



Newell

Highway  
Corridor

Strategy

**Summary Report**

June 2019

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# Summary Report







The Australian Government is committed to supporting and enhancing Australia's key transport infrastructure, including the Newell Highway corridor. As the most significant rural highway in NSW, the Newell Highway serves as an important social and economic connector for local communities, freight movement through inland NSW, and visitors travelling through the region.

This *Newell Highway Corridor Strategy Final Report*, commissioned by the Australian Government, documents the approach and findings for arriving at an evidence-based 10 year investment roadmap to ensure that the corridor continues to serve the needs of its users in the longer term.

Six corridor objectives were identified and align with Australian and State Government transport plans and agreed with key stakeholders, including local communities along the corridor.

Of particular importance is the interdependency with the Inland Rail project, and how road and rail will work together to meet the growing freight task and reduce costs for regional supply chains. A holistic, multimodal view of freight transport that leverages the strengths of each mode is a key consideration for enhancing the overall efficiency of Australia's transport networks.

## Key objectives for the 2019 Newell Highway corridor strategy.

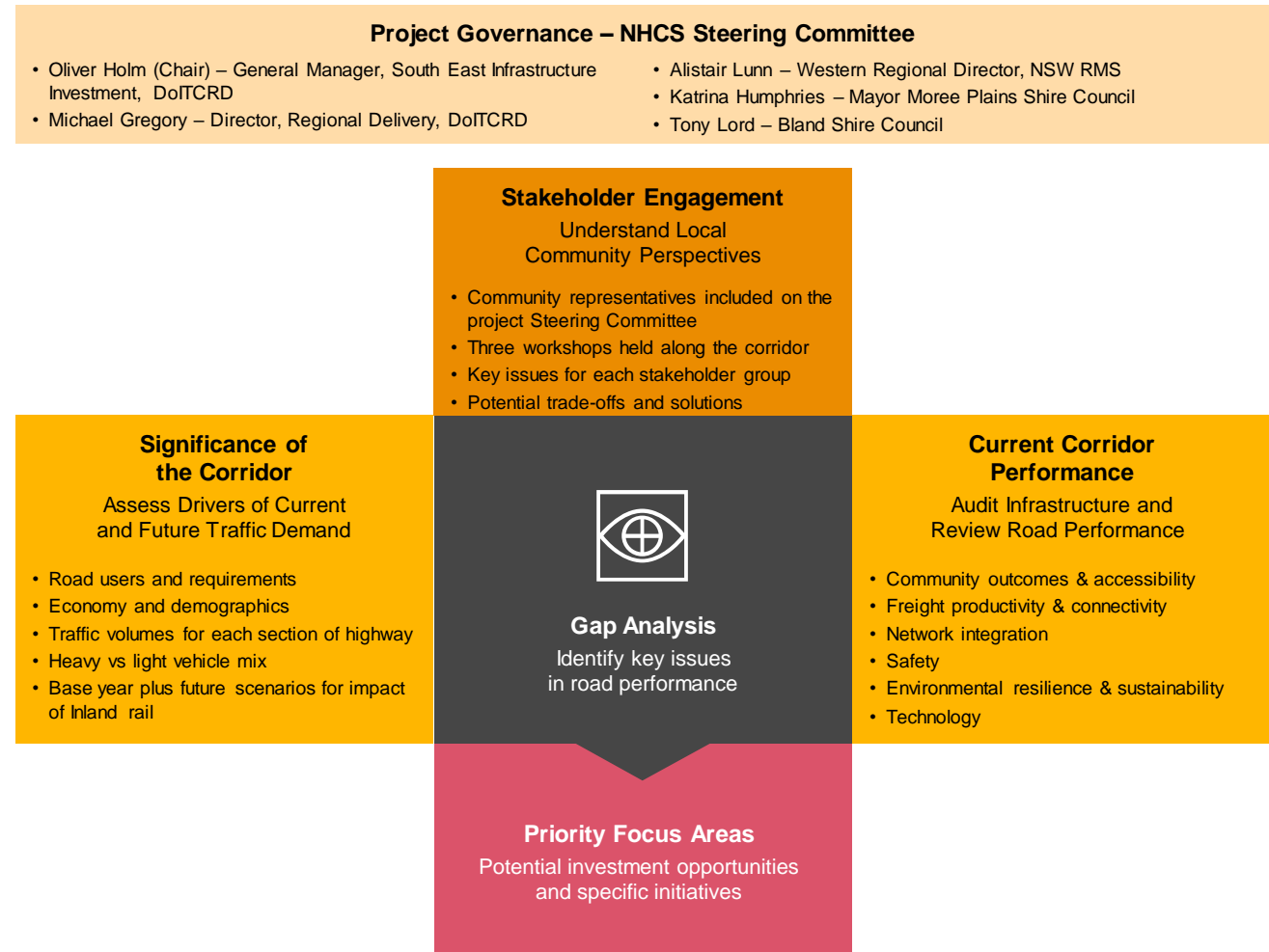
Objective	Description
<b>1</b> <b>Community Outcomes and Accessibility</b> 	To support regional growth and development and the needs of the communities along the corridor, by providing effective access to key destinations including employment, education, recreational and health services and encouraging visitors to support local businesses.
<b>2</b> <b>Freight Productivity</b> 	To support economic growth by providing efficient access and ensuring road freight has effective connections to and from areas of industrial activity, including agricultural and visitor economy activities.
<b>3</b> <b>Network Integration and Connectivity</b> 	To consider land use and multi-modal infrastructure planning more holistically and ensure that the overall transport system is efficient, well connected and robust.
<b>4</b> <b>Safety</b> 	To prioritise safety for all users, discourage risky behaviours and minimise the consequences of driver error, with an aspiration to eliminate serious incidents in the long term.
<b>5</b> <b>Environmental Resilience and Sustainability</b> 	To consider long-term environmental concerns throughout the development and delivery process, such as increasing resilience to significant weather events and supporting sustainability.
<b>6</b> <b>Technology</b> 	To maintain awareness of technological developments and embrace new technologies when feasible, thereby continuously improving the corridor.

