

Department of INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND LOGISTICS

Pinelands Road Safety Upgrades Frequently Asked Questions



Transport Planning
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The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics has completed consultation for the Pinelands road safety upgrades and a concept design has now been finalised. This Frequently Asked Questions paper compiles the most commonly asked questions during various stages of the consultation and to explain the final concept.

Context

What are the project objectives of the Pinelands Road Safety Upgrades?

The Department has been undertaking planning work to improve safety and access into Pinelands and Holtze since late 2016. The objectives of the planning project are to:

- improve road safety for heavy vehicles and other road users including motorists, cyclists and pedestrians
- provide more efficient and functional access to Pinelands and Holtze for all vehicles
- address existing road safety concerns about access in and out of Pinelands and Holtze
- upgrade infrastructure to accommodate future growth in the area
- maintain an acceptable level of service for future traffic increases on arterial roads
- respond to the area's changing economic profile and future land use planning.

Drivers for change

Why is Government wanting to deliver these road changes?

There are two primary drivers for the delivery of these road changes:

1. A new, safer option is required for heavy vehicles coming from the south to enter Pinelands (further explained in the next question).
2. Safety improvements are required on the Stuart Highway to the uncontrolled accesses in and out of Pinelands and Holtze to reduce potential crashes.

The design options are developed to address above mentioned issues as well as balancing the need for local business and commuter traffic. .

Why is a new, safer option required for heavy vehicles to enter Pinelands?

Prior to the opening of the Gateway Shopping Centre in Yarrawonga, heavy vehicles travelling from the south to Pinelands were able to use the left turn into Marjorie Street off the Stuart Highway.

This access was possible due to a detour via Yarrawonga Road that allowed traffic to turn safely through Yarrawonga Road / Roystonea Avenue intersection into the outermost lane of Roystonea Avenue (before becoming Stuart Highway) and turning left into Marjorie Street (refer to **Figure 1**).

