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- noise and vibration
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- social-economic
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Table of contents

Executive summary

1.0 Introduction
1.1 Background
1.2 Project objectives
1.3 The study area
1.4 The existing highway
1.5 Specialist studies
1.6 Route options development process
1.7 RTA environmental commitment
1.8 Ecologically sustainable development
1.8.1 New South Wales ecologically sustainable development requirements
1.8.2 Commonwealth ecologically sustainable development requirements
1.9 Report objective
1.10 Report structure

2.0 Strategic context
2.1 Introduction
2.2 Planning context
2.3 Transport
2.3.1 Existing traffic and transport conditions
2.3.2 Existing traffic volumes
2.3.3 Daily variations
2.3.4 Seasonal variations
2.3.5 Freight movements
2.3.6 Public and active transport movements
2.3.7 Crash analysis
2.3.8 Existing travel patterns
2.3.9 Existing travel times
2.3.10 Existing levels of service
2.3.11 Forecast traffic volumes
2.4 Consequence of no action
2.4.1 Overall efficiency
2.4.2 Local road safety
2.4.3 Local and regional growth patterns
2.4.4 Local environmental setting
2.4.5 Minimal intervention

3.0 Community and stakeholder engagement
3.1 Community engagement objectives
3.2 Approach to consultation
3.3 Workshops and displays – May 2006
3.4 Planning focus meeting
3.5 Property access letter for field investigations – January 2007
3.6 Community information sessions – February 2007
3.7 Interest groups
3.8 Local council meetings
3.9 Aboriginal Focus Group meetings
3.10 Specialist information sessions – August 2007
3.11 Community submissions
3.11.1 Type of contact
3.11.2 Type of stakeholders
3.11.3 Summary of issues raised

3.12 Project website
3.13 Next steps
3.13.1 Public display of short listed options
3.13.2 Value management studies
3.13.3 Preferred route
3.13.4 Environmental assessment

4.0 Statutory and strategic planning
4.1 Planning and zoning issues
4.1.1 Kiama Local Environmental Plan 1996
4.1.2 Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan 1985
4.1.3 Approval process
4.1.4 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
4.1.5 Key matters for consideration
4.1.6 Other approvals
4.1.7 Regional Environmental Plans – Illawarra Regional Environmental Plan No. 1

4.2 Strategic planning considerations
4.2.1 State Infrastructure Strategy
4.2.2 Regional strategies
4.2.3 Local settlement and development strategies
4.2.4 Planned and future land uses

5.0 The existing environment
5.1 Biophysical environment
5.1.1 Topography, geology and soils
5.1.2 Flooding and drainage
5.1.3 Water quality
5.1.4 Terrestrial ecology
5.1.5 Aquatic ecology
5.1.6 Climate and air quality
5.1.7 Existing major infrastructure and utilities

5.2 Social and cultural environment
5.2.1 Indigenous heritage
5.2.2 European heritage
5.2.3 Land use and property
5.2.4 Demographics and social-economic profiles
5.2.5 Noise
5.2.6 Urban design, landscape and visual amenity

6.0 Design considerations
6.1 Design criteria
6.1.1 Engineering design criteria
6.1.2 Design life
6.1.3 Flood immunity

6.2 Technical criteria
6.3 Flooding and drainage
6.3.1 Peak flow determination
6.3.2 Flood level determination
6.3.3 Road level and watercourse crossing requirements
6.3.4 Groundwater issues

6.4 Project urban design objectives
6.5 Geotechnical considerations
6.5.1 Geotechnical conditions
6.5.2 Ground treatment options
6.5.3 Suitability for tunnelling
6.6 Ecologically sustainable development
6.6.1 Integrating the principles of ecologically sustainable development

6.7 Property and land use impacts
6.7.1 Severance of land uses
6.7.2 Agricultural land
6.7.3 Dairy
6.7.4 Vineyards
6.7.5 Organic farming
6.7.6 Commercial activities
6.7.7 Existing residential land uses

6.8 Construction resources and materials
6.8.1 Materials
6.8.2 Sources of construction materials
6.8.3 Haulage of materials and manufactured items
6.8.4 Effect on depletion of resources
6.8.5 Batching plants
6.8.6 Ownership and planning approvals

