



New South Wales Government



Australian Government



Coffs Harbour Highway Planning

Sapphire to Woolgoolga section

PROJECT APPLICATION REPORT

OCTOBER 2006



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**Project Application Report
Sapphire to Woolgoolga Pacific Highway
Upgrade
Roads and Traffic Authority**

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In January 1996, the NSW and Australian governments announced their joint commitment to a 10-year program to upgrade the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border. As of the end of July 2006, a total 233 kilometres are now double-lane divided road.

The Pacific Highway is an AusLink National Network road. For the 10 years to June 2006, the NSW and Australian governments committed to a \$2.2 billion upgrade, \$1.6 billion from the NSW Government and \$0.6 billion from the Australian Government.

In December 2005, the NSW and Australian governments announced a jointly funded program of \$960 million for the three years to 2009. In June 2006, both the NSW and Australian governments committed an additional \$160 million each. This brings to \$1.3 billion the level of funding the two Governments have committed to upgrading the Pacific Highway until the end of 2009 under the new agreements negotiated in the last 12 months.

The NSW and Australian governments are currently examining how the entire length of the highway can be upgraded to dual carriageway in the next 10 years.

The Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy (CHHPS) is being developed to address the need to upgrade the Pacific Highway between Sapphire and Woolgoolga while planning for future traffic needs within the Coffs Harbour area.

Since planning for the Strategy began in September 2001, a wide range of potential road corridors and route options has been investigated. These have included options developed by the project team and options put forward by Coffs Harbour City Council (CHCC) and the community.

The options investigated for the Strategy fall within three broad strategic corridors:

- Far Western Bypass. A bypass of Coffs Harbour and Woolgoolga through the Orara Valley from Englands Road south of Coffs Harbour to Halfway Creek or Grafton.
- CHCC Preferred Corridor. Options within a corridor adopted by CHCC in late 2003 as its preferred option for a bypass of Coffs Harbour and Woolgoolga.
- Coastal Corridor. Options along the coastal plain between Englands Road south of Coffs Harbour and Arrawarra Creek north of Woolgoolga, with a future extension to Halfway Creek.

The assessment of the three broad strategic corridor options found that the Coastal Corridor was the most feasible corridor option. The Sapphire to Woolgoolga project comprises the northern section of the Coastal Corridor. The assessment and selection of the preferred route for the Strategy is detailed in the *Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy. Preferred Option Report Connell Wagner (2004)*.

The preferred route for the Strategy, including the Sapphire to Woolgoolga section, which was announced in December 2004, is shown in Figure 1.1.

The CHHPS has been divided into two sections:

- The **southern section** from Sawtell to Sapphire (Coffs Harbour section).
- The **northern section** from Sapphire to Woolgoolga.

The two sections of the CHHPS are at different stages of planning and implementation. The main actions required for the southern (Coffs Harbour) section include planning to reserve land for the preferred route, refining the concept design, and managing the existing highway through Coffs Harbour until the preferred route is constructed.

