

Draft Newell Highway

Corridor Strategy

SUBMISSION

June 2014



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Centroc's Mission is to be recognised as the lead organisation advocating on agreed regional positions and priorities for Central NSW whilst providing a forum for facilitating regional co-operation and sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources; effectively nurturing sustainable investment and infrastructure development.

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20 June 2014

The Hon Duncan Gay
Minister for Roads and Freight
Transport for NSW
PO Box K659
Haymarket NSW 1240

Dear Minister Gay,

Re: Draft Newell Highway Corridor Strategy

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Draft Newell Highway Corridor Strategy. Safety on Roads in the Central NSW is an extremely high priority for the Centroc Board, along with the greater use of high productivity vehicles (HPVs).

For more advice on Centroc programming and priorities, please go to our website
<http://www.centroc.com.au/centrocs-advocacy-priorities/roads-transport-infrastructure/>

Central NSW Councils (Centroc) represents over 220,000 people covering an area of more than 64,000sq kms comprising the Local Government Areas of Bathurst, Blayney, Boorowa, Cabonne, Cowra, Forbes, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, Upper Lachlan, Weddin , Young and Central Tablelands Water.

The Centroc Board applauds the initiative to complete the Corridor Strategy for the Newell Highway, which appears to be a comprehensive long term strategy. Being a Federal Highway however, it seems an opportunity missed, not to have included the sections in Queensland and Victoria in both a regulatory and asset management context.

The Newell highway runs through member councils of Parkes and Forbes.

The impact of the Newell on the amenity of the town both towns significant, and will escalate as the freight volume increases up to 103% by 2031.¹ Thus the Board are supportive of the objective to enable the entire length of the Newell for High Productive Vehicles (HPV) operation, in fact, given the prediction of large freight tonnage increases it would appear expansion of HPV access is essential.

In both the towns of Parkes and Forbes the Newell highway runs only one block from the towns'

¹ Hyder Consulting for Transport for NSW, NSW Freight Supply Chain Study - Western Regions

CBD. As the highway bisects both the towns, the highway traffic causes considerable disruption for local traffic needing to cross the Newell to access the CBD and local schools.

The case study on Parkes (page 120) assists in identifying the issues. The Parkes Railway Level Crossing is a major issue for Newell Highway Traffic. Recent investigations suggest there is twenty-eight train movements a day which close the Newell Highway for an average of two minutes and thirty seconds. Delays of forty-eight minutes have been recorded and the cumulative total daily delay is around seventy minutes.

The impact of Heavy Vehicles travelling through retail areas in Parkes is more than evident, accordingly the Western Ring Road (heavy vehicle bypass) which has been a high priority for Parkes Shire Council for a number of years. Please see the attached documents supporting the Heavy Vehicle bypass.

The Centroc Board strongly believes there is a significant case to move the Parkes Western Ring Road (Heavy Vehicle Bypass) from a "Medium-term investment priority" to a "Short term investment priority".

The Western Ring Road (heavy vehicle bypass) would;

- Potentially remove large volumes of heavy vehicle through-traffic from CBD vicinity (improve safety/noise/odour/pedestrian safety/local traffic conflict)
- Aid in extending B-Triple/Road-Train access on Newell from Dubbo to Victorian border
- Remove 4 geometrically constrained intersections
- Remove 2 rail level crossings for heavy vehicles
- Provide Highway access to the Parkes National Logistics HUB
- In time link to the Southern Ring Road to enhance east-west vehicle movements
- Facilitate Road-Train access to Central West Livestock Exchange from western regions
- Improve CBD vehicle/Pedestrian Safety
- Provides an alternate rail crossing

Regarding Forbes, when flooding in the south of Forbes occurs, the Newell Highway is cut for long periods of time with great affects to the local economy that relies on the Newell Highway traffic.

Table 4.4 Indicates that the section of the Newell Highway between Parkes to Forbes has casualty crash rates right on the class average for NSW, this is high in comparison to other sections of the Highway and is of concern to the Centroc Board.

The Intersection in Forbes at the Sheriff Street and Dowling Street lights before the Rail crossing is in very close proximity. Regular queuing issues are experienced causing delays to local traffic which is very similar to experiences at the crossing in Parkes.

Table 4.13 illustrates the section of Marsden to Forbes level of service (los) related to overtaking opportunities

Northbound	C	Southbound	D
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This is a severely restricted section of road where general level of comfort and convenience is poor. Further development of overtaking opportunities needs to be progressed in particular this section.

The Centroc Board is also very supportive of the adoption of the wide centerline treatment for the entirety of the Newell over a reasonable period due to the increased vehicle separation and safety benefits.

The upgrade of the intersection of Ashburnham Road 12kms north of Forbes has been delayed and should be undertaken as a priority due to the deficient sight distance. This intersection is not mentioned in the report.

The Centroc Board is very supportive of the proposed Trewilga realignment. There is a long history of fatalities on the particular stretch of road, which would strongly support this investment.

Similarly the proposed overtaking lane between Parkes and Tomingley is also strongly supported.

Likewise that of the 2 overtaking lanes already started between West Wyalong and Forbes.

The freight task in NSW along the Newell Highway is expected to double by 2031 with more heavy vehicles on the road, thus meaning conflict with smaller faster passenger vehicles. There is potential to look at dual carriage way, in some parts. By commencing to secure corridor space for this upgrade will allow future upgrades to be planned for.

In the short term the Centroc Board would like support for 10km spacing for overtaking lanes.

