and Cellar Door – also famous for its underground "drives", see Figure 18-2.
- Best's Winery and Cellar door - the slab hut of Bests Vineyard is one of the area's historic highlights
- Grampians Estate Winery - Western Highway.

The places and events of local social value within Great Western area are:

- Great Western Champagne Races - Australia Day weekend, January
- Great Western Vintage Racing Carnival - November
- Great Western Rodeo – Easter
- A Day on the Green winery concerts
- Historic walking tour which includes the following sites: Best's Winery, the Great Western Primary School, Anglican Church and Common School, Roman Catholic Church, General Store, Great Western Hotel, Salingers Cafe, Blacksmith Memorial, Gaol and Ploughs, Cemetery, Seppelt's Winery, Racecourse, Methodist and Uniting Church and the Recreation Reserve.



Figure 18-2 Seppelt Winery in Great Western

18.5.3 Ararat

The city of Ararat is the administrative centre of the municipality of the Rural City of Ararat. In 2011 the population of Ararat was 8,076 (ABS Census). Ararat is a major regional service centre for higher level services such as retail, commercial, health and education.

The main community facilities within Ararat are:

- Primary schools: Ararat Primary; Ararat West Primary; Ararat North Primary and St Mary's Catholic Primary School.
- Secondary schools: Ararat Community College (State) and Marian College (Catholic).
- Regional campuses of the University of Ballarat and Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE.
- Ararat & District Hospital, which provides in-patient and acute hospital services, allied health services and aged care residential services.
- Ararat Medical Centre, which provides general practice medical services to the Ararat community.
- Hopkins Correctional Centre (major employment facility).

The places and events of local social value within the Ararat area are:

- Ararat Regional Art Gallery and the Ararat Performing Arts Centre, both housed in the former Town Hall.
- The Gum San Chinese Heritage Centre, which is focussed on the history of immigrant miners on the goldfields in the mid-1800s.
- Former Aradale Mental Hospital. Now a TAFE campus, but also open for guided tours.
- The J Ward Museum, which interprets the early history of the goldfield times and the incarceration of the criminally insane. The Museum is visited by approximately 10,000 people per annum.
- Golden Gateway Festival (run since 1958)
- Jailhouse Rock Festival (A retro 1950s themed festival running since 1994).

18.5.4 Stawell

Stawell is a smaller regional city and is the administrative centre of the Northern Grampians Shire. In 2011 the population was 6,150 (ABS Census).

The main community facilities Stawell are:

- Three primary schools: Stawell Primary School; Stawell West Primary School and St Patrick's Catholic Primary School
- Stawell Secondary College
- University of Ballarat Stawell Campus
- Stawell Regional Health, which provides in-patient and acute hospital services and residential aged care health services for the residents of the municipality of Northern Grampians.

The main places and events of local and regional social value in Stawell are:

- Sisters Rocks, which has significant Aboriginal cultural heritage and local social significance
- Moonlight-cum-Magdala Mine Historic Area
- Central Park
- North Park
- Railway Station Gallery
- Pioneers memorial on Big Hill
- Caspers World In Miniature
- Stawell Gift Hall of Fame Museum
- Bunjil's Shelter in the nearby Black Range.
- The Stawell Gift is run each Easter long weekend by the Stawell Athletic Club. This historic event is a major regional tourism attraction which attracts international entrants and spectators from all over Australia
- Grampians Model Train Exhibition and Stawell Sheep Show
- Stawell Orchid Show and Stawell Vintage Machinery Rally.



Figure 18-3 Sisters Rocks near Stawell

18.5.5 Demographic Analysis

A demographic analysis was undertaken using a combination of 2006 and 2011 Census data. 2006 data was available at the CCD level, whereas 2011 data was only available at a broader level at the time of developing the EES.

The demographic analysis indicates that the community of the study area is culturally homogenous in terms of cultural background.

The population in the study area is stable. The age profile is slightly older than average across the municipalities, but in general the residents of the rural areas are not significantly different in character to the urban communities of the municipalities. There is no planning or demographic impetus for the area between Ararat and Stawell to become more heavily settled. In most areas, around two-thirds of the population have lived at the same address for more than five years. This indicates a highly connected community with strong social linkages.