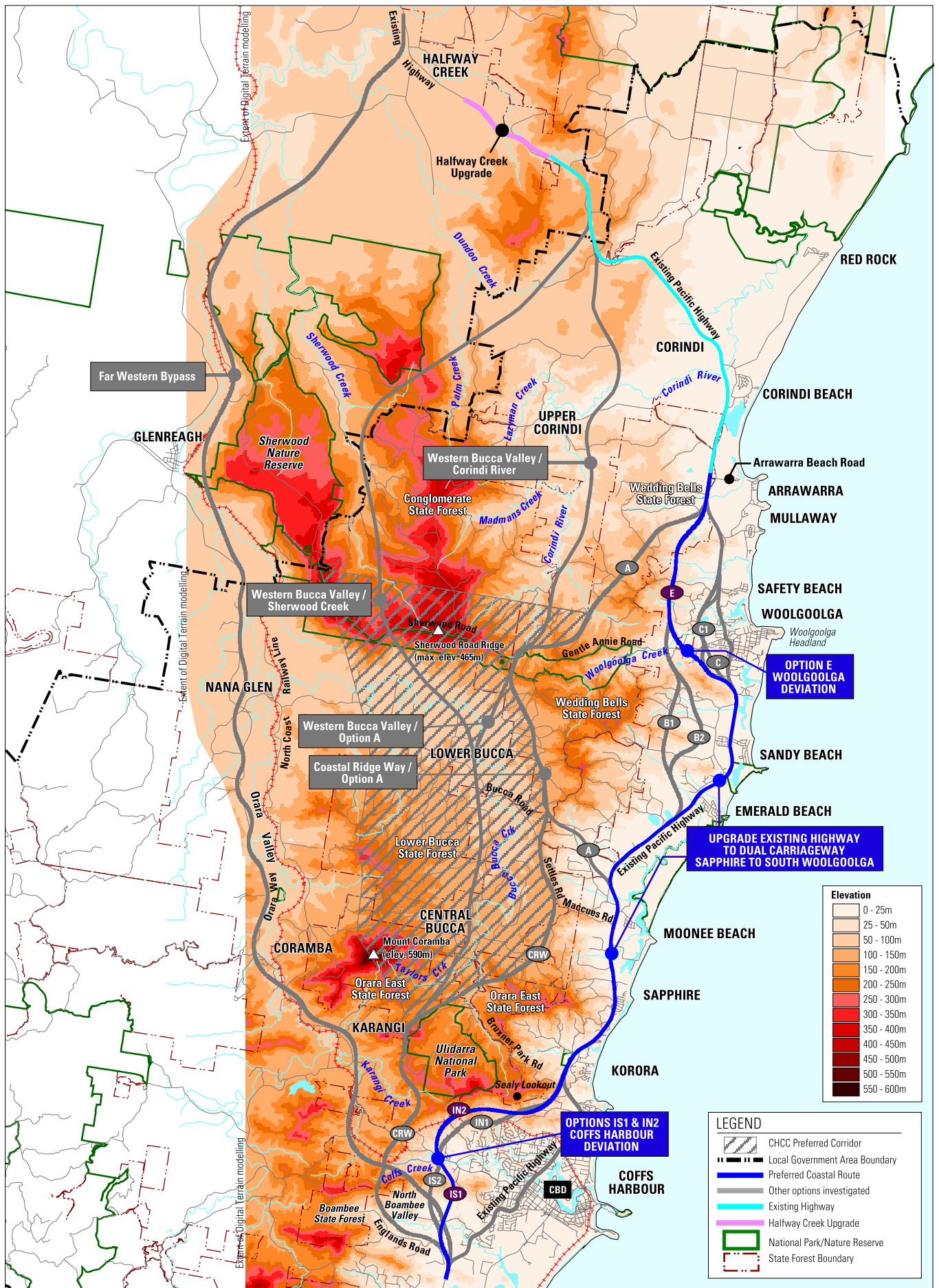


Figure 1.1

Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy Preferred Route

Source: Terrain model derived from 2m/10m contour information (2000/2002) - Connell Wagner P/L National Parks/Nature Reserves - DEC (2003) State Forest - custodian DIPNR (2003)

The main actions for the northern (Sapphire to Woolgoolga) section are refining the concept design for the preferred option and preparing an environmental assessment prior to seeking planning approval to construct the project. It is the northern section from Sapphire to Woolgoolga that is the subject of this application report. The preferred route for this northern section is referred to as 'the Proposal' in this report.

The Proposal for the northern section includes a grade separated interchange to the north of Arrawarra Beach Road. The interchange forms the northern entry from the highway to Woolgoolga and provides access to Safety Beach, Mullaway and Arrawarra. The interchange has been located to provide a consistent design standard along the full route length of the proposal and to ensure a seamless connection with a future upgrade to the north.

1.2 Purpose of this report

This Project Application Report has been prepared for the Director General (DG) of the Department of Planning (DoP) under Section 75E of Part 3A of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979 (EP&A Act)*. The Report accompanies a Project Application and includes the following information:

- justification for assessment of the Proposal to be conducted under Part 3A of the EP&A Act
- need for and description of the Proposal
- a summary of the studies, investigations and stakeholder involvement that has been conducted to date as part of the project development and the rationale for the selection of the preferred route
- a preliminary assessment of key environmental issues associated with the Proposal
- a preliminary list of environmental management measures that are expected to form part of the Proposal
- the proposed scope of further design and investigations that the RTA would complete as part of the subsequent Environmental Assessment for the Proposal

In accordance with Section 75F(2) of the *EP&A Act*, it is anticipated that the information in this Project Application Report will be used by the DoP to prepare formal requirements for the environmental assessment of the Proposal.

As the RTA intends to proceed to implementation of the Sapphire to Woolgoolga project as soon as funding is committed, a Project Approval (as distinct from a Concept Approval) is being sought.

