

5 Community consultation

This chapter describes the objectives and extent of consultation undertaken in the course of developing the Proposal. There has been extensive consultation with government agencies, the local community, Sikh community members and Aboriginal community representatives, for over six years.

5.1 Objectives of community consultation

Upon commencement of the project, a community involvement plan was developed based on the principles of transparency, inclusiveness and responsibility. The following specific objectives have guided the development of consultation strategies and mechanisms:

- To ensure all stakeholders have the opportunity to participate equitably in the study process.
- To develop a better understanding of community views to assist the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) to make informed decisions.
- To develop trust between the RTA and the community.
- To maintain transparency in all processes and decision-making.
- To communicate information to the community and all stakeholders.
- To provide mechanisms for community and stakeholder views to be incorporated into the project development process.

The community involvement plan was developed to be compliant with current RTA community involvement procedures and industry best-practice methods in stakeholder consultation. It is acknowledged that any consultation program undertaken does not always satisfy all participants or resolve all differences of opinion or values.

5.2 Consultation with government agencies

Consultation with local and state government agencies has been ongoing throughout the project. A planning focus meeting was held at an early stage of the project (8 February 2002) to provide information about the project to representatives of government agencies and to identify their issues and requirements.

Four additional planning focus meetings have been held (19 June 2002, 20 March 2003, 10 May 2004 and 10 February 2005) with representatives of government

agencies during the development of the project, and another planning focus meeting was held upon submission of the project application report (1 November 2006). In addition, a number of separate meetings have been held with representatives of State Government agencies throughout the route development and environmental assessment phases to discuss specific issues relating to their areas of interest and responsibility. Table 5.1 provides an outline of the issues raised by government agencies and service providers during the consultation process and identifies where they have been addressed in the document.

The project team has also had the opportunity to address meetings of, and provide briefings for, Coffs Harbour City Council on many occasions during the course of the study. Meetings have also been held with the executive and staff of the council to discuss specific issues. Council staff have been involved in planning focus meetings and also participated as members of community focus groups.

5.3 Consultation with the community

An extensive consultation and stakeholder involvement program has been implemented for the project that has involved ongoing communication and consultation with the local community and other diverse stakeholders since the project began in 2001. The program has included the following key activities:

- Widespread distribution of seven information brochures (community updates) at key project milestones between September 2001 and November 2006 (refer Appendix C).
- Widespread distribution of a progress update in April 2005 and a letter to residents in August 2006.
- Advertised open information sessions and public displays (both static and staffed displays).
- Meetings with and presentations to local interest groups.
- Formation of and regular meetings with two community focus groups for the development of the project.
- Interviews / meetings with relevant stakeholders including property owners and local businesses.
- Public notices and media coverage (print and electronic).
- Two value management workshops and a value engineering workshop with diverse agency and community representation.
- Formation of a contact database on which members of the public were able to register to receive community updates.
- Provision of a toll free project information line for direct enquiries to the project team.
- Establishment and frequent updating of a project website.
- Invitations for written submissions and completion of survey forms by individuals and interest groups.

The community involvement program and the outcomes are documented within a number of reports prepared over the course of the Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy development process. These reports, which are available via the project website (www.rta.nsw.gov.au/pacific), are:

- Community Involvement Summary Report (Discussion Paper Stage), Pramax Communications 2002a.
- Community Involvement Summary Report (Community Options Stage), Pramax Communications 2002b.
- Community Involvement Summary Report (Sapphire to Woolgoolga Route Options Stage), Pramax Communications 2003.
- Community Involvement Summary Report (Short-Listed Options Stage), Pramax Communications 2004a.
- Community Involvement Summary Report (Coffs Harbour City Council Preferred Corridor), Pramax Communications 2004b.
- Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy: Preferred Option Report, Connell Wagner November 2004.