The Social Impact Assessment in Technical Appendix O provides a more detailed description of the population and labour force characteristics.

18.5.6 Native Title Status

As mentioned in Table 18-1, the Commonwealth *Native Title Act 1993* (NT Act) exists for the recognition and protection of native title. Native title may exist on land if a traditional connection has been maintained with an area where it has not been extinguished by an act of the Crown, for example on land such as:

- Unallocated Crown Land
- National parks
- Public reserves
- Some types of pastoral leases
- Land held by government agencies.

Section 227 of the NT Act states that: 'an act affects native title if it extinguishes native title rights and interests, or if it is otherwise wholly or partly inconsistent with their continued existence, enjoyment or exercise.' The NT Act distinguishes between three types of acts which affect Native Title:

- Past acts
- Intermediate acts
- Future acts.

The occurrence of past or intermediate acts is likely to be relevant to the Project, in terms of whether or not native title has been extinguished within the Project area. Certain valid past acts extinguish Native Title if they occurred before 23 December 1996, including (refer Section 23B of NT Act):

- A grant of private land
- Leasehold giving exclusive possession

- Some public works
- Valid legislative acts.

There are also aspects of the Project which may comprise a 'future act' affecting native title as the proposed alignment traverses a range of land tenures, including Crown Land reserves and other forms of title on which Native Title may not have been extinguished.

The future act provisions in the NT Act provide a way for development to proceed on land while protecting native title rights. In particular, the provisions set out in Part 2 Division 3 of the NT Act outline procedures that must be followed when governments or private stakeholders propose an activity on land that may affect native title.

A future act would be valid:

- If the act is covered by an Indigenous Land Use Agreement, or it falls into one of the prescribed future acts within Division 3 of the NT Act; and
- If the procedural requirements for that prescribed future act are fully complied with.

The construction of the Western Highway is likely to be defined a valid 'future act' under Section 24KA of the NT Act and to be considered a facility for services to the public. If the construction is defined this way, Subsections 7 and 7(b) of the NT Act state that 'The native title holders, and any registered native title claimants in relation to land or waters in the area concerned, have the same procedural rights as they would have in relation to the act on the assumption that they instead held:...(b)...ordinary title.' In other words, native title holders have the same procedural rights as ordinary title holders.

Any new road gazettal for the purpose of the Project is likely to extinguish native title and therefore could have compensation implications.

The *Victorian Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (TOS Act) provides for an out-of-court settlement of native title and is an alternative native title settlement framework to the NT Act. When entering a settlement agreement under the TOS Act, a traditional owner group entity agrees to withdraw any Native Title claim the group has and to not make a claim into the future. At this stage, a recognition and settlement agreement has not been entered into with any traditional owner group within the Project area.

In addition, the NT Act stipulates that registered native title claimants have the right to be notified of a proposed development that comprises a 'future act'. According to a search of the National Native Title Tribunal record conducted on 28 October 2011, it appears that no native title claim has been lodged for the study area. In this case, Native Title Services Victoria should instead be notified, as this is the native title claimant body. A registered Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) does exist ('Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk Area

Agreement'), encompassing approximately 35,000m² within the Wimmera Region of Victoria, including land on the north-eastern side of the Western Highway between Ararat and Stawell (refer Native Title Report in Technical Appendix J).

In order to meet its obligations under the NT Act 'future act' provisions and for the act to be considered valid, VicRoads must:

- Notify the claimants or representative body (stipulating that comments should be made within 28 days)
- Receive comments within 28 days to which it responds
- Notify claimants or the representative body of a final decision regarding those comments.

18.6 Community Attitudes and Values

Information on community attitudes toward the Project was collected in a number of ways, including:

- Review of correspondence between VicRoads and local landowners and other stakeholders
- Review of feedback forms from the two rounds of community information sessions conducted during the course of the EES studies
- Participation in VicRoads community information sessions
- Interviews with a sample of affected landowners
- Interviews with local government representatives.

Community attitudes have been summarised below, under four sub-headings.

18.6.1 Potential effects on local residents and communities during construction and operation

Much of the landowner feedback focussed on concerns about property-specific impacts. There were many comments on water, including impacts on dams and general water movements. It was stated by several landowners that access to reliable water is crucial for sustainable farming operations. Several landowners discussed issues related to the length of the planning process, and the impact that this has had on farming operations.

