

Trees, vegetation and the environment

We're removing the level crossings at Old Calder Highway and Watsons Road, Diggers Rest by building new road bridges.

These level crossing removals will make the Sunbury Line level crossing free, improving safety, reducing congestion and allowing more trains to run more often.

Both level crossings in Diggers Rest will be gone for good in 2025. Major construction for the new road bridges will begin later this year, with early works set to begin in mid 2024.

When planning the design and construction methods for the project, we worked with qualified arborists, as well as ecologists, environmental scientists and sustainability experts to minimise our impact on local flora and fauna.

Early works

To prepare for major construction, we'll carry out early works in the area.

These early works include:

- setting up our site and work areas
- relocating and protecting essential services and utilities
- removing some trees and vegetation in areas impacted by the works
- establishing protection zones around trees, heritage listed buildings, native species habitat and plants that will remain in the area while we work.



Looking west from the new community space to the east of Diggers Rest Station. Artist impression only, subject to change.

Trees, plants and shrubs

Tree and vegetation removal

Minimising tree and vegetation removal is a priority on all our projects. However, some tree and vegetation removal is necessary to safely remove the level crossings and build the road bridges.

During the planning phase of the project, independent arborists, tree consultants and our construction teams conducted a comprehensive assessment of trees in the project area. Each tree was assessed on:

- structural integrity, including the size and location of tree roots
- health and life expectancy
- amenity and environmental value
- location in relation to essential services
- the presence of wildlife and habitat
- how likely it would be impacted by construction.

The results of these assessments then informed which trees could be kept and which trees will need to be removed.

As the project progresses, we'll continue reviewing our design and construction methods and assess the health of the trees during our works to retain as many trees as possible.

Protecting existing trees and vegetation

When we're working close to trees and vegetation that we're not removing, we'll separate and protect these trees and vegetation from our works with fencing and signage. These fenced off areas are called tree protection zones.

The information collected during our tree assessments also helps us develop design and construction methods that minimise the amount of trees that need to be removed.

For example, our underground drainage has been designed to avoid the roots of existing trees as much as possible, and, we'll use non-destructive digging techniques when we're working near trees with large root networks. We've also developed a construction method that allows us to retain more trees to the south of Diggers Rest Station when we build the bridge at Old Calder Highway.

Repurposing trees for the community

Where we can, we'll work with local community groups and organisations to find opportunities to use the vegetation we remove for local initiatives and projects.

Some of the options we'll explore include:

- donating logs to community groups, gardens, schools, and artists
- donating native seedlings to local nurseries for future planting
- creating mulch for landscaping and revegetation.

New native and diverse landscaping in Diggers Rest

During community consultation, you told us landscaping and native plants are important to the Diggers Rest community.

To balance required tree and plant removal, we'll plant hundreds of new trees and shrubs as part of the new road bridge designs, especially in the new community spaces at Diggers Rest Station. All chosen species are carefully considered to thrive in the local conditions and ensure the new landscaping builds upon and connects with the established plants in the area.



Learn more about the project's new landscaping by scanning the QR code or heading to levelcrossings.vic.gov.au/diggers-rest-landscaping-factsheet

Managing the environment

We work with specialists and experts throughout the design and construction phases of the project to carefully consider our impact on all aspects of the environment including sustainability, local flora and fauna, Aboriginal cultural heritage areas and historical heritage sites.

During the planning phase of the project we assessed our potential impact on trees, vegetation, and any sites of cultural significance within the project area. We also completed ecological assessments to understand our impact on flora and fauna.

We have used this information to create plans to minimise our impact on the local environment.

Protecting local wildlife

Before tree and vegetation removal, we engage and work with licenced fauna handlers who inspect trees and vegetation, and safely rehome any fauna we may encounter in project areas..

These fauna handlers are also on site during any vegetation removal works to safely relocate any fauna discovered unexpectedly. We also keep fauna handlers on-call when we undertake works in areas that have considerable vegetation growth.

Sustainability on site

Our environmental experts on the project are also dedicated to finding new and sustainable opportunities when we remove the level crossing and build the new road bridges at Diggers Rest. Some ways we do this is by using recycled materials for other purposes within the project where we can, such as recycling timber and mulch from removed trees and vegetation.

We'll share more about our sustainability initiatives as the project progresses.

Looking after heritage listed buildings

Our Old Calder Highway project area includes locally significant historical heritage listed buildings and places like the Diggers Rest Station building, the lone grave of JA Sanger, and the Old Diggers Rest School Building. Our design solution and construction methodology preserves the historical significance of these places. These buildings and places will be protected through creating 'no go zones' that include 'buffer zones' to protect the buildings from our works.

Protecting the Diggers Rest Grassland Reserve

The Diggers Rest Grassland Reserve is located within our project area, in the rail corridor to the south of the Watsons Road level crossing. We know this reserve is important to the community as well as a significant ecological feature in the local area. The reserve supports threatened and protected flora and fauna and also provides habitat for some of these species.

We're committed to protecting this important area when we need to work nearby, so we'll fence off this area as a 'no go zone' when we carry out works in the rail corridor. This 'no go zone' will also include a 'buffer zone' around the reserve to ensure that our workers and machinery stay away from this important area.

Looking south from the new community space to the west of Diggers Rest Station. Artist impression only, subject to change. All images show trees and plants 5 years post-planting.



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For SMS alerts, text **DIGGERS** to **0427 840 967** to receive updates on major traffic and construction impacts.

Visit our website for more project information at levelcrossings.vic.gov.au/diggers-rest

Cultural heritage management plans

An important part of the project is preparing cultural heritage management plans.

These plans help us to identify and implement opportunities to reduce any potential impacts to Aboriginal places or objects through design refinement and how the road bridges will be constructed.



Scan the QR code or head to levelcrossings.vic.gov.au/diggers-rest to learn more.

Looking south from the new community space to the east of Diggers Rest Station. Artist impression only, subject to change.



Project timeline



Late 2022 to early 2023

Site investigations and planning works



June to July 2023

Site investigations continue
Community consultation



September 2023

Concept designs released
Further community consultation



Late 2023 to early 2024

Site investigations continue



April 2024

Final designs released
Site investigations continue



Mid 2024

Early works underway



Mid to late 2024

Major construction begins



2025

Level crossings removed

* Timeline subject to change.

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