TABLE 5.1 OUTLINE OF RTA CONSULTATION WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

| FORM OF CONSULTATION | ISSUES RAISED | EA REFERENCE |
|--|---|--|
| Department of Planning | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning Focus Meetings. ■ Other meetings. ■ Written communication (letters, development applications, community updates). ■ Telephone calls. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify how Pacific Highway Program and project objectives have been met. ■ Address property access issues (particularly accesses into residential properties). ■ Assess any impacts associated with staging the works. ■ Noise controls (to be part of Proposal) must be adequately addressed. ■ Ensure that the design caters for cyclists through the provision of an off-road cycleway facility. ■ Ensure consistency with Council Strategic Planning and that environmental assessment addresses the draft Mid North Coast Strategy. ■ Identify the traffic impacts of future development in the Sapphire to Woolgoolga area. ■ Identify property impacts including impact on Crown land. ■ Refer to Department of Planning letter outlining Director General's Requirements. | <p>Section 3.1 Sections 7.4 and 14.3. Sections 7.3 and 8.2 Sections 7.5 and 11.2 Section 7.5 Section 2.1</p> <p>Sections 10.2 Sections 7.6 and 14.3 Appendix B</p> |
| Department of Environment and Climate Change | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning Focus Meetings. ■ Other meetings. ■ Written communication (letters, community updates). ■ Telephone calls. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify stormwater management measures including locations of sediment basins and spill containment basins. ■ Describe receiving waters with reference to ANZECC water quality guidelines and assess the potential construction and operation phase impacts on water quality (soil exposure) and flooding, including ground and surface water treatment (including use of erosion and sediment controls), both during and after construction. ■ Identify number and type of bridges, culverts and water quality control structures proposed. ■ Construction and operation noise issues to be identified and assessed (with reference to DECC guidelines <i>Environmental Criteria for Road Traffic Noise and the NSW Industrial Noise Policy</i> and RTA's <i>Environmental Noise Management Manual</i>) including noise impacts from blasting and truck parking areas. ■ Identify the location of any sensitive noise receivers and include predicted noise levels at all potentially affected sensitive receivers. ■ Assess the requirement for, and feasibility of, implementing operation stage noise mitigation measures to provide a construction stage benefit, with appropriate mitigation measures developed in accordance with guidelines. ■ Flora and fauna assessment required to comply with relevant biodiversity assessment guidelines and should identify any key threatening processes, the extent of vegetation removal, potential for barrier effects, fragmentation of habitat. ■ Describe, quantify and address likely direct and indirect impacts to threatened biodiversity and their habitats (including cumulative impacts). ■ Identify appropriate flora and fauna mitigation measures during construction and operational phases. ■ Consult with DECC in relation to any proposed translocation of threatened plant species. ■ Air quality assessment to include a description of existing air quality and meteorology and the location of sensitive receptors. | <p>Section 7.5</p> <p>Sections 18.1 and 18.2</p> <p>Section 7.5 Sections 11.2 and 11.3</p> <p>Sections 11.2 and 11.3 Sections 7.5 and 11.2</p> <p>Sections 17.1, 17.2 and 17.3</p> <p>Section 17.3 Section 17.4</p> <p>Section 17.4 Section 20.1</p> |