1.3 Planning and development process

1.3.1 Project development process to date

Planning for this section of the Pacific Highway commenced in September 2001. Ongoing community and stakeholder consultation has strongly influenced the area that was investigated as part of the project and resulted in the identification and assessment of additional corridor and route options and in more detailed environmental and engineering studies being undertaken. A summary of the key milestones in the project development process is presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1-1 Project milestones

Date	Milestone
Early 2000	RTA calls tenders for the development of the upgrading of the Pacific Highway between Sapphire and Woolgoolga.
Mid 2000	In response to requests from Council and DUAP the RTA expands study area to include investigations of future traffic needs for the Coffs Harbour urban area and develop a highway planning strategy for both Coffs Harbour and Woolgoolga. Steering Committee with representatives from Council, DUAP and RTA formed to manage the development of the Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy.
September 2001	Summary brochure released : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategy announced • corridor options for a bypass of Coffs Harbour identified • study area for the Sapphire to Woolgoolga project identified • community comment invited
March 2002	Information Sheet No.2 released : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advice that in response to community requests a Far Western Corridor (through the Orara Valley) was also investigated • announcement that the Central, Outer and Far Western Corridors for a bypass of Coffs Harbour are not worthy of further consideration • announcement that options within the Inner Corridor would be identified and evaluated against the upgrading of the existing highway through Coffs Harbour • corridor options for the Sapphire to Woolgoolga project identified (Options A, B, C and D) • community comment invited
May 2002	CHCC resolves to engage an independent consultant to undertake a peer review of the work done to date.
September 2002	Peer review findings released : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concludes that ...<i>the Inner Corridor is the preferred of the options for a bypass of Coffs Harbour</i> • methods of improving the community consultation process recommended <p>CHCC resolves to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acknowledge receipt of the peer review findings • request the Steering Committee to investigate the Coastal Ridge Way proposal
October 2002	Steering Committee : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reaffirms that outer and central corridor options for a bypass of Coffs Harbour are "ruled out" • agrees to investigate the Coastal Ridge Way proposal
December 2002	Community Update No.3 released : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides details of refined route options for the Sapphire to Woolgoolga project (Options A, B1, B2, C and D) • community comment invited
April 2003	Value management study for Sapphire to Woolgoolga options : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options C and D should go forward with further consideration of socio-economic and environmental issues • Options B and A identified as less favourable
May 2003	CHCC requests Steering Committee to investigate other options for a bypass of Woolgoolga which would have less impact on the future development of the township.
May to August 2003	CHCC holds a series of Community Forums.
September and October 2003	CHCC adopts its Preferred Corridor for a bypass of Coffs Harbour and Woolgoolga : <p>...<i>that the western bypass diverge from the existing highway at or near Englands Road to Red Hill, and thereafter by the best available option to Grafton with the intention that south and western Boambee and the Orara Valley be excluded from further consideration.</i></p>
November 2003	CHCC advises the Minister for Roads of the adoption of its preferred corridor.

Date	Milestone
February 2004	Following the decision by CHCC to adopt its own preferred corridor for a bypass of Coffs Harbour and Woolgoolga, the steering committee agrees that it can no longer continue to manage the development of the strategy and dissolves. RTA and DIPNR agree to work together to finalise the development of the strategy.
February 2004	Minister for Roads agrees to investigate the feasibility of CHCC preferred corridor.
February 2004	<p>Community Update No.4 released :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides details of route options within the Inner Corridor and the upgrading of the Existing Highway through Coffs Harbour • provides details of the investigations into the Coastal Ridge Way proposal • announces that the upgrade of the existing highway through Coffs Harbour does not merit further consideration • announces that a decision regarding the Inner Bypass options and the Coastal Ridge Way proposal will be made following the assessment of the feasibility of CHCC Preferred Corridor • provides details of new options for a bypass of Woolgoolga (Options C1 and E) • for the Sapphire to Woolgoolga project announces that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Option A is not favoured due to its severe environmental (biophysical) and Aboriginal heritage impacts, poor functional performance, high cost and poor value for money ○ Options B1 and B2 do not merit further consideration due to the need to protect valuable agricultural land ○ Option D (upgrade of the existing highway through Woolgoolga) is not an acceptable option due to its social and economic impacts on the township of Woolgoolga • community comment invited
June 2004	<p>Community Update No.5 released :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides details of assessment of feasibility of CHCC Preferred Corridor • <i>...while route options within Council's preferred corridor have the lowest socio-economic impacts, the feasibility assessment has shown that they also have major adverse impacts and are not considered to be viable options for the Highway Planning Strategy</i> • community comment invited
August 2004	<p>Value management workshops held:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workshop for the Inner Bypass Corridor options for Coffs Harbour recommended Options IS2 and IN2 • majority of participants at the workshop for the bypass options of Woolgoolga recommended Option E
December 2004	Preferred route for the strategy announced. The preferred route involves a coastal route comprising the IS1 and IN2 options for Coffs Harbour, an upgrade of the existing highway to dual carriageway between Korora and south Woolgoolga and the Option E bypass for Woolgoolga.
April 2005	<p>Progress Update for Sapphire to Woolgoolga project released:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • field investigations commenced • CFG meetings held – input into concept design for preferred route provided • Concept design will be refined based on results from field investigations and ongoing community consultation.
April 2005 to August 2006	<p>Field investigations, including surveys, geotechnical investigations, flora and fauna studies, heritage studies (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) undertaken. Environmental assessment of potential impacts and possible mitigation measures commenced – including assessment of flora and fauna, traffic and transport, agricultural, land use and property, urban design, traffic noise and cultural / socio-economic issues.</p> <p>Concept design refined to identify design features, likely footprint and possible road boundaries, access arrangements and mitigation measures.</p>
August 2006	<p>Update letter to residents released:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • correct incorrect information contained in maps circulated in the community • confirmed that the Preferred Route for the Strategy remains the route announced in December 2004