Many people raised concerns about trucks on the Western Highway. These included:

- The noise and vibration from trucks, which have an adverse impact on residential amenity; and
- Access constraints, mostly related to safety concerns about turning into and out of adjacent properties and side roads with heavy trucks bearing down on them.

There were comments regarding the need for further rest stops between Ballarat and Stawell, in particular, rest stops with conveniences for travellers and facilities for truck drivers.

18.6.2 Great Western

Comments about Great Western included:

- Resolve that the heritage of Great Western should be protected
- Concerns about the business impacts of bypassing Great Western, including impact on tourism and retail
- There was concern that changed access conditions may affect patronage at some wineries. The community want to ensure good signage is developed to encourage tourists to still come into Great Western
- Concerns regarding the railway and highway either side of the town restricting growth and development.

18.6.3 Heritage/Cultural Sites

Specific mention was made of the following:

- The importance of maintaining access to Sisters Rocks Bushland Reserve
- Comments on heritage value of several different houses, such as the former St Ethel's winery
- Operation of the historic Stawell Gift race requires access to accommodation for attendees.

18.6.4 Grange Golf Club and Caravan Park

There was considerable concern about the impact of the Project on the Grange Golf Club and Stawell Park Caravan Park. These concerns included:

- That the Golf Club may lose car park spaces, which would affect access
- Some earlier alignment options included significant access changes to these facilities, which were unwelcome to the owners and managers
- Uncertainty about a final alignment was causing financial burdens on the Stawell Park Caravan Park development as well as apprehension amongst the community
- Stawell Park Caravan Park management were concerned with the proposed new access arrangement and acquisition of Caravan Park frontage. They stated that they were concerned that the business would cease to be viable and that there would be a reduction of the sale value of the business due to changed access. They also indicated that the development may affect a planned residential development (a relocatable home village) on the site. They suggested that this could impact on accommodation availability during the Stawell Gift.

18.7 Impact Assessment

The Social Impact Assessment was conducted under four main categories which included relevant indicators to measure the potential impact. The four categories were:

- Current Social and Community Conditions;
- Individual and Community Impacts during Operation of the new road;
- Construction Stage Impacts; and
- Valued Places and Spaces.

The social impact and benefits for each category are discussed below. For more detail refer to Section 6 of Technical Appendix O.

18.7.1 Current Social and Community Conditions

18.7.1.1 Pressures on settlement patterns

The likelihood of the Project leading to an adverse change in settlement patterns is very low. This is because existing planning controls are designed to prevent intensive development in the study area. In addition, there is an opportunity to plan the township of Great Western to take advantage of the improved amenity and reduced traffic that would result from the bypass. Accordingly, the social impact in relation to pressures on settlement patterns is expected to be Minor.

18.7.1.2 Distribution of residents

It is unlikely that any residents would specifically move away due to the project, apart from the residents of the one dwelling that would be acquired (Property No. 2776). Accordingly the social impact in relation to distribution of residents is expected to be Negligible.

18.7.1.3 Changes to demographic characteristics

Changes to demographic characteristics are predicted to be small and consequently have a low social impact. This is due to the planning controls and geographic factors that would limit development and hence demographic change. Any new people who move to the area are likely to have similar socio-economic characteristics to the existing population. This is based on conversations with people who have moved into the study area previously. This will also minimise any adverse social impacts. Accordingly the social impact in relation to demographic change is expected to be Insignificant.

18.7.2 Individual and Community Impacts During Operation of the New Road

18.7.2.1 Dislocation of individuals and communities

The Project is not anticipated to cause any community level dislocation. This is because there is no wide-scale loss of residents or severance from

the Project. The dislocation impact of this project is at an individual household level, rather than a community level. It relates to the partial acquisition of some properties, including acquisition of one dwelling to enable construction of the Project. This may be experienced negatively by some landowners. Accordingly, the social impact of dislocation is expected to be Minor.