Three key activities were undertaken to develop the evidence base for further decision making:

- Evaluation of the significance of the corridor, including modelling current and future demand along the corridor
- Corridor performance, including an assessment of the performance of existing infrastructure assets
- Engaging with key stakeholders.

The outcomes from these activities were used to identify key issues and high level potential investment opportunities, which were then prioritised according to an agreed evaluation framework.

#### High-level methodology for identifying gaps in road capability and priority investment opportunities.



The findings of the analysis indicate seven key issues along the corridor:

- Barriers to wider adoption of High Productivity Vehicles (HPVs), including inadequate facilities for certain road freight tasks such as decoupling and truck washing sites
- Safety concerns, due mainly to fatigue and speeding, a lack of fit-for-purpose infrastructure such as proper facilities at rest stops and heavy vehicle safety stations (HVSSs), and several level crossings with limited line of sight
- Lack of resilience to major flooding events
- Desire for real-time traffic condition and travel time information, as well as mobile network coverage
- Localised congestion and reduced amenity in some towns, especially those with high levels of heavy vehicle traffic
- Lack of sufficient overtaking opportunities along the corridor
- Substandard and deteriorating pavement quality, with insufficient support for operational maintenance.

Based on these key issues, four key focus areas and a range of opportunities were identified. In total 48 specific location based initiatives were identified across each of the focus areas.

#### Overview of key issues along the corridor.

Key Issues	Proposed Response
<b>1</b> Barriers to wider adoption of HPVs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support HPV access and facilities along the entire corridor, prioritising necessary upgrades in line with future commercial activity, demand, and the impact of Inland Rail</li> <li>• Align any key initiatives with the Federal Government National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy and Roads of Strategic Importance</li> </ul>
<b>2</b> Safety concerns and a high rate of serious and fatal incidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to identify a corridor-wide safety improvement strategy defining both infrastructure and behaviour change initiatives and that leverages and builds upon existing RMS work such as the Saving Lives on Country Roads Campaign</li> </ul>
<b>3</b> Lack of resilience to major flooding events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to better understand the likelihood and impact of flooding along the corridor and the full suite of potential improvement initiatives (including likely costs and benefits)</li> </ul>
<b>4</b> Limited real-time information flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the primary information needs along the corridor and a suitable platform for the distribution of information to road users</li> </ul>
<b>5</b> Localised congestion and reduced amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to minimise the adverse travel time, safety, and amenity impacts of heavy vehicle movements through towns, particularly traffic and interactions with lighter vehicles</li> </ul>
<b>6</b> Lack of sufficient overtaking opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to support the construction of overtaking lanes to enable efficient and safe travel along the corridor for all road users</li> </ul>
<b>7</b> Poor pavement quality and insufficient road maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to identify areas of poor pavement quality and identify ways to improve pavement conditions, particularly in light of heavy vehicle usage along the corridor</li> </ul>

Each of the 48 initiatives were evaluated against a range of criteria including strategic alignment, expected benefits, and financial implications to help prioritise each initiative over the short and medium (within the next 10 years) and longer term (10+ years). The resulting investment road map is illustrated in the following table.

