7.0 Development of route options
7.1 Phase I: Determination of a long list of options
7.2 Phase 2: Preparatory assessments
7.3 Phase 3: Route options development workshop
7.4 Phase 4: Conclusion and next steps

8.0 Description of short listed route options
8.1 Section A (Mount Pleasant to south Gerringong)
8.1.1 Overview
8.1.2 Alignment (road safety / efficiency)
8.1.3 Regional and local economic development
8.1.4 Environmental impacts
8.1.5 Community impacts
8.1.6 Engineering
8.1.7 Value for money – cost, constructability and project risk

8.2 Section B (south Gerringong to north Berry)
8.2.1 Overview
8.2.2 Alignment (road safety / efficiency)
8.2.3 Regional and local economic development
8.2.4 Environmental impacts
8.2.5 Community impacts
8.2.6 Engineering
8.2.7 Value for money – cost, constructability and project risk

8.3 Section C (Berry Township)
8.3.1 Overview
8.3.2 Alignment (road safety / efficiency)
8.3.3 Regional and local economic development
8.3.4 Environmental impacts
8.3.5 Community impacts
8.3.6 Engineering
8.3.7 Value for money – cost, constructability and project risk

8.4 Section B/C (south Gerringong to south Berry)
8.4.1 Overview
8.4.2 Alignment (road safety / efficiency)
8.4.3 Regional and local economic development
8.4.4 Environmental impacts
8.4.5 Community impacts
8.4.6 Engineering
8.4.7 Value for money – cost, constructability and project risk

8.5 Section D (south Berry to Bomaderry)
8.5.1 Overview
8.5.2 Alignment (road safety / efficiency)
8.5.3 Regional and local economic development
8.5.4 Environmental impacts
8.5.5 Community impacts
8.5.6 Engineering
8.5.7 Value for money – cost, constructability and project risk

8.6 Road safety audit summary
8.6.1 Background
8.6.2 Summary of findings

9.0 Project cost, economic analysis and safety
9.1 Introduction
9.2 Objectives, options and scope
9.3 Quantitative assessment of costs and benefits
9.4 Traffic analysis
9.4.1 Introduction
9.4.2 Traffic estimates
9.4.3 Diverted traffic
9.5 Road user costs
9.5.1 Introduction
9.5.2 Vehicle operating cost savings
9.5.3 Travel time savings
9.5.4 Accident cost savings
9.5.5 Environmental externalities
9.6 Route option assessment
9.7 Option costs and benefits
9.7.1 Construction costs
9.7.2 Maintenance cost impacts
9.7.3 Normal traffic benefits
9.7.4 Diverted traffic benefits
9.8 Economic appraisal results
9.8.1 Introduction
9.8.2 Economic appraisal results
9.8.3 Sensitivity analysis
9.8.4 Summary
9.9 Qualitative analysis
9.9.1 Background
9.9.2 Economic development
9.9.3 Property values
9.9.4 Safety
10.0 Summary of next steps

10.1 General

10.2 Short list of route options

10.3 Preferred route selection

10.4 Environmental Impact Assessment under Environmental Planning and Assessment Act

10.5 Land acquisition and construction

10.6 Ongoing community engagement

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Traffic volumes on the Princes Highway in February 2007

Table 2.2 Level of service for the Princes Highway within the study area

Table 2.3 Traffic forecasts at selected locations

Table 2.4 Forecast mid-block level of service

Table 3.1 Key issues raised at the planning focus meeting

Table 3.2 Key issues raised at the community information sessions, February 2007

Table 3.3 Key issues raised at the interest group workshop, April 2007

Table 3.4 Key issues raised by individual interest groups

Table 3.5 Key issues raised by local councils

Table 3.6 Key issues raised by Aboriginal Focus Groups

Table 4.1 Approval and licence considerations for the proposed activity

Table 5.1 Plant communities of the study area

Table 5.2 Frequency of occurrence of atmospheric stability classes at Gerroa tip (2000)

Table 5.3 Residential characteristics

Table 5.4 Considerations to address key potential social and economic impacts

Table 5.5 Constraints values applied to land cover types

Table 5.6 Constraint values assigned to slope analysis

Table 5.7 Constraint values applied to visibility analysis

Table 5.8 Technical criteria

Table 6.1 Potential treatments for road formation on soft soils

Table 6.2 Summary of construction materials currently available locally

Table 6.3 Summary of workshop process findings

Table 6.4 Current and future traffic on the project road

Table 6.5 Current and future traffic on the Sandtrack

Table 6.6 Travel speed assumption by section

Table 6.7 Value of Time parameters – December 2005 prices

Table 6.8 Crash rates per one hundred million kilometres for the study road

Table 6.9 Environmental externality values – (cents per vehicle km – December 2005 prices)