18.7.2.2 Access

There is expected to be some localised impacts on travel times for landowners, particularly the owners with property on both sides of the Highway who require farm machinery to move from one side to another. However, overall benefits for road safety and Highway operations will be provided for general users. It is anticipated that the majority of the local community would accept slightly longer travel distances as there will be a trade-off against:

- Reduced travel times due to the improved road conditions;
- Safer driving conditions; and
- Safer access to and from side roads and properties.

Access to community facilities and focal points would not be adversely affected by the Project. Access to the community facilities in Great Western may be improved due to significantly reduced through-traffic.

The proposed bypass is located to the east of Great Western with half diamond interchanges on either side of the town. For north-bound traffic, access to the town will be maintained and commuters would be able to see the approaching town prior to the bypass and with appropriate signage, the existing tourism opportunities at the Great Western would be maintained.

Any psychological severance impact would be minimal, as changes to existing access pathways are minimal.

Due to significantly decreased traffic volumes through Great Western, it may become safer for children to walk or ride between dwellings in Great Western and community facilities such as the primary school. This would be considered to be a social benefit, due to social health concerns regarding declining childhood activity levels. Accordingly, the overall social impact on access is considered to be Minor.

18.7.2.3 Amenity

Amenity effects of the Project may come from the following key elements:

- Changes to the road alignment or creation of service roads introducing transport infrastructure to new locations, or aligning it closer to houses than what is existing

- Increased traffic noise, if it affects the quality of life for residents living adjacent to the Western Highway
- Light from traffic at night, if the road is designed in such a way that lights shine directly on to dwellings
- Changes to the pleasantness of a household's surroundings - for example, by road realignment, tree clearing or changes to the quality of the landscape
- Changes to the air quality - for example an increase in vehicle emissions in locations currently without highway traffic.

It is estimated that the proposed alignment would result in a high increase in noise of 5+ db(A) at 28 dwellings. This is the level at which a change in noise would be 'clearly noticeable' at the receiver locations. In contrast, 9 dwellings would experience a very high reduction in noise levels (10 db(A)) as a result of the Project. Refer to Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Report (Technical Appendix M) for more information on Noise impacts.

The Visual and Landscape Impact Assessment report (refer Technical Appendix N) states that the proposed alignment is expected to have an insignificant visual impact upon the Great Western town centre and other places of natural and cultural value. However, the visual impacts upon the northern edge of Great Western and Sisters Rocks are comparably higher. Non-standard mitigation, comprising of screening vegetation and the sensitive design of road infrastructure is recommended.

The overall social impact on amenity is considered to be Moderate, due to the large number of households that would experience a change in their amenity due to one or a combination of the above factors.

18.7.3 Construction Impacts

The main disruptive effect of a major infrastructure project is often experienced at the construction phase by the local community. It is at this point that many of the negative access and amenity effects occur. The potential social impacts of construction include:

- Reduced amenity for adjacent residents from construction activities, including: increased traffic noise, dust, and visual impact
- Property access interruptions during construction
- The presence and movement of the construction workforce
- Location of facilities for the workforce, including site offices, amenities blocks and car parks.

The workforce directly employed on the project is estimated to be no more than 200, and is more likely to be between 50-100 people at any given time. The workforce is likely to include local people as well as people who are only in the area to work

on the Project. A proportion of the workforce is likely to move directly from construction of Section 2 of the Western Highway Project (Beaufort to Ararat), to construction of Section 3, depending on project timing.

The level of disruption is likely to be high for an extended duration over the construction period. For this reason, the social impact of construction is assessed as a Moderate Impact. However, the impact is still temporary and is one that people would be accustomed to, and it is expected that most community members would accept the nature of the impact, as they would understand that the construction would ultimately benefit their community.

18.7.4 Valued Places and Spaces

The major locations for valued places and social interaction within the study area are:

- The Sisters Rocks
- The Grange Golf Club
- Stawell Park Caravan Park
- Seppelt's Winery
- Best's Winery
- Grampians Estate Winery
- Great Western Mechanics Institute Hall
- Eric F.H. Thomson Sports Reserve
- Christ Church Anglican Church

While access arrangements to all of these facilities would be changed by the Project, either directly or as a result of the bypass of Great Western, this is unlikely to significantly affect patterns of community interaction. There would be no major severance of access, and for this reason it is likely that existing patterns will continue.

