

1. Introduction

1.1 Proposal identification

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) is proposing to upgrade a 1.2 kilometre section of the Great Western Highway at Medlow Bath, between Railway Parade and around 330 metres south of Bellevue Crescent (the proposal). The upgrade will provide a safer, more efficient link between Central West NSW and the Sydney Motorway network.

The proposal is located about 90 kilometres west of the Sydney Central Business District in the Blue Mountains local government area (LGA). It involves an upgrade to a section of the Great Western Highway, which is a 201 kilometre crossing of the Great Dividing Range through the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains, connecting Sydney to Bathurst and the surrounding Central West and Orana regions. The highway follows a narrow and difficult alignment constrained by the Blue Mountains National Park, steep topography, a railway line and existing villages for which the highway acts as the main street.

The Medlow Bath section of the Great Western Highway is a primary north – south connection between Katoomba and Blackheath and provides one of the only two mountain crossings between Sydney and Lithgow.

The location of the proposal is shown in Figure 1-1. Key features of the proposal are shown in Figure 1-2. Further detail is provided in the general arrangement plans included in Appendix M.

Key features of the proposal include the following:

- upgrade of the existing highway to a four-lane divided carriageway allowing for two lanes of traffic in each direction, either side of a central median with planted trees
- upgrade of the Bellevue Crescent intersection with new turning lanes, U-turn bay and traffic signals
- a new right turn lane providing access to the Hydro Majestic Hotel
- improvements on Railway Parade to formalise parking provisions, U-turns and rail customer parking
- new indented bus bays on both sides of the highway close to Medlow Bath Station
- construction of a new pedestrian bridge, stairs and lifts to provide an accessible path of travel between the bus bays, the Medlow Bath Station platforms and Railway Parade
- new shared path for pedestrians and cyclists on the western side of the highway
- ancillary works such as the replacement of road surfaces, reconstruction works associated with local roads, driveways, footpaths, kerbs, gutters and retaining walls, drainage works and relocation of services.

In addition to the road modifications to enhance safety and improve traffic efficiency, the proposal would also improve links to walking and cycling infrastructure and public transport facilities. Chapter 3 describes the proposal in more detail.