Table 6.10 Construction cost estimates

Table 7.1 Economic appraisal results for combined sections

Table 7.2 Sensitivity analysis (Benefit Cost Ratio’s by option)
### Table of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.1</td>
<td>Study area</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.2</td>
<td>Route options development process</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.1</td>
<td>Regional context</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.2</td>
<td>Seasonal variations in traffic flow at permanent stations in study area (2003)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.3</td>
<td>Location of crashes on the Princes Highway (2001-2005)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.4</td>
<td>Peak hour traffic patterns</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1</td>
<td>Community engagement process</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.2</td>
<td>Methods of contacting the project team since January 2007</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.3</td>
<td>Stakeholder type</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.4</td>
<td>Issues raised by stakeholders since January 2007</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.5</td>
<td>Summary of community issues</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.6</td>
<td>Visits to the project website since February 2007</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.1</td>
<td>Planning and zoning constraints</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.1</td>
<td>Summary of ground conditions</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.2</td>
<td>Watercourses and floodplains</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.3</td>
<td>Summary of terrestrial ecology</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.4</td>
<td>Major public utilities</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.5</td>
<td>Summary of heritage constraints</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.6</td>
<td>Land-use</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.7</td>
<td>Noise sensitive receivers</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.8</td>
<td>Noise monitoring locations</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.1</td>
<td>Project objectives</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.2</td>
<td>Long list of route options</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.3</td>
<td>Critical factors affecting the route options</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.4</td>
<td>Short listed route options (continued opposite)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8.1</td>
<td>Section A - Red route</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8.2</td>
<td>Section B - Pink route</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8.3</td>
<td>Section B - Green route</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8.4</td>
<td>Section B - Yellow route</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8.5</td>
<td>Section C - Blue route</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8.6</td>
<td>Section C - O range route</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8.7</td>
<td>Section B/C - Brown route</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8.8</td>
<td>Section D - Purple route</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.1</td>
<td>Vehicle Operation Costs by vehicle type for different speeds</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>Route Options Workshop Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>Preliminary Geotechnical Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>Preliminary Urban and Regional Design Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>Preliminary Traffic Assessment Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>Preliminary Public Utilities and Services Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F</td>
<td>Preliminary Social Economic Impacts Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G</td>
<td>Preliminary Biological Report - Terrestrial Flora and Fauna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H</td>
<td>Preliminary Biological Report - Aquatic Ecology and Water Quality Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I</td>
<td>Preliminary Indigenous and Non Indigenous Heritage Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix J</td>
<td>Preliminary Air Quality Management Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix K</td>
<td>Preliminary Flooding and Drainage Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix L</td>
<td>Preliminary Planning and Zoning Issues Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix M</td>
<td>Preliminary Land Use Issues Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix N</td>
<td>Preliminary Traffic Noise and Vibration Assessment Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix O</td>
<td>Preliminary Property Impacts Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix P</td>
<td>Preliminary Climatic Assessment Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Q</td>
<td>Preliminary Cumulative Effects Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix R</td>
<td>Road Safety Audit - Stage 1, Route Options - Preliminary Concept Design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive summary
Executive summary

Introduction

Due to the significant changes in land use and population in the region and a review of current planning, traffic and safety conditions, the NSW State Government has committed to upgrade the Princes Highway north of Gerringong at Mount Pleasant to Moss Vale / Cambewarra Road at Bomaderry. No preferred option has been identified at this stage.

The RTA has set out several objectives for the Princes Highway. Generically these include:

- Provide a flowing highway alignment that is responsive and integrated with the landscape.
- Protect the natural systems and ecology of the corridor.
- Protect and enhance the heritage and cultural values of the corridor.
- Respect the communities and towns along the road.
- Provide an enjoyable, interesting highway with strong visual connections to the Pacific Ocean, immediate hinterland and the mountains to the west.