Date	Milestone
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussed the concept of a motorway with an access road for local traffic developed partly in response to requests from CHCC and input from the Sapphire to Sandy Beach CFG. • advised the next steps for the project.

1.3.2 Project approval process

The proposal is located within the Coffs Harbour local government area and is subject to the provisions of the *Coffs Harbour Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2000* and the *Ulmarra Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 1992*.

Coffs Harbour LEP

The route traverses through or close to numerous land use zones including rural, State Forests, residential, business, special uses, open space, environmental protection and National Parks and Reserves (refer Figure 1.2). The northern section of the Woolgoolga bypass traverses part of Wedding Bells State Forest, while a section of the upgrade of the existing highway just south of Sandy Beach is adjacent to, but does not enter, the Moonee Beach Nature Reserve. The Arrawarra interchange section traverses another part of Wedding Bells State Forest as well as a strip of land zoned 7(b) (Environmental Protection Scenic Buffer) to the east of the existing highway.

Clause 7 of *Coffs Harbour LEP* identifies activities that are neither prohibited or require development consent. Activities referred to in Clause 7 (ie listed in Schedule 1) include:

"The carrying out by a public authority of any development required in connection with the construction, reconstruction, improvement, maintenance or repair of any road."

On this basis, the proposal would be permissible without consent in all zones within *the Coffs Harbour LEP*.

