

## Executive summary

### What is proposed?

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The proposed Tintenbar to Ewingsdale upgrade of the Pacific Highway (the proposed upgrade) is an important component of the New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority's (RTA's) Pacific Highway Upgrade Program.

The length of the proposed upgrade would be approximately 17 km, starting at Ross Lane in Tintenbar and extending north to the existing Ewingsdale interchange, near the settlement of Ewingsdale. At Ross Lane, the proposed upgrade would connect to the north end of the proposed Ballina bypass. Generally the proposed upgrade would be in close proximity to existing highway corridor from Ross Lane to the Bangalow bypass. The existing highway would be maintained for local and regional traffic.

From Bangalow, the proposed upgrade would diverge away from the Bangalow bypass to the northeast through Tinderbox Creek valley. From there, the proposed upgrade would avoid the steep grades of St Helena Hill by way of a tunnel approximately 340 m long and 45 m below the ridge line. North of the tunnel, the proposed upgrade alignment would be located immediately to the east of the existing highway before tying into the Ewingsdale interchange.

The general features of the proposed upgrade would be:

- > Four-lane divided carriageways (two lanes each way), with a wide median allowing for the future addition of a third lane in each direction.
  - Connection to the northern end of the Ballina bypass at the proposed Ross Lane interchange. A new northbound on-ramp and a new southbound off-ramp would be provided. The remainder of this interchange will be constructed as part of the Ballina bypass project.
- > Upgrading of the existing Ewingsdale interchange to provide full access between the modified local and regional road network and the highway.
- > A half interchange at Ivy Lane. North-facing ramps would provide access between the local road network and the proposed upgraded highway to the north.
- > A half interchange at Bangalow. South-facing ramps would provide access between the local road network, including to Bangalow and Lismore, and the proposed upgrade to the south. This arrangement would replicate the arrangement with the existing Bangalow bypass which also has south-facing ramps only.
- > Six twin bridges and four underpasses allowing roads and creeks to pass underneath the proposed upgrade. These would include twin bridges above Byron Creek and the existing Casino-Murwillumbah railway on the north side of Byron Creek.
- > Two bridges carrying local roads over the proposed upgrade, one for Broken Head Road and one about 500 m north of Lawlers Lane providing access to several properties east of the upgrade. Protection screens would be provided on both bridges.
- > Signage providing clear directions for traffic at the Ross Lane, Ivy Lane, Bangalow and Ewingsdale interchanges.
- > The existing highway would be retained as a continuous road for local and regional traffic. It is further anticipated that between Ross Lane and Bangalow the existing highway would be handed over to the councils. Between Bangalow and Ewingsdale

the existing highway would continue to function as a regional link between Lismore/Bangalow and the north and would be retained by RTA.

- > Twin parallel tunnels under St Helena ridge (one tunnel for each carriageway). The tunnels would each be about 340 m long and about 45 m below St Helena Road.

For more details on the characteristics of the proposed upgrade, refer to **Chapter 5 – Concept design**.

## Why is it needed?

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The Pacific Highway is the major transport link between Sydney and Brisbane, and also serves a growing population on the north coast of NSW. The existing Tintenbar to Ewingsdale section of the Pacific Highway requires upgrading to the standard that is being applied over the broader Pacific Highway Upgrade Program.

The existing highway is mainly two lane single carriageway. It has numerous intersections with local roads and private driveways. It also traverses steeply undulating terrain and as a result there are many tight curves and steep climbs. This leads to two main deficiencies:

- > It does not meet safety objectives.
- > It is inefficient.

The upgrading of the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale section of the Pacific Highway would have substantial benefits for travel safety and efficiency for local and regional movements by separating through and local traffic and improving the standard of the road.

For more details of the need for the project, refer to **Chapter 2 – Strategic and project need**.

## What alternatives were considered?

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Route options for the proposed upgrade were developed through an iterative process involving a range of environmental, community, engineering, urban design, safety and cost considerations. A long list of options was narrowed down to a shortlist of four. The shortlisted options were then assessed in greater detail and publicly exhibited. From these shortlisted options, the preferred route was selected after consideration of community and government agency submissions, the results of a value management workshop, and a technical assessment of the options. The preferred route provides the best overall balance of functional, ecological, social and economic considerations.

For more details on route selection, refer to **Section 2.7 – Alternatives considered**.

## What are the main beneficial outcomes expected?

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The proposed upgrade would result in a range of benefits such as:

- > A safer section of highway.
- > Greater transport efficiency and safety for intra-state and inter-state movements.
- > Supporting growth and the long-term sustainability of the regional economy.
- > Improved access and connectivity for the local community.
- > Improved amenity along the existing Pacific Highway.

- > Reducing financial costs associated with travel on the Pacific Highway.
- > Reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the longer term and energy consumption relative to the base case of 'no upgrade'.

For more details on the beneficial outcomes expected, refer to **Chapter 2 - Strategic and project need**.

## What are the main adverse outcomes expected?

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The proposed upgrade would result in some impacts, such as:

- > Acquisition of properties.
- > Loss of agricultural land.
- > Changes in visual amenity in some areas.
- > Loss of a small amount of native vegetation.
- > Increased noise for some residents (while for others there would be a decrease).
- > Minor surface and groundwater impacts.
- > Disruption during construction.

For more details on the impacts expected, refer to **Chapters 8-20**.

## How will the likely impacts be managed?

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Measures to mitigate and/or manage the impacts have been proposed. The mitigation measures aim to remove or minimise potential impacts through design in the first instance. Where a potential impact is unable to be mitigated through design, further management measures are outlined.

The environmental, social and economic impacts, and measures to minimise those impacts, are discussed in **Chapters 8 to 20**. A draft Statement of Commitments, which lists the outcomes and actions proposed to be achieved, is provided in **Appendix C**.

## How can I comment on the proposed upgrade and/or the Environmental Assessment?

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The NSW Department of Planning will make the environmental assessment publicly available for a minimum period of 30 days. During this period, it will be available for inspection at the Department of Planning website ([www.planning.nsw.gov.au](http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au)), on the project website [www.rta.nsw.gov.au/pacific](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/pacific) (click on Tintenbar to Ewingsdale), at selected RTA offices and in other locations. The RTA will also be conducting community information sessions. A project information line will also be available throughout the exhibition period – 1 800 882 787 (toll free).

Any person may make a written submission to the Director-General of the Department of Planning during the exhibition period. Submissions should be made to:

**Director – Major Infrastructure Assessment**  
**Department of Planning**  
**GPO Box 39**  
**Sydney NSW 2001**