It is unlikely that the Project would have a negative effect on access to, and use of, valued community facilities. It is more likely that removing through traffic from the town of Great Western would be seen as a social benefit from the Project, as it would enable easier movement around the town and hence to places of local social value.

The overall social impact of access to valued places and social foci is assessed as Insignificant.

18.8 Risk Assessment

An environmental risk assessment was undertaken on the proposed alignment to identify key environmental issues associated with the construction and operation of the Project. The methodology for this risk assessment has been described in Section 4.2 of the Social Impact Assessment (Technical Appendix O). A risk assessment report that explains the process in detail and contains the complete Project risk register has also been included in Technical Appendix Q.

Table 18-2 shows a summary for social impact of:

- The impact pathways identified; and
- A description of the consequence of the specified impacts.

Table 18-2 Social Impact Risks

Risk No.	Impact Pathway	Consequence Description
S1	The Project may lead to changes to the existing social and community conditions by creating pressures for the settlement pattern to change.	Travel time changes from Stawell and Ararat, which may make it seem a more desirable location for residential development. If there is increased development pressure, this may have flow-on effects in the delivery of infrastructure and community services.
S2	The Project may lead to changes to the existing social and community conditions by changing the distribution of residents in the vicinity of the Highway.	As per S1: there are several rural properties around Great Western which would be severed by the Project. If the land between the new alignment and the existing township was re-zoned for rural residential or township purposes, this may increase the population in the vicinity of the Project. Along the balance of Section 3 the alignment is relatively close to the existing highway: this is likely to minimise the number of new households living in close proximity to the road.
S3	The Project may change the existing social and community conditions by creating change processes which affect the demographic characteristics of the study area.	S1 and S2 may lead to long-term changes to the demographic character of Great Western. It is unlikely that the balance of Section 3 would create any major demographic change processes.
S4	The Project and changes to access arrangements may lead to changes to the existing social and community conditions by changing patterns of community interaction and use of social foci.	The major locations for social interaction within the study area are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sisters Rocks – Stawell ▪ The Grange Golf Club – Stawell ▪ Great Western Mechanics Institute Hall – Great Western ▪ Eric F. H. Thomson Sports Reserve – Great Western ▪ Christ Church Anglican Church – Great Western. While access to these facilities would be changed by the Project, this is unlikely to significantly affect patterns of community interaction. There would be no major severance of access, and for this reason it is likely that existing patterns will continue.
S5	The Project may affect local residents and communities during the construction stage.	The potential social impacts of construction include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disruption from the presence off the construction workforce – most likely to be caused by their movements to and from construction sites. ▪ Reduced amenity for adjacent residents from construction activities, including: increased traffic noise, dust visual impact; and ▪ Property access interruptions during construction. Locations along the proposed alignment where this may occur are those where construction activities are carried out in close proximity to dwellings, or where they disrupt access. The sites of highest sensitivity are around Armstrong, Great Western and Monaghan Road, Stawell (near the Stawell Park Caravan Park) and Grange Golf Club).
S6	The Project may lead to effects on places with particular cultural, recreational or aesthetic values, particularly with regard to significant regional locations.	Access to sites in Great Western may be slightly changed for people coming into the town, but there would be minimal difference within the town. Access to Seppelt's Winery and Best's Winery would be changed, as travellers would need to make a conscious decision to leave the new road and enter Great Western. This may affect casual visitation to these facilities. Access to other sites within Great Western would only be minimally changed. Access to Sisters Rocks, the Stawell Park Caravan Park and Grange Golf Club would be changed, but there would be no effect on the actual facilities.
S7	The Project may create a risk of dislocation for individuals and communities.	The proposed alignment requires acquisition of one dwelling (Property No. 2776).

Risk No.	Impact Pathway	Consequence Description
S8	The Project may create a risk of severance and accessibility changes for individuals and communities.	Most existing access ways would be changed by the Project, particularly some future time when the Highway would be upgraded to freeway standard (AMP1). Under AMP1, existing access points from properties on to the Highway would be removed. Some side roads may have restricted access and egress. Access into and around Great Western would be changed. The effects of changes would be both positive and negative: many residents would experience slightly longer travel times, but would have safer and easier access to their properties and side roads. There would be minimal severance resulting from the Project. Accessibility in Great Western may improve as traffic volumes would decrease.
S9	The Project may create risks of reduction of amenity (in relation to visual amenity, noise other changes to the character of the area) to individuals and communities.	Houses left close to the ROW are located at Ch. 4500 (south), 4900 (south), 5300 (south), 5800 (north), 10600, 21900 (north). The proximity varies for each house.

