

23. Conclusions and next steps

23.1 Overall conclusions

The Environmental Assessment for the SWRL project confirms that the project has a strong justification for proceeding, considering the significant regional transport, social and economic benefits it would produce in a key growth area of Sydney. This is supported by the Concept Plan, which identifies a staging process.

The project is an important component of the NSW Government's Sydney Metropolitan Strategy. The consequences of not proceeding with the project would be significant in the long term given the potential impacts on the rail network and road network congestion, poor accessibility and potentially unsustainable land release and development.

A range of impact assessments, with a focus on the key issues identified in the Director-General's Environmental Assessment requirements, were prepared and documented in this report. The assessments were undertaken to a level appropriate to the level of the project design development and approval sought. The nature of the SWRL project, being a linear infrastructure project within a largely greenfield area, means that some potential adverse impacts are unavoidable. Many of the potential impacts, including noise, visual, and social impacts, would also be expected to reduce in the long-term as the area is developed and land use planning integrates with the SWRL. Other potential direct impacts of the SWRL, such as biodiversity and land use property impacts, also need to be considered in the context of the wider growth area development.

Various measures/commitments are recommended to avoid, remedy and mitigate the identified, potential impacts with a focus on further assessment and the development of management plans as the design for the project is developed further.

The scope of the SWRL Concept Plan (what TIDC is seeking approval for) is detailed in Chapter 20 of this report. The scope of the concept approval being sought was determined through assessment of what parts of the project need to be confirmed now to enable the project to progress to the next stage of the development and based on the level of design development and impact assessment. Further assessment of other components of the project is proposed as the design develops. This is reflected in TIDC's Draft Statement of Commitments in Chapter 21.

The next stage of assessment may include a referral to the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, if required.

23.2 Next steps

The next steps for the SWRL project are as follows:

- exhibition of the SWRL Concept Plan and Environmental Assessment for a minimum of 30 days and invitation for the community and stakeholders to make submissions
- some further environmental assessment of Stage A of the project to determine the extent of impacts (as detailed in Chapter 20)
- TIDC prepares Submissions Report and, if required, a Preferred Project report and final Statement of Commitments
- Director-General of the Department of Planning provides an Assessment Report on the SWRL Concept Plan to the Minister for Planning, who then determines the Concept Plan and, if approved, sets conditions for further assessment and/or further approvals required.

The following steps would be undertaken in accordance with the terms of the concept approval.