



# Construction method for the viaduct (bridge) over the Hunter River at Hexham

## M1 Pacific Motorway extension to Raymond Terrace

### Frequently asked questions

August 2024



Transport for NSW acknowledges the Wonnarua, Worimi and Awabakal people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which the M1 Pacific Motorway extension to Raymond Terrace project is being built and pay our respect to Elders past and present.

Transport for NSW contractor John Holland Gamuda Joint Venture will begin construction of the over-water section of the 2.6-kilometre viaduct (bridge) across the Hunter River and floodplain in early September. The bridge is part of the 10-kilometre section of the M1 Pacific Motorway extension from Black Hill to Tomago.

### Construction method and impacts

#### What construction method is being used for the bridge?

A revised construction method involving a single 80-metre temporary rock platform has been selected to build the over-water section of the 2.6-kilometre bridge across the Hunter River and surrounding floodplain at Hexham. This approach will fast-track the project's completion by up to four months, reduce congestion on the surrounding road network sooner, reduce environmental risks and improve safety for workers.

This construction method will involve the use of barges and a small jetty to dock the barges, with no dredging required. Installing the rock platform will take about five to six weeks, and the same amount of time will be needed to remove it once the work is completed. The rock platform will be in place from September 2024 for a period of about 18 months, weather permitting.



The revised construction method will fast-track the project's completion by up to four months

#### Will rocks remain in the Hunter River once the temporary rock platform is removed?

A survey of the work area has been completed to obtain a profile of the sub-surface riverbed. Following the bridge construction work, a GPS guided excavator will progressively remove the rock and restore the riverbed to its original profile, in accordance with the survey results.

#### What impact will the work have on marine life and aquatic ecology?

Construction work in the Hunter River will be completed under strict environmental controls and in accordance with the project approvals and our Environmental Protection Licence.

Construction using a single temporary rock platform will minimise disturbance to aquatic ecosystems compared to the extensive use of barges which might involve anchors and potential spillage. Some disturbance of the riverbed will occur during removal of the rock material, but impacts would likely be reduced compared to a barge method and the need to dredge for vessel access.



## When will the work start?

Work in the Hunter River is planned to begin in early September 2024 and will continue for about 18 months, weather permitting. We will keep the community informed as the project progresses and we encourage you to contact us directly with any questions or concerns.

## Construction method selection process

### Why is the bridge construction method different to the one described in the Project's EIS?

During the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and planning approvals phase of the project, the proposed bridge construction method involved small rock jetties, dredging, and the use of large barges. This method was approved by the then NSW Minister for Planning in November 2022.

As construction planning progressed, the John Holland Gamuda Joint Venture proposed a new method for the bridge, which included temporary rock platforms up to 180 metres long. This method was considered as it could fast-track the project's completion by up to six months, thereby reducing congestion on the

surrounding road network, reducing the duration of construction impacts and improve safety for workers. It also removed the need to dredge the river.

Both bridge construction methods were presented to the community for feedback during July and August 2024. In response to this feedback, a refined option was developed which involves a single 80-metre rock platform from the western bank and barges for the deeper section of the river. This refinement still eliminates the requirement for dredging of the river. This option was selected as a revised construction method, balancing risk, environmental impact, construction duration, and safety considerations.

### What are the benefits of the 80-metre rock platform construction method?

There are a range of benefits associated with the 80-metre rock platform construction method. These include:

- reduced safety risk
- reduced construction time
- no dredging of the Hunter River
- reduced period of flood risk in the event of a flood
- reduced environmental impact on the river ecology.



Example of rock platform construction (Nowra Bridge)



## Have rock platform construction methods been successfully used before?

Both barges and rock platforms have been used successfully in infrastructure projects.

Barges were used in the third Hunter River crossing at East Maitland in 2009 and the duplication of the Tourle Street Bridge in 2016.

Rock platforms were used successfully in the construction of Pacific Highway upgrade projects including the bridge over the Wilson River at Telegraph Point, the Kempsey Bypass (Macleay River), the Ballina Bypass (Emigrant Creek North, Emigrant Creek Central and Emigrant Creek South) and Tintenbar to Ewingsdale at Tinderbox Creek.

## Was the community consulted on how to construct the bridge?

Yes. As part of the consultation process, we listened to the community and have refined our construction methodology based on overall feedback preferences, to achieve faster delivery and reduced flooding and environmental impacts.

The revised bridge construction method was selected following extensive community and stakeholder consultation involving:

- early consultation (via doorknocking and letters)
- meetings with stakeholders including local councils, commercial fishers, the Newcastle Fishermen's Co-op, NSW Fisheries, and commercial cruise operators
- meetings with directly affected property owners
- a 'Have your say' consultation period in late July 2024, including
  - five community drop-in sessions
  - letters posted to individual property owners surrounding the project
  - three targeted social media advertisements
  - two newspaper adverts
  - a post-card distributed to 22,000 households surrounding the project.

A copy of the consultation summary report can be accessed here: [nswroads.work/m12rtportal](https://nswroads.work/m12rtportal)

## Can changes to bridge construction methods be made under the project approval?

Yes. *The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* allows for changes to a State Significant Infrastructure project like the M1 extension. The Planning Minister's approval for these types of changes is not required if the change is consistent with the existing approval.

A consistency assessment was developed in consultation with relevant agencies as well as the project's independent Environmental Representative and the project's flood expert.

## Can I make a submission about the bridge construction method?

The project team is available at any time to accept project feedback and respond to project-related queries. However, the formal consultation period about the bridge construction method has been finalised and submissions are no longer being accepted.



Aerial view of Tomago





## Changes for people

### Will my property be flooded during construction?

Work in the Hunter River will not create any flood impacts under normal circumstances. In the event of a flood, there may be some minor impacts on properties upstream of the work location. This includes some slight increases in flood levels and some increases in flood duration.

As part of the project's EIS, this consultation process was required to focus on mitigation measures with potentially affected property owners, should a flood event occur.

The project team has contacted the owners of the affected properties to discuss individual property and business-related issues, including potential mitigation options in the event of a flood.



The project team has contacted property owners to discuss potential mitigation options in the event of a flood

Mitigation during construction of the works may include assistance with flood preparation, flood barriers, insurance excess support, feed for stock, crop replacement or financial compensation.

We will continue to consult with affected property owners on mitigation measures for their individual circumstances.

### Can commercial fishing, trawling, and recreational boating continue along the Hunter River?

During construction, commercial fishing and trawling will not be permitted in the construction area and this will mean some temporary changes to trawling practices. There will be changes to river navigation which will be communicated to stakeholders and marked out with buoys.

### Will there be road and river traffic changes during the work?

During the work there may be temporary lane closures with periodic stop/slow traffic control and reduced speed limits of 40 kilometres per hour on the M1 Motorway, Pacific Highway, New England Highway and John Renshaw Drive.

Please keep to the posted speed limits and follow the direction of traffic controllers. For the latest traffic updates, you can call 132 701, visit [livetraffic.com](https://www.livetraffic.com) or check the **Live Traffic App**.

A clear navigation channel will be maintained to allow the passage of all vessels along the Hunter River.

However, there may also be periodic river channel closures which will be managed by personnel working on vessels.

## Contact us:



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