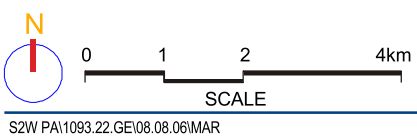
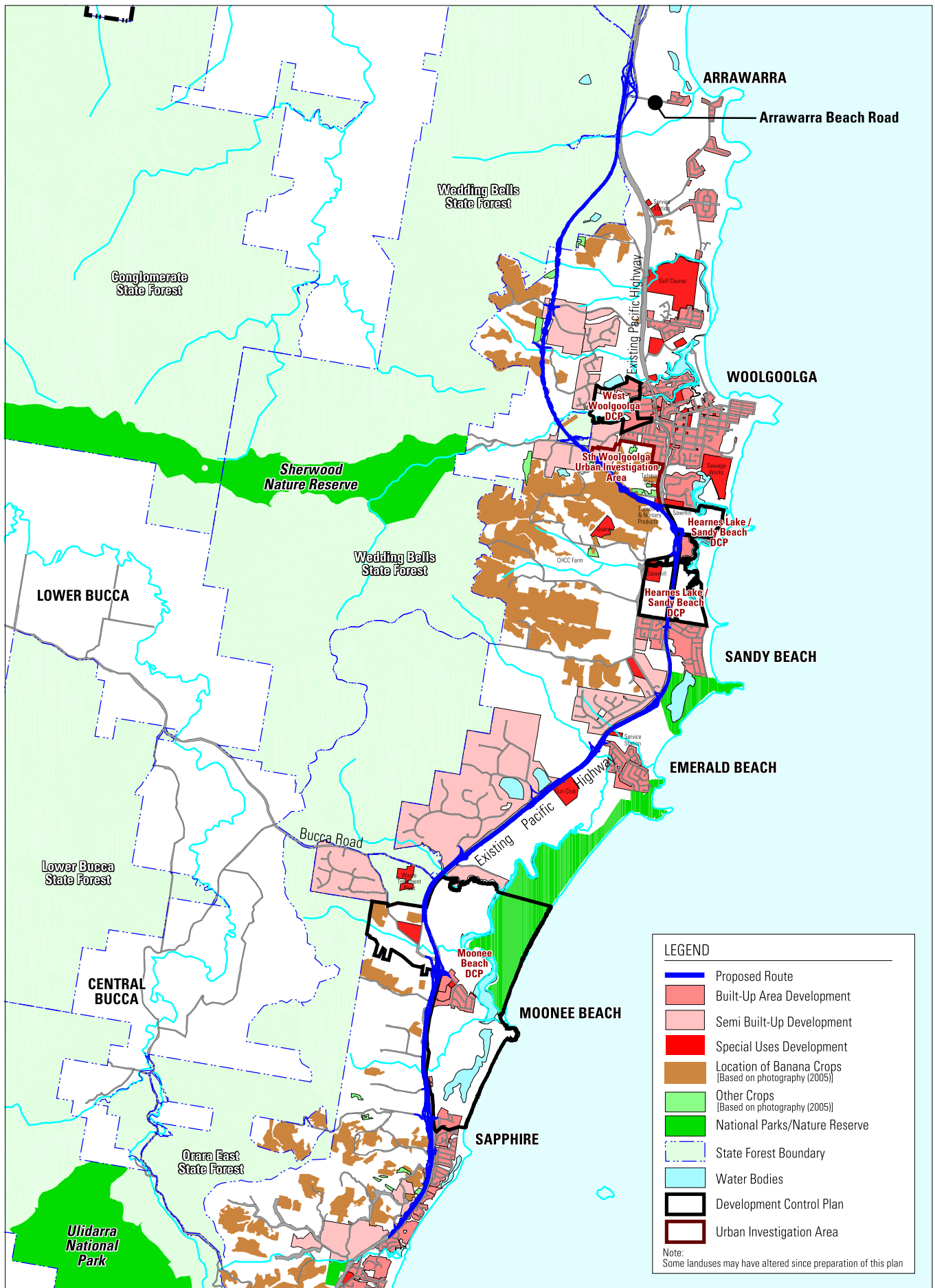
Ulmarra LEP

Up to 1 hectare of the proposal would be located in 1(f) Rural (Forests) zone (Wedding Bells State Forest) within the *Ulmarra LEP* area. In the 1(f) zone, all purposes other than forestry purposes are prohibited unless the Council is satisfied that the proposed development or activity is generally consistent with Objective (c) of the zone which is:

"to enable the development of land for purposes (other than forestry) where it can be demonstrated by the applicant for development consent that suitable land or buildings for the proposed purpose are not available elsewhere and that such a use will not detrimentally affect forestry operations on nearby lands."

The RTA considers that the proposed interchange is in the most suitable available location as it:

- would only impact on up to 1Ha of 1(f) Rural (Forests) zone within the *Ulmarra LEP* area,
- provides good access from the highway to Woolgoolga, Mullaway, Arrawarra Beach and adjacent development while being far enough away from these residential areas to have minimal visual and noise impacts on residents,
- maximises the utilisation of the existing road infrastructure and topographical features to reduce the potential impacts of the facility,
- has minimal impact on forestry activities in the Wedding Bells State Forest and does not detrimentally affect forestry operations on nearby lands,
- provides safer access to the State Forest by consolidating the existing junctions between the internal forestry roads and the highway,
- has no direct impact on adjacent 1(a) (General Rural) and 7(a) (Environment Protection Habitat and Catchment) zoned lands and minimises the direct impact on the 7(b) (Environment Protection Scenic Buffer) zoned strip of land along the eastern side of the existing highway, and



Source: Land Use - adapted from Zoning Mapping 2000) and aerial photography (2005)
 National Parks/Nature Reserves - DEC (2003)
 State Forest - custodian DIPNR (2003)

Figure 1.2
Land Use

- would not require the acquisition of any privately owned land in the area.

Coffs Harbour City Council has advised the RTA that it is satisfied that the extent of the proposal located in 1(f) Rural (Forests) (Wedding Bells State Forest) zone under the Ulmarra LEP area is consistent with Objective (c) of the LEP. (See Appendix A).