Objectives for this project have been determined as follows:

- Improving road safety by improving alignment and improving standards in new road design and construction.
- Improve efficiency of the Princes Highway between Gerringong and Bomaderry.
- Support regional and local economic development.
- Provide value for money.
- Enhance potential beneficial environmental effects and manage potential adverse environmental impacts.
- Optimize the benefits and minimize adverse impacts on the local social environment.

Study area characteristics

Preliminary investigations have been carried out in order to facilitate the choice of options for further evaluation. Significant constraints are listed below:

- Sub-standard road geometry of the existing highway, particularly in the Foxground area.
- Floodplains and soft soil conditions located generally in the south and east of the study area.
- The South Coast railway.
- Agricultural industry including dairy.
- An approved housing development in Berry.
- The Eastern Gas Pipeline.
- Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural heritage at various locations across the study area.
- Hilly terrain (generally found to the northwest of the study area with ridges extending south and east).
- Colonies of Endangered Ecological Community and threatened plant species.
- Residences.

With the exception of the approved development application for housing in Berry, none of these characteristics lead to any potential route from being discarded in its own right. However, combinations of desirable and non-desirable attributes of routes lead to their recommendation or discard as a feasible route.

Route options selection process

The identification of a short list of route options which best meet the objectives of the project was undertaken using the generally recognized route options development process.

The development of the route options from a long to a short list is based on a qualitative assessment of the relative impacts of each one. Subsequent to further and more detailed analysis of each of the short listed options, a more refined and quantitative assessment is carried out to determine the preferred route.

The short listing process of route options for this project followed four phases:

- Determination of a long list of options.
  A long list of options was developed using routes examined as part of previous studies and verified using rudimentary engineering and route selection principles.

- Preparatory assessments.
  Each of the potentially feasible routes was reviewed in detail in relation to many specific evaluation categories. This established a preliminary understanding of how routes performed relative to the project objectives. The evaluation categories comprised:
  - Community values.
  - Urban and visual landscape.
  - Alignment, staging and access.
  - Socio-economics.
  - Water quality and aquatic ecology.
  - Flooding and drainage.
  - Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage.
  - Air quality.
  - Sustainability.
  - Climate.
  - Utilities.
  - Planning and zoning.
  - Land use.
  - Noise and vibration.
  - Terrestrial ecology.
  - Ground conditions.
  - Cost.
  - Traffic.

- Route options development workshop.
  This process involved a qualitative assessment of how well each of the long list of options best met the project objectives. The evaluation categories were assigned the same weighting and the workshop debated each scenario. The short list of feasible route options were subsequently identified as ones that performed better than others, having considered all the constraints.

- Conclusion and next step.
  The outcome of the route options development workshop process was a short list of feasible route options. These are presented in this report and displayed to provide the community with an opportunity to comment on the route options.
Community engagement

Objective
Community and stakeholder input is considered in conjunction with the project's specialist studies into social, economic, environmental and engineering factors. Appreciation of community priorities and concerns is further understood through investigation of the social and cultural environment in the study area.

The RTA is committed to enabling opportunities for all stakeholders to be consulted, informed and involved in an open and transparent process across all phases of this study.

Community engagement objectives are to:

- Support and strengthen the current RTA community engagement process.
- Ensure an open accountable and transparent community engagement process.
- Ensure all potentially affected property owners and interested stakeholders are provided with sufficient information about the project and the likely impacts so that they can provide informed input.
- Ensure appropriate and direct communication with property owners in relation to access to, and investigations on, landholdings within the study area by study team members and/or the RTA representatives.
- Encourage community support and involvement in the project to facilitate better and more generally accepted outcomes through innovative communication methods.
- Provide a range of accessible opportunities for stakeholders, interested groups and the wider public to contribute to the project through issues identification, information provision, and options evaluation.
- Build an ongoing relationship between the RTA, its contractors, and stakeholders in order to gain long term support for the project and in particular the preferred route.

To date
Key community engagement activities conducted during the project familiarisation and route options development phases have comprised:

- Workshops and information stands in May 2006.
- A planning focus meeting with representatives from various agencies and stakeholder groups in September 2006.
- Property access letters for field investigations sent in January 2007.
- Community information sessions in February 2007.
- An interest group workshop in April 2007.
- Individual meetings with local councils, local Aboriginal representatives, Chambers of Commerce, and other local interest groups.
- Specialist information sessions in August 2007.
- A project office was opened in Berry in July 2007.
- Establishment of a 1800 free call number.
- Establishment of a project email address.
- Establishment of a project web page.