18.9 Environmental Management Measures

VicRoads has a standard set of environmental management measures which are typically incorporated into its construction contracts for road works and bridge works. These measures have been used as the starting point for the assessment of construction related risks and are described in detail

in Chapter 21 (Environmental Management Framework). In some instances, additional Project specific environmental management measures have been recommended to reduce risks.

Management measures specific to each identified social risk, and the residual risk rating after these environmental management measures have been applied, are outlined in Table 18-3 and in Chapter 21 (Environmental Management Framework).

Table 18-3 Social Environmental Management Measures and Residual Risk

Risk No.	Environmental Management Measures	Residual Risk
S1	This is controlled by the planning scheme.	Low
S2	As per S1	Low
S3	As per S1	Negligible
S4	As per S1	Negligible
S5	Consultation with the management of the Grange Golf Course has been undertaken during the planning for this project to determine access requirements.	Medium
S6	As per the controls described in Air Quality (Section 21.7.8), Geology (Contamination) (Section 21.7.3), Noise (Section 21.7.10), and Traffic (Section 21.7.2). Protocols would be developed as part of the CEMP for liaising with adjacent land owners, to keep them fully informed about construction activities in their area, and any potential disruption to their access and amenity. Engage with the students of Great Western Primary School to provide educational opportunities for the school students to learn about major project construction and environmental management. Develop and adhere to an appropriate code of conduct to prevent conflict with the local community.	Negligible
S7	Consultation with Council has been undertaken during the planning for the Project to determine access requirements. Develop a signage strategy that encourages travellers to visit the wineries in the area in consultation with tourism bodies and Council.	Negligible
S8	Property acquisition would be managed in accordance with the <i>Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986</i> . Where properties are severed to an unworkable size, VicRoads would work with landowners and Council to determine appropriate solutions.	Medium
S9	As per Traffic and Transport controls described in Risks T1 through T7. Continue to liaise with landowners regarding access arrangements, to ensure that driveways and access points are located appropriately	Low

18.9.1 Residual Risks

Following implementation of the recommended mitigation measures, there are not expected to be any significant impacts, with four risks rated as negligible and the remainder rated as either low or medium.

18.10 Conclusion

The Social Impact Assessment (refer to Technical Appendix O) recommends a number of actions to respond to potential impacts at both the individual landowner and wider community level, including further community engagement through the detailed design and construction phases. A summary of the conclusions of the Social Impact Assessment is provided in Table 18-4.

There are strong social linkages within communities in the study area, with most residents having lived at the same address for more than five years. The study area also has several places of local and regional social value. However, the effect of the

Project upon social value is likely to be low. There are not likely to be any significant consequences from the Project with respect to: settlement patterns; the distribution of residents; demographic characteristics; patterns of community interaction; or places of cultural, recreational or aesthetic value. There may be a reduction in amenity during construction and operation resulting in a moderate impact upon some residents, although the amenity and safety of the Great Western township would be improved by removing through-traffic. In addition, there is a minor impact in terms of dislocation and disruption to access for some residents, as one dwelling would be acquired and demolished. Overall, it is considered that the Project would have a low social impact when compared with other similar transport infrastructure upgrade projects.

Table 18-4 Summary of Social Impact Assessment

EES Requirement	Indicator	Impact Assessment
Current social and community conditions	Pressures on settlement patterns	Minor Impact
	Changes to the distribution of residents	Negligible Impact
	Changes to the demographic characteristics of the study area	Insignificant Impact
Individuals and community impacts	Dislocation for individuals and communities	Minor Impact
	Severance and accessibility changes for individuals and communities	Minor Impact
	Amenity impacts to individuals and communities	Moderate Impact
Construction stage impacts	Amenity impacts to individuals and communities Disruption to access	Moderate Impact
Valued places and spaces	Patterns of community interaction Effects on valued places	Insignificant Impact