Notwithstanding, the Proposal constitutes development for the purposes of a classified road under Section 11C of *State Environment Planning Policy No 4 – Development Without Consent* (SEPP 4). Section 11C provides that:

"If, in the absence of this clause, development for the purposes of a classified road or proposed classified road may be carried out only with development consent, that development may be carried out without that consent."

As such, the proposal within the 1(f) Rural (Forests) zone under the Ulmarra LEP is permissible without development consent under the provisions of SEPP 4.

Consequently, the proposal can be undertaken without the need for development consent within both the Coffs Harbour and Ulmarra LEP areas. An activity that does not require consent is subject to the provisions of Part 5 of the EP&A Act and the RTA would be both a determining authority and the proponent for the proposal.

As a determining authority under Part 5 of the Act, the RTA has a duty to consider the environmental impact of an activity, and must not grant approval to an activity that is likely to significantly affect the environment unless it has considered an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in relation to the activity.

An assessment of the potential environmental impacts of the proposal and their likely significance was undertaken based on investigations undertaken to date as part of the route development and assessment stage of the proposal. The assessment was completed with reference to two relevant publications "*Is an EIS Required? Best Practice Guidelines for Part 5 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*", NSW Government, Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (DUAP, now Department of Planning) and the "*EIS Guideline Roads and Related Facilities*", DUAP (now Department of Planning) September 1996. The assessment concluded that there are several potential areas of impact associated with the preferred route that are likely to result in significant environmental impact, within the meaning of the *EP&A Act*. These include land use and property effects, noise and vibration, and traffic and transport impacts. Although best practice environmental planning and management measures would be applied so as to avoid, minimise and mitigate adverse effects, the residual risks or impacts after such action would still require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) if assessed under the provisions of Part 5 of the *EP&A Act*.

By an order gazetted on 29 July 2005, the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning declared that Part 3A of the *EP&A Act* applies to:

"major infrastructure or other development that is an activity for which the proponent is also the determining authority (within the meaning of Part 5) and that, in the opinion of the proponent, would (but for this Part) require an environmental impact statement to be obtained under that Part."

As shown above, the RTA is both the proponent and the determining authority for the Sapphire to Woolgoolga Project within the meaning of Part 5 of the *EP&A Act*. In the opinion of the RTA, the project would (but for Part 3A of the Act) require an EIS to be obtained under Part 5. Consequently, the RTA proposes to submit the Sapphire to Woolgoolga Project to the Department of Planning for Project Approval under Part 3A of the Act.

Other project approvals

NSW Legislation

On the assumption that the proposal will be assessed under Part 3A, a range of other project approvals identified in Section 75 U of the *EP&A Act* are no longer required. For an approved project, the following authorisations are not required, and accordingly the provisions of any Act that prohibit an activity without such an authority do not apply:

- the concurrence under Part 3 of the *Coastal Protection Act 1979* of the Minister administering that Part of the Act,
- a permit under section 201, 205 or 219 of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*
- an approval under Part 4, or an excavation permit under section 139, of the *Heritage Act 1977*
- a permit under section 87 or a consent under section 90 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*
- an authorisation referred to in section 12 of the *Native Vegetation Act 2003* to clear native vegetation
- a permit under Part 3A of the *Rivers and Foreshores Improvement Act 1948*
- a bush fire safety authority under section 100B of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*
- a water use approval under section 89, a water management work approval under section 90 or an activity approval under section 91 of the *Water Management Act 2000*

Other approvals, including licences under Chapter 3 of the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* and the *Roads Act 1993* will continue to be required but these cannot be refused if they are necessary for the carrying out of an approved Part 3A project. These approvals must be substantially consistent with the Part 3A approval.

The proposal passes over Double-Crossing Creek, which forms part of the Solitary Islands Marine Park offshore. The boundary for the Marine Park is the mean high water mark. The highway will be bridged to clear span the creek and to avoid impacts on vegetation within the Marine Park.

Notwithstanding, if vegetation within the Marine Park is affected, concurrence of the relevant Ministers (the Ministers who administer the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*) under the *Marine Parks Act 1997* would be required and need to take into consideration:

- i) *the objects of this Act specified in section 3, and*
- ii) *if a zoning plan for the marine park is contained in the regulations as referred to in section 16, the objects of the zone within which the area concerned is situated as specified in the zoning plan, and*
- iii) *the permissible uses of the area concerned under the regulations.*

Should the Marine Park be affected, the statutory requirements would be further addressed in the Environmental Assessment.