Ongoing consultation
Community updates will continue to be distributed quarterly to maintain open and regular communication with the community. The project site office and the 1800 number will remain operational for the foreseeable future and the website will continue to be updated when important information is available.

The community will be provided with ongoing opportunities to input into the project. Key future phases in the project which involve the community comprise:

- Public display of the short listed route options.
- Value management studies.
- Public display of the preferred route.
- Various consultation activities during the concept design and environmental assessment of the preferred route stage.

Route options

General
The study area has been divided into four sections to facilitate the assessment of the long list of options. These sections are as follows:

- Section A - Mount Pleasant to south Gerringong.
- Section B - south Gerringong to north Berry.
- Section C - Berry Township.
- Section D - south Berry to Bomaderry.

Some route options straddle Sections B and C. These have been grouped as "Section B/C".

The study area presents a complex array of constraints influencing benefits and disadvantages of each of the long list of options. Only in a few instances did a particular feature lead to a route or routes being directly discarded. The emerging short list of routes scored well overall with regards to the project objectives and vice versa with regards to the discarded routes.

Description of short listed route options (from north to south)

Section A - Mount Pleasant to south Gerringong
One route has been short listed for Section A. The Red route follows the existing highway alignment subject to relatively minor adjustments to meet the required design and safety parameters.

Section B - south Gerringong to north Berry
Three route options emerged as being better than others within Section B.

The Pink route generally follows the existing highway alignment except for the section past Foxground. The existing highway alignment is particularly poor in this location and has to be improved to meet the required design and safety parameters.

The Green route is the same as the Pink route apart from the section between Toolijooa Road and Thompsons Road. The Green route follows a more direct alignment and passes under the Toolijooa ridge "north saddle" in a 350 metre long tunnel.
The Yellow route follows an alignment parallel to the South Coast railway line until just past the dwellings at Toolijooa. The route then turns to follow a north-west alignment. It passes under the Toolijooa ridge “south saddle” in a 350 metre long tunnel before meeting and following the existing highway corridor for the remainder of Section B.

Section C - Berry Township
Two route options emerged as being better than others within Section C.

The Blue route follows a circular arc bypassing Berry to the north. Due to developments to the west of Berry, the Blue route passes Berry close to the western edge of the main town. The Blue route then follows the existing highway alignment until the southern end of the section at Croziers Road.

The Orange route provides an upgrade of the existing highway alignment north of Berry and then follows the North Street corridor as it bypasses Berry. North Street itself would remain a local road. At the western end of North Street, the route turns to the south to follow the existing highway until the southern end of the section.

Section B/C – south Gerringong to south Berry
There is one short listed route that traverses Sections B and C. This route is identified as the Brown route and runs along the western side of the railway line from south of Gerringong to the north of Berry. It heads westwards from the David Berry hospital and crosses the existing highway, Broughton Mill Creek and Woodhill Mountain Road. It then continues along the North Street corridor and from Kangaroo Valley Road it follows the existing highway to Croziers Road. North Street would remain a local road.

Section D - south Berry to Bomaderry
One route has been short listed for Section D. The Purple route follows the existing highway alignment subject to relatively minor adjustments to meet the required design and safety parameters.

Next steps
The proposed upgrade of this section of the Princes Highway is being developed considering social, environmental and economic objectives in a way that achieves the best functional and community outcome.

Different permutations of the routes in each section have been combined to form a short list of seven options from one end of the study area to the other. The short list of options will be presented to the community, including workshops with specialists available to discuss details. At the same time potentially affected landowners will be offered an opportunity for an individual meeting with the RTA.

The feedback from the above consultation will be used in the value management studies to assist in the determination of the preferred option. Participants in these studies will include technical and non-technical representatives from a range of government, council and community interests. A preferred overall option will be determined by considering the following:

- The community's feedback and response to the short listed options.
- Further and more detailed analysis of physical characteristics and impacts of the options.
- The findings of a value management process performed to review the above information together with all the information and data which has been collected or determined from this and previous studies.

Following the announcement of the preferred option, a concept design will be carried out and this will be the subject of more detailed environmental assessment and community input. On completion of the environmental assessment, the project can move into detailed design and construction. It is likely that the overall upgrade will be constructed in a number of discrete sections.