Based on the evaluation the key short term priorities include:

- Construction of the Parkes bypass
- Improved road-rail alignment at Tichborne
- Intersection upgrades at Mitchell and Oxley Highways
- Heavy duty pavement upgrades at North Moree and from Narrabri to Moree
- Fatigue management
- Upgrade and construction of new decoupling sites
- Program of consistent rural gateway treatments, including road markings
- Commissioning of a corridor-wide flood study
- Installation of electronic variable message signs
- Improved road designs.

Together, these and other initiatives are expected to generate a number of benefits for communities, industries, and visitors, including:

- Regional growth and development
- Improved supply chain efficiency
- Improved road safety
- Improved information and reduced inconvenience.

#### Identified opportunities and their alignment with the Strategy objectives.

Focus Areas	Opportunities	Strategic Alignment
<b>1</b> <b>Support increased HPV access and freight efficiency</b>	A. Bypasses and heavy vehicle alternate routes	  
	B. Improvements to intersections and crossings	  
	C. Improvements to road geometry	
	D. Heavy duty pavement strengthening	
	E. Upgrades to primary east-west connections	 
	F. Enhancements to freight facilities	 
<b>2</b> <b>Prioritise safety initiatives</b>	A. Additional safety infrastructure	 
	B. Improvements to road design	 
	C. Changes to driver behaviour	
<b>3</b> <b>Mitigate the impacts of flooding</b>	Development of a corridor wide flood study, which seeks to identify key flood prone zones along the corridor against a number of potential scenarios and identifies and evaluates a suite of mitigation measures	  
<b>4</b> <b>Provide improved information and communication</b>	A. Electronic communications along the corridor	
	B. Development of a single and accurate information platform	
	C. Provision of mobile network coverage along the corridor	 
	D. Improved signage on the approach to key town centres	 
<b>Legend</b> <div> Community Outcomes and Accessibility  Freight Productivity  Network Integration and Connectivity  Safety  Environmental Resilience and Sustainability  Technology  </div>		

## Proposed investment roadmap for the Newell Highway Corridor.

Area of Opportunity	Proposed Initiatives		
1a. Bypasses and heavy vehicle alternate routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parkes bypass</li> <li>Coonabarabran HVAR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dubbo Bridge/Bypass</li> <li>Narromine HVAR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrabri HVAR</li> </ul>
1b. Intersections and crossings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve road-rail alignment at Tichborne</li> <li>Oxley Highway – Straighten and prioritise Newell</li> <li>Improve alignment at West Wyalong level crossing</li> <li><i>Upgrade level crossing near Hideaway Lane</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade Forbes level crossing</li> <li>Assess local road access requirements for potential upgrades</li> <li><i>Upgrade Hartigan Ave level crossing</i></li> <li><i>Upgrade Clarinda St / Mitchell St intersection</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Widen and remediate pavement for grade separated crossing south of Morundah</li> <li>Upgrade structures (bridges and culverts) requiring strengthening or replacement for PBS 3a access</li> </ul>
1c. Road geometry	<i>Improve alignment at Bogan St / Hartigan Ave</i>		
1d. Heavy duty pavement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>North Moree</li> </ul>	Narrabri to Moree	
1e. East-west connection upgrades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mitchell Highway (commenced)</li> <li>Kamilaroi Highway</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lachlan Valley Way</li> <li>Vehicle activated signs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gwydir Highway</li> <li>Enhancements at other key connections</li> </ul>
1f. Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade existing and provide additional decoupling sites, including deceleration lanes</li> </ul>	Provide additional livestock effluent disposal facilities	
2a. Safety infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install audio-tactile wide centre lines</li> <li>Install additional lateral safety barriers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade existing and build additional rest stops</li> <li>Provide new heavy vehicle safety stations</li> </ul>	
2b. Road design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess suitability of planned overtaking lane designs</li> <li>Review constructed overtaking lanes for performance gaps</li> <li>Update line markings to prevent overtaking at right turns into local access roads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progressively upgrade to meet standard cross section design</li> <li>Address high risk curves rated as “very poor”</li> <li>Widen road through Pilliga Nature Reserve</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-assess feasibility of lower priority overtaking lane options excluded from current program</li> <li>Establish 8m clear zones along the highway</li> <li>Address high risk curves rated as “poor”</li> </ul>
2c. Driver behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish program of rural gateway treatments (i.e. road markings)</li> </ul>	Run targeted road safety advertising campaigns	
3. Flooding mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a corridor-wide flood study</li> </ul>		
4. Information and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install electronic variable message signs</li> <li>Establish information platform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate providing mobile coverage at all rest stops</li> <li>Improve tourism signage along the corridor and beautify town entrances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide consistent mobile phone coverage along entire corridor</li> </ul>

Note: italicised initiatives will be addressed by the Parkes bypass route if constructed





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