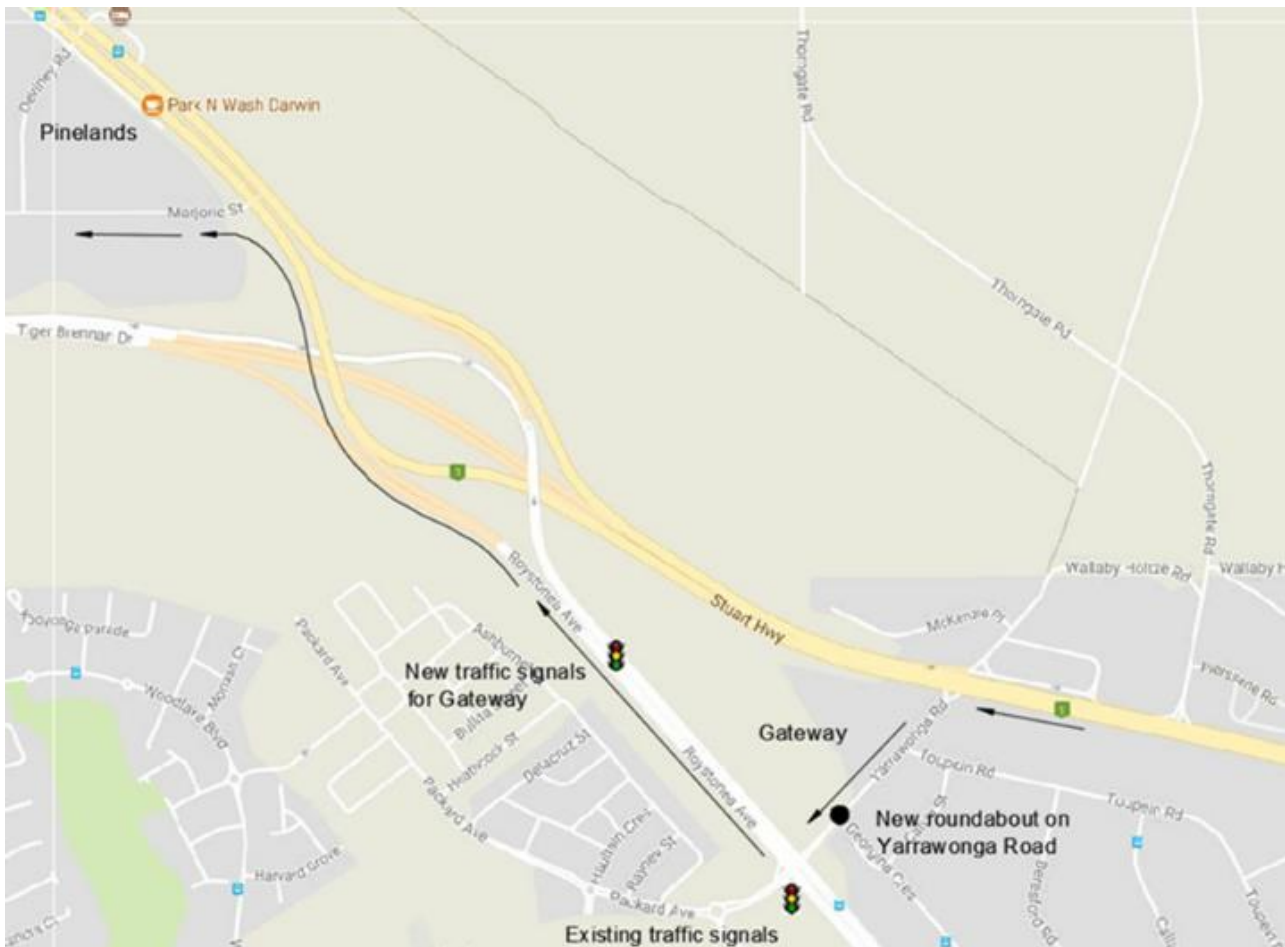


Figure 1 - Map showing heavy vehicle route for turning left into Marjorie Street, Pinelands

The number of traffic conflicts has increased on Yarrowonga Road with the construction of Gateway Shopping Centre which caters 1,400 car parks for shoppers. As such, this route is no longer a suitable long-term option for heavy vehicles as it conflicts with vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, disabled and elderly people crossing in front of the Shopping Centre.

Once the Pinelands Road Safety Upgrades are complete, heavy vehicles wishing to access Pinelands, can do so without the need for detouring on Yarrowonga Road. Instead, heavy vehicles will be able to continue along the highway and safely turn left directly into Pinelands at Deviney Road, McKinnon Road (south) and McKinnon Road (north).

The Department's traffic survey has also indicated that there are very low number of road trains using the Yarrowonga route to access Pinelands.

The Northern Territory Government has no intention to restrict heavy vehicle use on Yarrowonga Road. The road is under the care and control of City of Palmerston as the competent authority.

What are the safety issues with the uncontrolled intersections on the Stuart Highway at Pinelands?

Uncontrolled intersections on the Stuart Highway at Pinelands are points of conflict and require complex speed and distance judgements to navigate safely through these intersections. Congestion and high traffic volumes create delays leading to frustration and increased risks for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists.

Crash data for the uncontrolled intersections on the Stuart Highway at Pinelands tell us that safety improvements are required. There have been more than 50 crashes in a period ranging from 2010 to 2019. This includes 1 fatal crash and 22 crashes where people required admission to hospital for vehicle injuries.

Road safety is one of the Government's highest priorities, as outlined in the *Towards Zero Road Safety Action Plan*.

Proposed controls

Why are traffic signals a suggested solution in this circumstance?

The solution for each road/intersection needs to be assessed on its unique circumstances in terms of crash types, traffic flows, vehicle composition and site conditions. In the case of the Stuart Highway at Pinelands and Holtze, traffic signals are an appropriate control because they:

- Will continue to maintain current access to all existing areas of Pinelands/Holtze and in all directions
- Reduce traffic conflicts by assigning right of way to vehicles and promote orderly traffic movement
- Prohibit dangerous and risky traffic movements
- Provide safe crossing facility for pedestrians and cyclists
- Provide greater control to manage changing demand
- Can be coordinated to reduce delays.