| FORM OF CONSULTATION | ISSUES RAISED | EA REFERENCE |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify measures to limit dust generation (ensure progressive clearing of vegetation and ongoing re-vegetation). ■ Consider potential impacts (of particulate matter) on water tanks. ■ Comply with <i>Aboriginal Heritage Management (Interim Guidelines for Community Consultation)</i>. ■ Clearly document the number, nature and significance of Aboriginal sites to be impacted by the project as well as cultural significance of any locations. ■ Describe the actions that will be (or have been) taken to avoid or mitigate impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage values during the construction and operational phases of the project. ■ Design to avoid Aboriginal heritage if possible (especially known high significance sites). ■ Subsurface archaeological investigations should be undertaken in relation to the potential archaeological deposits likely to be directly / indirectly impacted by the project and associated works and activities. ■ Provide details of the cut / fill balance for the project. ■ Identify waste streams and detail waste minimisation and management strategies. ■ Batch plant locations should be identified and be in appropriate locations. ■ Environmental assessment to identify acid sulfate soils and contaminated land and outline management methods in accordance with relevant guidelines. ■ Ensure protection, rehabilitation and ongoing management of riparian zone (outline construction in proximity to waterways). | <p>Section 20.1</p> <p>Section 20.1</p> <p>Section 12.1</p> <p>Section 12.2</p> <p>Section 12.3</p> <p>Sections 5.7 and 7.2</p> <p>Section 12.3</p> <p>Section 8.3</p> <p>Section 20.4</p> <p>Section 8.4</p> <p>Sections 18.2, 18.3 and 20.3</p> <p>Section 13.2 and 18.3</p> |
| Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries) | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning Focus Meetings. ■ Written Communication (letters). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bridges and culverts to be designed in accordance with Fisheries Guidelines. ■ Ensure the environmental assessment adequately identifies and assesses impacts on existing fish communities (including on threatened species) and fish habitat within, or adjacent to, the study area. ■ Consultation must take place for any proposed dredging or reclamation works associated with the project. ■ Work in waterways are to be scheduled within dry seasons, during periods of low flow, to minimise impacts on flow and fish passage, and should consider timing of construction in relation to fish migration and breeding seasons. ■ Design is to include measures to maintain aquatic habitat and biodiversity, control impacts from construction on aquatic habitat and biodiversity, protect habitat for fish and invertebrates and maintain connectivity. ■ Identify potential impacts to surface water and groundwater flows as a result of the project (potential impacts on flows in wetlands, waterways and floodplain hydrology). | <p>Sections 7. 5 and 17.3</p> <p>Sections 17.2 and 17.3</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Section 17.4</p> <p>Sections 7.5 and 17.4</p> <p>Sections 18.1 and 18.2</p> |
| Department of Primary Industries (Agriculture) | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning Focus Meetings. ■ Other meetings. ■ Written Communication (letters). ■ Telephone calls. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The environmental assessment should include a description of the options development process, a summary of the main issues raised by stakeholders during the route selection and planning process, the policy and legislative framework applying to the assessment and details of properties affected by the Proposal. | <p>Sections 4.1, 5.6, 6.2 and 6.4</p> |

| FORM OF CONSULTATION | ISSUES RAISED | EA REFERENCE |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide a description of the Proposal and the existing environment (including soils, drainage, flooding patterns, landform, land use and existing infrastructure etc.). ■ Consider impact on access to farms, severance of farms, loss of infrastructure such as farm sheds and dams and internal access within a farm. ■ Consider direct affect on banana farms, including banana farm production / viability, including consideration of buffer zone for banana farms (including constraints of aerial spraying) and changes in surrounding land use. ■ Consider all aspects of Panama Disease during construction and operation (ie. earthmoving trucks disinfected / cleaned when in known or potential areas of Panama Disease). ■ Consider impact of Proposal on localised climatic conditions including impact of large cuttings on farms (wind damage). ■ Ensure continued water supply to farms, including impacts to groundwater and potential impact sources of bore water. ■ Identify manner in which individual landowners will be consulted in relation to acquisition and the process to be followed in the event disagreements arise in negotiating a land acquisition value or in negotiating a proposed impact mitigation measure. | <p>Sections 7.4, 14.1 and 18.1</p> <p>Section 15.2</p> <p>Section 15.2</p> <p>Sections 15.2 and 15.3</p> <p>Section 15.2</p> <p>Section 15.3</p> <p>Sections 7.6 and 14.3</p> |
| Department of Primary Industries (Forestry) | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning Focus Meetings. ■ Other meetings. ■ Written Communication (letters). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fragmentation of State Forest land, protection of timber resources of regional significance and loss of timber production should be considered ■ Access to and from forests should be considered (for forestry operations, recreation and for fire management). ■ Retention of access arrangements within, and severance of, State Forest land should be considered. ■ Address likely direct and indirect impacts to threatened biodiversity and their habitats. ■ Assess the possible presence of Aboriginal heritage sites in State Forest areas. | <p>Section 14.3</p> <p>Sections 7.4 and 14.3</p> <p>Sections 7.4 and 14.3</p> <p>Section 14.3</p> <p>Section 12.2</p> |
| Coffs Harbour City Council | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning Focus Meetings. ■ Numerous other meetings. ■ Written communication (letters, community updates). ■ Telephone calls. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provision of ongoing project specific updates (eg. refinements to concept design and utility locations) and updates on the progress of the Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy generally. ■ Consideration of strategic justification for the highway upgrade in relation to the development of Coffs Harbour. ■ Consideration of land use planning issues, including Council's urban development and settlement (land-use) strategies (Master Plans, Development Control Plans), as well as population growth. ■ Consider social and economic effects with particular consideration of community needs. ■ Impacts to threatened species should be addressed. ■ Should consider construction staging (if at all) and how interim works would be assessed. ■ Identify local access road network and include an off-road cycleway facility. | <p>Sections 5.2 and 5.8</p> <p>Sections 2.1, 2.2, 14.3 and 16.1</p> <p>Sections 14.2 and 16.1</p> <p>Sections 16.1 and 16.2</p> <p>Section 17.3</p> <p>Section 7.3</p> <p>Sections 7.4 and 7.5</p> |