Commonwealth Legislation

Under the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*, a proposal that is likely to result in a significant impact on a matter of National Environmental Significance (NES) must be referred to the Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH). If the proposal is subsequently determined to be a 'Controlled Action', then approval from the Commonwealth Environment Minister is required. Matters of NES that are potentially relevant to the Sapphire to Woolgoolga proposal include:

- Nationally threatened species and ecological communities
- Migratory species protected under international agreements
- Ramsar wetlands

Based on investigations completed by the RTA to date, the most likely trigger for a referral to DEH would be a significant impact on nationally listed threatened species or migratory species. If it is determined that a significant impact is likely, the proposal will be referred to the DEH.

1.4 Consultation

1.4.1 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 September 2001. The program has included the following key activities:

- widespread distribution of six information brochures (community updates) at key project milestones between September 2001 and December 2004
- 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 the two Community Focus Groups (CFGs) 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 freecall telephone enquiry 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 of the program are documented within a number of reports prepared over the course of the Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy (CHHPS) development process (see Pramax Communications 2002a 2002b 2003 2004a 2004b, Connell Wagner November 2004).

Feedback Mechanisms had also been set up to enable the community to provide comments back to the Project Team, via email and a freecall 1800 number.

1.4.2 Consultation with the Woolgoolga area Sikh community

The Community Involvement Plan (CIP) for the upgrade identified the Sikh Community as a significant community group and identified communications activities targeted for the community.

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

Specific community involvement with the Sikh community has included:

- Letters written to both Sikh Temples in Woolgoolga on 13 September 2001 to advise them of the project and to seek approval to erect displays at the Temples.
- Information sessions / presentations provided at the 2 Sikh Temples in Woolgoolga in December 2001.
- Distribution of the six information brochures (community updates), Progress Update and Letter to Residents to the 72 Sikh property owners identified as registered on the contact database

- Community display posters produced at project milestones have been translated into Punjabi and placed on display at both Sikh temples in Woolgoolga and at the Woolgoolga Neighbourhood Centre. At the suggestion of a member of the Sikh community, the display poster for the preferred route was also displayed in the waiting room of a Sikh doctor's surgery in Woolgoolga.
- Letters were written to both Sikh Temples on 19 February 2004 advising of the release of Community Update No.4 which provided information on the new and revised options for Woolgoolga – Options C1 and E. The letter also advised that copies of the Community Update would be delivered to the Temples for distribution to community members.
- From the commencement of the community involvement process, there have been positions for two representatives of the Sikh community on the Woolgoolga community focus group (CFG). As with other members of the CFG, if attendance by the Sikh representatives at the CFG meetings became irregular, the Sikh representatives were contacted to ascertain if they wanted to continue to attend the meetings or identify replacement representatives. After the preferred route was selected, all representatives on the CFGs (including the Sikh representatives) were contacted to ascertain if they wished to continue their membership. A separate request for three additional Sikh representatives on the CFG was also approved.
- Throughout the development of the Strategy, there has been at least one representative of the Sikh community on the Woolgoolga CFG at any time. At least 1 representative of the Sikh community has attended 11 of the 19 meetings held by the CFG.
- At this time, four out of a total of 14 representatives on the Woolgoolga CFG are members of the Sikh community.
- The project team has held numerous meetings with individual property owners who are members of the Sikh community
- Two Value Management Workshops have been held for the project, to which representatives of the Sikh community were invited. A member of the Sikh Community attended the first workshop in April 2003 as a representative of the banana growing industry. An invitation was issued to a member of the Sikh community to represent the banana growing industry at the second workshop in August 2004 but the representative did not attend.
- There has been a standing offer for members of the project team to meet with the wider community and contact details are advertised in the community updates and on display material.
- Meetings have also been held with 13 individual Sikh property owners, in many instances, on more than 1 occasion.
- Following a meeting with the Community Relations Commission in September 2005, the RTA agreed to undertake an assessment of the potential impact of the preferred route on the cultural and heritage values of the local Sikh community as part of the Environmental Assessment for the project. The assessment will also investigate mitigation options to reduce the potential impact of the proposal on the community. The consultation program for the assessment consists of six key consultation activities which are described below.
 - **Activity 1:** Informal discussion with members of the Woolgoolga Sikh community at the first Sikh Temple on Sunday 30 April 2006. Flyers were provided to community representatives advising them of the activity prior to 30 April 2006.
 - **Activity 2:** Discussion with members of the Woolgoolga Sikh community from the Guru Nanak Sikh Temple on 7 May 2006. Flyers were provided to community representatives advising them of the activity prior to 7 May 2006.
 - **Activity 3:** Individual meetings with members of the Woolgoolga Sikh community scheduled for 8 May 2006.
 - **Activity 4:** A (small) discussion group meeting. While the event took place, with approximately 45 individuals attending, representatives from the community rejected the proposed format and did not participate. The community requested the opportunity to submit comments/feedback in writing.
 - **Revised Approach – Activity 5:** Community representatives were invited to provide comment on the potential impacts of the preferred route by 28 July 2006. Additional presentations have been made to the 2 Sikh temples to explain the revised approach.