What other solutions have been considered by the project team?

Closing the intersection is another possible control as put forward for consideration at Olive/McKinnon (south) in the concept designs released for Stage 2 and Stage 3 consultation.

Roundabouts were considered as not suitable for a number of reasons: dominant flows on the Stuart Highway would lead to excessive delay on side roads; various site constraints; geometry needs of buses and heavy vehicles; road layout not suitable; high-speed environment; etc.

Controlling traffic movements at these intersections through the use of enhanced signs was considered as insufficient and unsuitable.

Traffic signals

Why do we need three sets of signals, instead of just one?

Leaving these intersections uncontrolled is not an option for the safety issues outline above. That leaves either:

- Closing the intersection/s
- Installing signals.

If closing the intersection proves undesirable because of the access impediments, the next best solution is for the installation of traffic lights which provides safe and controlled traffic movements, and fair access to all existing local businesses. Additional lights however will have an impact on travel time for through commuters which is proposed to be managed by coordinating the traffic lights.

Finding the right solution is a delicate task in balancing various stakeholders' needs against the objectives of the project. There is no one solution that will appease everybody.

If lights were installed at Mander Road and McKinnon Road (north) intersection, wouldn't that create sufficient gaps in the traffic so that the mid-block intersection can remain uncontrolled?

It will create gaps in oncoming traffic, but other factors will mean that the intersection is still too unsafe to leave uncontrolled:

1. Under the proposed traffic changes, the width of the median opening will narrow and will not be wide enough for vehicles to store safely and make two stage turn. . Narrow Stuart Highway median means heavy vehicles will no longer be able to undertake two staged movement at this intersection and one stage movement will be highly unsafe option.
2. Crash data and traffic observations reveal that driver behaviour in this area is to abruptly slow/stop on the highway to provide courtesy to cars wanting to exit Olive Place, rather than blocking the access with their car. This causes rear-end crashes on the Stuart Highway and reveals that further controls are required to provide predictability and reliability for road users. Crashes in this location can also be caused by the kerbside lane stopping to not block Olive Place and the lane closest to the median not stopping resulting in a collision with an entering vehicle.

Can we remove the existing lights at Deviney Road (and leave the intersection uncontrolled)?

Removing the lights at Deviney would cause safety and access issues at this intersection which is at odds with the objectives of this project.

Will additional traffic lights add to travel time?

Yes. It is reasonable to expect that some impact to through travel will occur as a result of signals, however, traffic modelling shows that for an overall journey of 20 minutes it will add 54 seconds.

Delays can also be minimised through the construction of additional lanes and synchronisation with traffic lights along the route.

Traffic lights will also add reliability to the network by removing conflicts at uncontrolled four leg intersections.

Will the signals be coordinated? How does this work?

Yes. The signals can be coordinated to support platoons of vehicles to proceed through series of green lights along a designated route.

Crash statistics

What is the crash data for the intersections where traffic controls are proposed?

For a period ranging from 2010 to 2019, the two uncontrolled intersections at Mander/McKinnon and Olive/McKinnon have seen 21 crashes and countless near misses (13 crashes at Mander/McKinnon and 8 at Olive/McKinnon). Majority of these crashes were rear-end or angle collision (16 out of 21).

Median on the Stuart Highway

Why does a new outbound lane need to be added? / Why does the median gap need be adjusted?

During Stages 1 and 2 of consultation, stakeholders highlighted the lack of green time when turning right onto the Stuart Highway from Deviney Road. The green light did not allow enough time for road trains to safely complete their turn in the designated green phase.

The concept design released as part of Stage 3 consultation includes a lengthened green time for traffic exiting Deviney Road, which means delay to the traffic on the Stuart Highway. To offset this delay to traffic on the Stuart Highway, an additional outbound lane will be added. This will also prevent traffic from backing up beyond the Olive Place /McKinnon Road intersection.

This third outbound lane will be constructed on the median side and reduce the width of the median on the Stuart Highway.