| FORM OF CONSULTATION | ISSUES RAISED | EA REFERENCE |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure noise impact assessment incorporates the Noise Taskforce recommendations, assesses noise impacts along the Proposal and the existing highway (including at Arrawarra interchange rest area), and identifies acoustic treatments. ■ Ensure consideration is given to urban design of the Proposal and the existing highway (including through Woolgoolga). ■ Ensure that consultation includes the Aboriginal and Punjabi community, and the Chambers of Commerce, Ullitarra Society and Emergency Services. | <p>Section 11.2</p> <p>Sections 7.5 and 19.4</p> <p>Chapter 5</p> |
| Marine Parks Authority | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning Focus Meetings. ■ Written Communication (letters). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advice that Solitary Islands Marine Park extends to mean high water mark of any estuary within study area (including Double Crossing Creek). ■ Potential impacts during construction should be addressed, including soil and water quality and bridge and culvert design. ■ Advice that if work is required below mean high water, the concurrence of the Minister could be required. ■ Identify impacts of the Proposal on habitat and aquatic fauna during construction and operation phases. ■ Fuel storage areas and control of spills especially from trucks needs to be considered. | <p>Sections 4.5 and 13.2</p> <p>Sections 7.5 and 18.2</p> <p>Section 4.5</p> <p>Section 17.3</p> <p>Section 20.5</p> |
| Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning Focus Meetings. ■ Numerous other meetings. ■ Written communication (letters, community updates). ■ Telephone calls. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure that consultation during Aboriginal heritage assessment surveys is carried out and that Aboriginal elders are consulted during the survey. ■ Advertising requirements under (then) DEC guidelines for cultural heritage assessments (requirement to advertise in the local paper and document any response) should be identified. ■ Ensure notification of Aboriginal heritage assessment undertaken in accordance with relevant guidelines. | <p>Chapter 12</p> <p>Section 12.1</p> <p>Section 12.1</p> |
| Yarrawarra Aboriginal Corporation | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning Focus Meeting. ■ Written communication (letters, community updates). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Full survey of Aboriginal archaeology to be carried out prior to commencing construction. Aboriginal site officers are to be on site during the archaeology survey to assess PAD (Potential Archaeological Deposits). Elders should be contacted by archaeological consultant during the surveys. | <p>Chapter 12</p> |
| Police / Emergency Services / Rural Fire Service | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning Focus Meetings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Access off the highway for emergency services and for bushfire purposes and also access between highway carriageways (size of median crossovers) is important during construction and operation. Access details need to be addressed in design phase. ■ Consider hazardous materials containment in design development. ■ Ensure retention of access to fire trails for asset protection during construction and operation and for bushfire management of areas acquired by the Proposal. | <p>Section 7.5, 8.2 and 14.3</p> <p>Sections 7.5 and 20.5</p> <p>Sections 8.2 and 14.3</p> |