- **Proposed Consultation after May 2006:** The assessment report will be included in the Environmental Assessment for the project which will be placed on display for community information and comment. Presentations will be offered to both Sikh Temples in conjunction with the display of the Environmental Assessment of the proposal.

1.4.3 Consultation with government agencies

Consultation with Local and State Government agencies has also been ongoing throughout the project development. At the commencement of the project a Planning Focus Meeting was held to provide information about the project to representatives of these agencies and to identify their issues and requirements. Three additional Planning Focus Meetings have been held with representatives of these agencies during the development of the project. In addition, a number of separate meetings have been held with representatives of State Government agencies to discuss specific issues relating to their areas of interest and responsibility.

The study 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 project development. Meetings have also been held with the executive and staff of Council to discuss specific issues and some Council staff have participated as members of the Community Liaison Groups.

1.4.4 Key issues

Much of the feedback throughout the development of the overall CHHPS and the Sapphire to Woolgoolga project has been from stakeholders potentially directly-affected or nearby the various corridors and routes. As corridor and route options have been ruled out, responses from stakeholders potentially directly-affected or nearby those corridors or routes have significantly declined. Relatively few responses have been received from environmental groups and stakeholders not potentially directly-affected or nearby the corridors and routes.

The issues consistently raised by respondents since the CHHPS 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

With each key information milestone, respondents also 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. These included options previously ruled out or not considered to be viable as well as 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 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 settled coastal area

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.

Some over-arching issues related to the Pacific Highway or transport industry have also been consistently raised by respondents. These have included:

- an increase in heavy vehicle movements, particularly B-doubles, since the opening of the full length of the Pacific Highway to B-double vehicles in August 2002 and associated noise, air quality and road safety issues from the mix of local and through traffic
- the ability of the various options assessed to serve as a functional bypass for many years
- obtaining more Federal Government funding for the Pacific Highway, particularly through it gaining national highway status
- encouraging more freight to be transported by rail
- the ability of the various options to allow for urban expansion in a growing regional area

The above feedback is the result of responses to questions on the 'Have Your Say' survey forms as well as written submissions and, statistically, cannot be considered as a valid or statistically representative survey of the area or necessarily representative of the views of the overall Coffs Harbour community. In addition, the activities of lobby groups are likely to have influenced the submissions received and the extent of this influence is difficult to determine.

1.4.5 How stakeholders have influenced the proposal

Throughout the development of the CHHPS, a number of issues or options have been raised by the community or CHCC which have been responded to by the project team, either by investigation or implementation.

The community or CHCC-raised options investigated by the project team have been:

- 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 community-taken traffic counts
- extension of submission periods

In June 2002, CHCC appointed Arup consultants to carry out an independent Peer Review on the adequacy of the decision-making process and the sufficiency of technical assessment undertaken as part of the Strategy to March 2002 for the southern (Coffs Harbour) section. While the Peer Review and a subsequent workshop with Arup and CFG members held in November 2002 recommended a number of key actions, principally concerning the southern (Coffs Harbour) section of the Strategy, a range of activities for the Sapphire to Woolgoolga Highway Upgrade were undertaken by the project team in response to the recommendations, including:

- inclusion of information regarding future steps in the process for the development and delivery of the Strategy at the two Sapphire to Woolgoolga CFG meetings
- review of the Charters of the two CFGs
- widespread advertising and distribution of information at key information releases, including staffed displays and the distribution of approximately 10,000 community update brochures

CHCC also held a number of public forums to further examine strategic options. Seven public forums were organised and conducted by CHCC between May and August, 2003.

Following the series of public forums, CHCC adopted a preferred corridor for a bypass of Coffs Harbour and Woolgoolga in October 2003. Council's 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 options within the CHCC preferred corridor and completed detailed evaluations of all options. The announcement of the preferred route was thus delayed as a result of the investigation and evaluation of the options developed by CHCC.