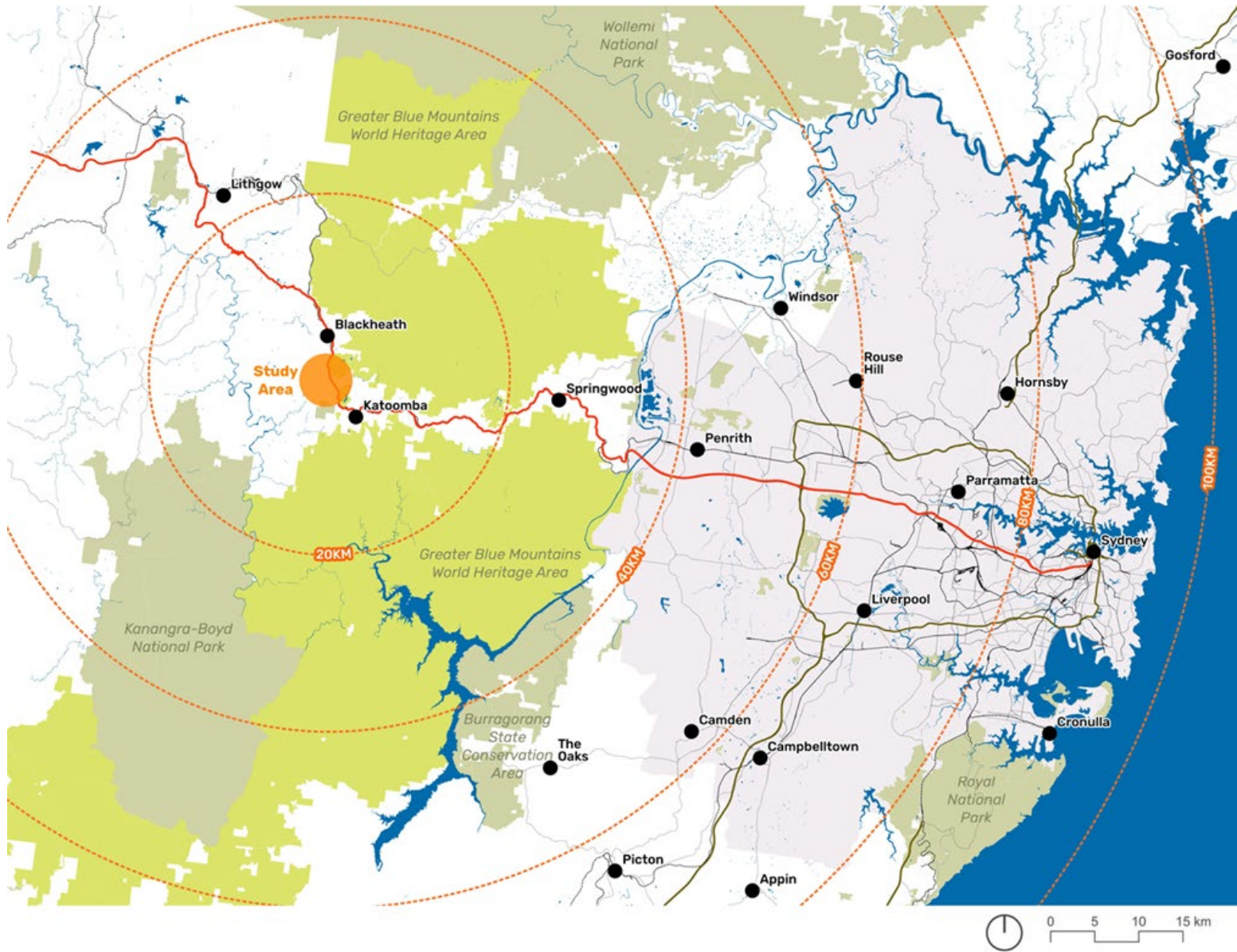
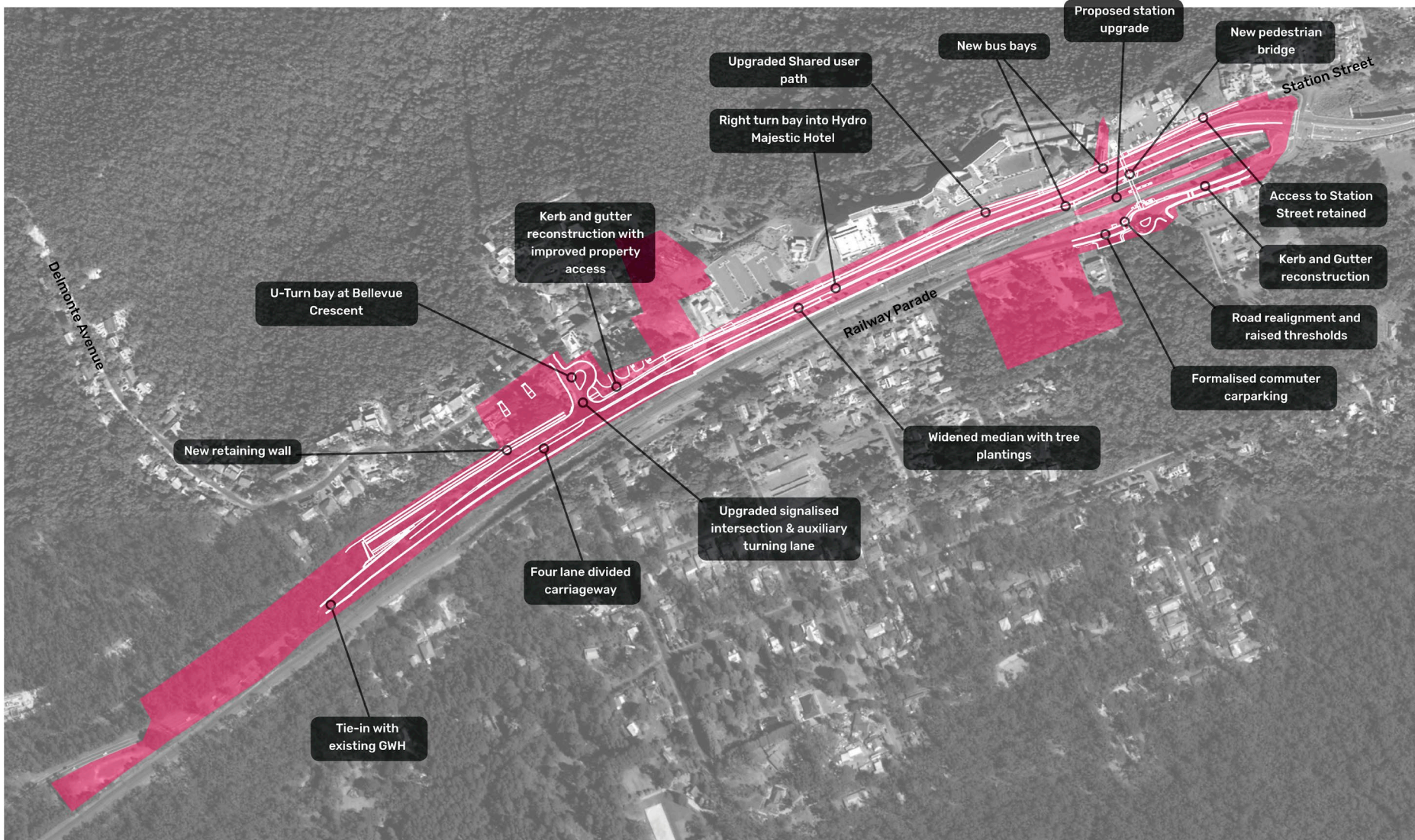