| FORM OF CONSULTATION | ISSUES RAISED | EA REFERENCE |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Minimise number of access points to the highway. ■ Minimise disruption to motorists during construction. ■ Ensure that bus stops are appropriately located (recognising need to keep pedestrians and children off the highway). | <p>Section 7.5 Section 8.2 Section 7.5</p> |
| NRMA | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning Focus Meeting. ■ Written communication (letters). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No specific issues raised. | |
| Community Relations Commission | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning Focus Meetings. ■ Numerous other meetings. ■ Written communication (letters, community updates). ■ Telephone calls. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Impacts on the Sikh Community should be identified. | <p>Section 16.2 Section 7.5 Section 7.5</p> |
| Utility service providers (including Country Energy, Telstra, Optus and Coffs Harbour City Council) | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Meetings. ■ Telephone calls. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Impacts on existing utility services should be identified. ■ Impacts on proposed utility services (including 66kV power line, Sapphire to Woolgoolga section) should be identified. | <p>Section 7.5</p> |
| (then) Department of Public Works and Services | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning Focus Meeting. ■ Written communication (letters). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure that appropriate level of community consultation is undertaken and documented. | <p>Chapter 5</p> |
| Mid North Coast Area Health Service | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning Focus Meeting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No specific issues raised. | |
| (then) Rail Infrastructure Corporation | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning Focus Meeting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No specific issues raised. | |
| Commonwealth Department of Environment and Water Resources | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning Focus Meeting. ■ Written communication (letters). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Referral of Proposal under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999</i>. | <p>Section 4.2</p> |
| Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Written communication (letters) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ongoing consultation regarding project aspects such as design, programming and funding. | |

5.4 Consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders

The study area lies within the territory administered by the Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council, and within an area of interest to the Yarrawarra Aboriginal Corporation, Gumbala Julipi Elders Corporation, Garby Elders, and other Aboriginal persons and organisations.

Contact with these parties was initiated during the route selection study undertaken in 2002 and members participated in a sample field survey of the various route options. These organisations provided information regarding the location and significance of ceremonial, spiritual, historical and other types of sites to facilitate the selection of a preferred route that would minimise impacts on Aboriginal heritage. Aboriginal heritage issues were then considered during the route selection process.

On commencement of more detailed investigations into the preferred route, the Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council, Yarrawarra Aboriginal Corporation, Gumbala Julipi Elders and Garby Elders were again contacted and a meeting was held to discuss the Proposal, its Aboriginal heritage implications and arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal representatives in field surveys. Subsequent to the meeting the Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council and Yarrawarra Aboriginal Corporation site officers provided field survey assistance.

Details of the consultation program undertaken with the Aboriginal community can be found in Chapter 12 of this report and in Appendix A of the Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment (working paper 3, Appendix F).

5.5 Consultation with the Woolgoolga area Sikh community

The community involvement plan prepared prior to the beginning of the project, identified the Sikh community as an important community group and identified communication activities targeted to the community.

Prior to the launch of the Strategy in September 2001, discussions were held with the co-ordinator of the Woolgoolga Neighbourhood Centre as the representative of the local Sikh community. The community involvement plan incorporated the advice received from these discussions.

Specific consultation with the Sikh community has included translation of information brochures, meetings with the community, as well as attendance at community focus group meetings.

Following a meeting with the Community Relations Commission in September 2005, the RTA agreed to undertake an assessment of the potential impact of the Proposal on the cultural and heritage values of the local Sikh community as part of this report. The assessment also investigates management options to reduce the potential impact of the Proposal on the community. The consultation program for the assessment consisted of discussions and meetings held at the local Sikh temples and an invitation for the community to provide written submissions.

Further details on the consultation program undertaken since the launch of the Strategy can be found in Chapter 16 of this report and in the Sikh cultural assessment (working paper 6, Appendix F).

5.6 Main issues raised

Much of the feedback obtained throughout the development of the overall Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy and the Sapphire to Woolgoolga project has been from people potentially directly affected or near the various corridors and routes.

The issues consistently raised by respondents since the Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy announcement have been:

- Property impacts, e.g. area of land required for the proposal and access arrangements.
- Socio-economic impacts, e.g. impact on agricultural activities and on future development of the Coffs Harbour/Woolgoolga area.
- Long term role of the proposed upgrade.
- Traffic noise and vibration impacts and concerns about the ability to mitigate them.
- Air quality impacts.
- Road safety impacts.