The Centroc Board are very supportive of the proposed Trewilga realignment. There is a long history of fatalities on the particular stretch of road, which would strongly support this investment.

Similarly the proposed overtaking lane between Parkes and Tomingley is also strongly supported.

Likewise that of the 2 overtaking lanes already started between West Wyalong and Forbes.

For further advice in regards to this submission please contact the Executive Officer Ms Jennifer Bennett on 0428 690 935 or jenny.bennett@centroc.com.au

Yours sincerely,



Cr Ken Keith OAM
Chair
Central NSW Councils (Centroc)

enc Key Newell Highway Challenge – Western Ring Road

Key Newell Highway Challenge	How a Parkes Western Ring Road (Heavy Vehicle Bypass) Addresses the Key Challenges
<p><i>Improve livability and reduce social disadvantage</i></p>	<p>The Newell Highway passes within one (1) block of the Parkes CBD which is typified by; high traffic volumes, retail shops fronting the Highway with conflicting user traffic, the amenity of residents on the west side of the Highway are adversely affected by difficulties crossing the Highway, changes to the School Bus Subsidy program will increase the number of School Children crossing the Highway to attend school, with up to seventy minutes a day railway crossing closure highway traffic queues for hundreds of metres.</p> <p>A Heavy Vehicle Bypass would dramatically improve the urban amenity of Parkes.</p>
<p><i>Economic Growth/Productivity</i></p>	<p>There are three (3) substandard intersections in the Parkes urban area, this is exacerbated by centre medians which on curves reduce the potential turning paths of LHPV. This substandard geometry has the effect of preventing the passage of LHPV.</p> <p>The mix of slow caravan traffic looking for parking, high levels of local traffic and local pedestrian traffic, is in direct conflict with the time critical through movement of larger highway traffic and will directly affect the productivity of the through highway traffic.</p> <p>The efficient movement of freight is severely affected by the frequent closure of the Rail Crossing, around twenty-eight times per day with average delays of around two minutes and thirty seconds significantly impact on the productivity of the through highway traffic.</p> <p>LHPV's from the Western Region (on State road MR61) are not able to access the Highway and such facilities as the Central West Livestock Exchange at Forbes as a consequence of the urban intersection configuration. It is just the Parkes urban section which prevents connectivity of the LHPV access from MR61 to the Newell.</p> <p>By completing the Western Ring Road as a Heavy Vehicle Bypass the above issues will be resolved. ie. Three (3) substandard intersections will be removed, two (2) of the nine Railway Crossings on the Newell will be avoided, LHPV from the western areas will be able to connect with the Newell and access facilities such as the Forbes Central Livestock Exchange and LHPV's will be able to now operate on this, seriously limiting section of Highway.</p>

<p><i>Regional Development & Accessibility</i></p>	<p>The Heavy Vehicle Bypass would also serve as highway access to the Parkes National Logistics HUB. Unrestricted access of this type would assist in the development of this multi-modal transport HUB and allow expansion without exacerbating the urban amenity issues. With the Melbourne-Brisbane Inland Rail predicted to be completed within ten years, well designed, accessible multi-modal HUB's will be critical to reduce the growth of long-haul road transport.</p> <p>The Parkes HUB is at the intersection of the Melbourne-Parkes, Brisbane-Parkes, Perth-Parkes and Darwin-Parkes railways and will be of national significance, however, there will also be a significant regional development opportunity.</p> <p>The Western Ring Road would significantly contribute to the efficiency of the Parkes National Logistics Hub and the associated regional development opportunities.</p>
<p><i>Improve Sustainability</i></p>	<p>The proposed alignment of the Western Ring Road creates a unique opportunity to develop valuable biological communities which connect to other areas of biological value. The proposed route has been zoned to enable this approach.</p> <p>The free flow of Heavy Vehicles created by the avoidance of two (2) Railway Level Crossings and the high local traffic situation within the urban area of Parkes would likely have a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, by reducing the multiple acceleration/deceleration needed to traverse a busy town.</p>
<p><i>Safety and Security</i></p>	<p>A Western Ring Road would facilitate the expansion of LHPV on the Newell, this will intrinsically reduce the road occupation of Heavy Vehicles and thereby improve road safety. The Western Ring Road (as a Heavy Vehicle Bypass) would also separate the existing significant conflict which occurs in the urban areas between large vehicles travelling at the speed limit with local crossing traffic, pedestrian traffic, Caravaners hunting for parks, and local shopping traffic looking for parks.</p> <p>The separation of the constant stream of heavy traffic from the urban areas of Parkes would be a significant safety amenity benefit.</p> <p>There is also significant opportunity for a major rest area to be incorporated into the Ring Road land acquisition.</p> <p>It is also very significant that the proposed Western Ring Road facilitates the avoidance of Heavy Vehicles crossing two (2)</p>

	<p>Railway Level Crossings. There has been incidents of Heavy Vehicles and trains colliding at level crossings in the section, with catastrophic results. Avoidance of two (2) of the nine (9) Railway Level Crossings would be a significant safety improvement to the Highway and Rail Network.</p>
<p><i>Improve Transport Integration Process</i></p>	<p>The Western Ring Road project is the perfect example of transport integration. It will separate Heavy Vehicles from Light Vehicles that have conflicting journey's, it will greatly improve Highway access to the Parkes National Logistics HUB thereby improving the efficiency of the HUB operation and encouraging modal shift to/from the most efficient type. It will remove the conflict of Heavy Vehicles with Trains at two (2) Level Crossings and it will improve the amenity of the Parkes urban area for all other road users by largely removing Heavy Vehicles from the urban area.</p>