Environmental Management

As with all major infrastructure projects, there will be some environmental impacts which will be closely managed and monitored during construction of the Great Eastern Highway Bypass Interchanges project.

**Design and construction of the project will be undertaken in a way that minimises environmental impacts and enhances the environment.**

Main Roads and Greater Connect Alliance are committed to effective management of environmental issues and protecting and enhancing the natural environment, including heritage and social values, in all our activities.

Our commitment

Our team is committed to:

* Complying with and striving to exceed requirements of all applicable environmental laws, approvals, policies, and other legal requirements that apply to our work.
* Following best practice management to minimise adverse impacts on the environment including the surrounding ecology, water, flora, fauna, atmosphere, and Aboriginal and non-Indigenous heritage.
* Improving design efficiency to conserve natural resources.
* Energy efficient operation and incorporating sustainable and recycled materials.
* An environmentally responsible culture amongst Alliance staff and contractors.
* Continual improvement in environmental management and protection.

How will we ensure that construction activities don’t harm the environment?

Extreme care will be taken to protect and minimise impacts of construction on the environment. As a minimum, the Alliance will comply with the conditions linked to our environmental and heritage approvals. In addition, the project team will proactively identify potential environmental impacts and manage these through a risk-based approach. This involves undertaking detailed environmental risk assessments for all aspects of the project including issues associated with culture and heritage, dust, flora and fauna, waterways, hazardous substances, noise and vibration, and spoil management. After the hazards, impacts and risks are identified, control measures will be identified and implemented to mitigate or eliminate the risks.

Measures to mitigate environmental impacts

Environmental management measures will depend on the nature of the site activities and the sensitivity of the project area and surrounding environment. Examples of mitigation measures include:

* Avoiding temporary clearing of native vegetation wherever possible
* Minimising vegetation disturbance and protecting all vegetation not identified for removal
* Ensuring machinery is not used outside the construction zone
* Locating stockpiles and their access tracks in cleared areas away from drainage lines or native vegetation
* Maintaining bunting around protected vegetation areas
* Storing weed infested materials separately from clean materials
* Checking soil for contamination, including weeds, before disturbing or use
* Revegetating or mulching disturbed areas at the earliest opportunity
* Establishing dieback protection zones and applying ‘clean in – clean out’ procedures until placement of first layer of road formation.

What measures will be in place to protect flora species during construction?

The project design is being refined to avoid Threatened Ecological Communities where possible and limit the clearing required to safely construct the project. Where significant areas of native vegetation cannot be avoided, environmental offsets will be applied, which include planting and assigning valuable bushland to conservation estate. An offset compensates for biodiversity losses arising from native vegetation removal. An offset can be the ongoing protection and management of:

**Environmental management measures will depend on the nature of the site activities and the sensitivity of the project area and surrounding land or water environment.**

* a patch of native vegetation
* one or more scattered trees, or
* an area of revegetation.

In addition to offsets, areas disturbed by construction that are not part of the permanent infrastructure will be revegetated as part of project landscaping. Landscaping will be designed by a landscape architect who will develop a landscape plan that integrates the new road infrastructure with the surrounding natural areas. Landscaping will include native trees, shrubs and ground covers.

What measures will be in place to protect wildlife during construction?

Before clearing starts, a fauna relocation program will be undertaken by a qualified ecologist. Native animals will be relocated to a nearby suitable habitat, as approved by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

Once construction has begun, checks will be made daily and any wildlife that has strayed into the construction area will be removed to safety.

How will the Helena River be protected during construction?

Greater Connect Alliance understands the value and importance of the Helena River and its floodplain. The Helena River and any other waterways in the project area will be protected via use of appropriate sedimentation controls such as silt fencing. Baseline water quality monitoring has been undertaken, and water quality will be monitored throughout construction to ensure water quality is maintained.