Figure 1-1: Location of the proposal



Key features of the proposal
 Source: Adapted from SIX MAPS

Environmental Study Boundary

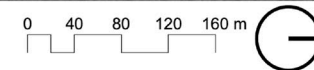


Figure 1-2: Key features of the proposal (Spackman Mossop Michaels, 2021)

1.2 Purpose of the report

This review of environmental factors (REF) has been prepared by MRB (a joint venture between Mott MacDonald, RPS and BG&E), on behalf of TfNSW (Infrastructure & Place). For the purposes of these works, TfNSW is the proponent and the determining authority under Division 5.1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act).

The purpose of this REF is to describe the proposal, to document the likely impacts of the proposal on the environment, and to detail the mitigation and management measures to be implemented.

The description of the proposed work and assessment of associated environmental impacts has been undertaken in the context of clause 228 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000, the factors in *Is an EIS Required? Best Practice Guidelines for Part 5 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (Department of Planning, 1995), the *Roads and Related Facilities EIS Guideline* (Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, 1996), the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act), the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* (FM Act), and the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

This REF helps to fulfil the requirements of:

- Section 5.5 of the EP&A Act, including that TfNSW examine and take into account to the fullest extent possible, all matters affecting or likely to affect the environment by reason of the activity
- the strategic assessment approval granted by the Australian Government under the EPBC Act in September 2015, with respect to the impacts of TfNSW's road activities on nationally listed threatened species, ecological communities and migratory species.

The findings of this REF would be considered when assessing:

- whether the proposal is likely to have a significant impact on the environment and therefore the necessity for an environmental impact statement to be prepared and approval to be sought from the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces under Division 5.2 of the EP&A Act
- the significance of any impact on threatened species as defined by the BC Act and/or FM Act, in Section 1.7 of the EP&A Act and therefore the requirement for a Species Impact Statement or a Biodiversity Development Assessment Report
- the significance of any impact on nationally listed biodiversity matters under the EPBC Act, including whether there is a real possibility that the activity may threaten long-term survival of these matters, and whether offsets are required and able to be secured
- the potential for the proposal to significantly impact any other matters of national environmental significance or Commonwealth land and the need, subject to the EPBC Act strategic assessment approval, to make a referral to the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment for a decision by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment on whether assessment and approval is required under the EPBC Act.