Tiger Brennan Drive (TBD) Access

Doesn't the inclusion of an access to TBD resolve the safety issues on the Stuart Highway?

The project team considered whether providing an alternative exit from Pinelands to Tiger Brennan Drive would reduce traffic and improve safety on the Stuart Highway. While the solution offers some benefit, it does not fully resolve the safety issues on the Stuart Highway. This is because:

- a) heavy vehicles going to and from Holtze still need to either use or cross the Stuart Highway.
- b) heavy vehicles turning into Pinelands from the South (from Palmerston) still need to use the Stuart Highway.

- c) heavy vehicles turning out of Pinelands to the North (towards Darwin) still need to use the Stuart Highway.

Why is an access onto TBD included?

During stages 1 and 2 community consultation, stakeholders told us that an exit to Tiger Brennan Drive will streamline transport and logistics functions for the Pinelands industrial estate in general. There were strong demands for this to be included into the concept. Two options were presented to the community during Stage 3 consultation and the preferred option is included in the final concept design.

Will road trains be accommodated by the access onto TBD?

Yes.

Other possible connections

Can a service road between Butler Place and Puma Palms be added?

No. it would impact the open drain in this location and have serious flooding implications for properties in this area.

Can you provide a connection between Pinelands and Tivendale Road?

The project team are looking for a more permanent and robust solution than a short-term fix such as this.

There is already a link provided from Pinelands to Tivendale Road via the Stuart Highway (approximately 3.8km total distance). If another (shorter) link was provided, it would shorten the distance to 1.9km – however cost in building such a connection would potentially offset any advantage offered. The complexities that would need to be overcome to provide such a link include:

- Land acquisition.
- Grade separation would need to be considered to avoid future rail corridors which is expensive and provides geometric challenges.
- Additional traffic lights would be required on Tivendale Road.
- Future strategic uses of surrounding land.

The project team is guided by the need to be balanced in our responsiveness to traffic needs but also, forward thinking in terms of potential future land uses of surrounding vacant land.

Consultation

What consultation has been undertaken on this project to date?

The project underwent three stages of consultation.

Stage 1 consultation occurred in 2016-17. A flyer was distributed to stakeholders and 34 resident businesses took part in face-to-face meetings. The objective of Stage 1 was to gather feedback from key stakeholders, including local businesses within the Pinelands and Holtze precincts on the current heavy vehicle access routes used, traffic issues and ideas for improvement.

Stage 2 consultation was open for seven weeks between 14 September 2018 and 2 November 2018 and reached a much wider audience than Stage 1. The objective was to seek feedback on the initial proposed concept design and also to ensure enough time so that all businesses and property owners had the opportunity to contribute. Feedback obtained highlighted concerns with cul-de-sacs on service roads as well as the restated desire for an access from Marjorie Street to Tiger Brennan Drive and adjustments to the timing of the traffic signals at Deviney Road.

During Stage 2 consultation, 33 stakeholders lodged feedback via email or telephone, 42 businesses were doorknocked, 68 organisations made direct contact with the project team, 168 letters were sent to landowners, 485 fact sheets were delivered to businesses in the area and Facebook posts reached 3499 people.

Stage 3 consultation was open for eight weeks from 29 October 2019 until 20 December 2019. Letters were sent to 176 land owners (slightly fewer than in stage 2 as duplicate landowners were consolidated); 750 addresses of business operators in Pinelands and Holtze were letterbox dropped; 580 visits were recorded to the webpage and 72 people completed the survey. The Facebook posts reached over 4,000 people. During this stage of consultation, the project team recorded 192 interactions (phone calls, emails, meetings) with 67 stakeholders.

Construction

When will construction take place?

The project will now progress to detailed design. This entails the preparation of construction drawings.

Construction staging will be decided upon completion of the detailed design and will aim to minimise impact on the businesses.

How will construction activity impact my business?

The staging of the project will be finalised to minimise impact to the local businesses. Before works are scheduled to commence, community notice will be provided in advance to assist with planning to minimise disruption. A traffic management plan will be prepared which will outline the approach to managing traffic during construction.