The main Issues raised by government agencies included:

- Impact on Solitary Islands Marine Park, wetlands and rainforest habitat, threatened species, wildlife corridors and biodiversity in general.
- Loss of agricultural land and impact on the banana industry.
- Acid sulfate soils, clearing of native vegetation, ground and surface water impact.
- Social and economic effects including noise and aesthetics.
- Access for emergency services and bush fire purposes.

With each key information milestone, respondents have consistently seen the invitation for submissions and completion of survey forms as an opportunity to record a preference or a "vote" for the various options. This often included support for options previously ruled out or not considered to be viable, as well as for options which had impacts that had not been assessed and exhibited at that time. Generally the "voting" trend has been:

- Those on the more densely settled coastal areas preferred options on or to the west of the coastal range.
- Those on the more sparsely settled rural areas of the local government area preferred options closer to the coast.

Another more recent trend has been an increase in support for an upgrade of the existing highway from Sapphire to south Woolgoolga, primarily to cater for local traffic.

5.7 How the community has influenced the Proposal

Throughout the development of the Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy, many issues or options have been raised by the community, government agencies and Coffs Harbour City Council. The project team has responded to such comments by investigation of the issue and where appropriate by implementation of the idea / option.

Alternative route options raised by the community or Coffs Harbour City Council and investigated by the project team include:

- Option A in the Sapphire to Woolgoolga section.
- A far western bypass running through the Orara Valley to Halfway Creek or Grafton.
- Option C1 in the Sapphire to Woolgoolga section.
- Option E in the Sapphire to Woolgoolga section.
- Options within CHCC's preferred corridor including Coastal Ridge Way / Option A, Western Bucca Valley / Option A, Western Bucca Valley / Corindi River, Western Bucca Valley / Sherwood Creek.

The project team also has responded to community input regarding:

- Additional open information sessions and displays.
- Review of traffic counts taken by community groups.
- Extension of submission periods.

Consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders has resulted in important design changes and project development outcomes such as:

- Substantial realignment of the Option A corridor so as to avoid the highly sensitive and valued Marys Waterhole.
- Strong influence on the eventual exclusion of the Option A corridor.
- Realignment of the Proposal in the vicinity of the Coffs Harbour Clay Target Club to minimise impact on an identified site of importance.

In June 2002, Coffs Harbour City Council appointed Arup consultants to carry out an independent peer review on the adequacy of the decision-making process and the sufficiency of technical assessments undertaken as part of the Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy up to March 2002 for the southern (Coffs Harbour) section. At its meeting in September 2002, Council resolved to acknowledge receipt of the peer review report which concluded that "the inner corridor is the preferred of the options for a bypass of Coffs Harbour". Council also resolved to hold a workshop with Arup and community focus group members to discuss proposals for improving the community consultation process during the next stage of the development of the strategy. The workshop, held in November 2002 recommended a number of actions principally concerning that section of the strategy. Because of the close relationship between the southern and northern section, a range of activities for the Sapphire to Woolgoolga project was also undertaken by the project team with regard to the recommendations, including:

- Inclusion of information at the meetings of two Sapphire to Woolgoolga community focus groups regarding future steps in the process for the development and delivery of the strategy.
- Review of the charters of the two community focus groups.
- Widespread advertising of and distribution of information at key information releases.
- Staffed and static displays and the distribution of approximately 10,000 community update brochures at key information releases.

Coffs Harbour City Council also held a series of seven public forums between May and August 2003 to further examine strategic options. In October 2003 following the forums, Council adopted a preferred corridor for a bypass of Coffs Harbour and Woolgoolga. The preferred corridor was located within the Bucca Valley and the coastal range to the west of Coffs Harbour and Woolgoolga. The RTA subsequently developed several route options within the preferred corridor and completed detailed evaluations as part of the option selection process. The decision on the preferred route for the Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy was not made until after the investigation and evaluation of all options, including the corridor proposed by Council, was completed.

5.8 Future community consultation

During the environmental assessment exhibition period, the community, State Government agencies and other interested parties will be invited to make written submissions on the Proposal.

Should the Proposal be approved, community and agency consultation will continue to be an important aspect of the project with tailored consultations to be undertaken during the pre-construction and construction phase activities.

Further details regarding the communication and consultation procedures that have been committed to by the RTA during these phases are located in the draft Statement of Commitments (refer Appendix A).