

Record of Meeting



Purpose of Meeting	Ecological Focus Group Meeting No. 2		
Project	Upgrading the Pacific Highway – Wells Crossing to Iluka Road	Project No	EN01810
Prepared By	Paul Robilliard	Phone No	1800 557 673
Place of Meeting	Grafton Community Centre 59 Duke St, Grafton	Date	24 February 2006 10:00am – 12:00pm
Attendance	10 community and government agency representatives and 3 members of the project team attended the meeting		

Item

AGENDA

- 1) Welcome, introductions and purpose of the meeting
 - *Introduction of project team members and participants*
 - *Purpose of the meeting*
- 2) Project Update / Overview
 - *Public display of route options*
 - *Overview of additional ecological investigations*
- 3) Discussion of draft Ecology Background Paper
- 4) Discussion of potential mitigation measures
- 5) The next steps
 - *Value Management Workshop*
 - *Selection of a Preferred Route*
 - *Ongoing liaison with the community*
- 6) Meeting close

NOTES

- Welcome and Introduction Value Management Workshop one step.
- Q: Why weren't minutes of last meeting sent out in a timely fashion?
- A: This is a fair comment, and we apologise. Undertake to send notes out within a week of meetings in the future.
- Q: Have you accessed wires database?
- A: Yes. Will liaise with Michael Byrnes regarding this information.
- You will get only limited data from the road kill information.



Item

- Species list – from wildlife atlas. Where is the full list? For example, the atlas has 4 microbats listed. There would be 10 out there.
- Why not upgrade to a lower standard?
- Need to look at flooding. Orange Option and Purple Option will have a high level of flooding.
- Need a map of EECs and SEPP 14 wetlands to get a more complete picture of floodplain communities
- Roads can be built across floodplain. As long as Emus have passage, they are okay. Worked at Charleville / Long Reach. Peter McCrea would be a good contact.
- The eastern emu is a different bird to the inland emu. Follow different paths. Follow the rainfall.
- The emus have a requirement for constant water. Need it on a daily basis.
- They follow the lower spots / valleys. Come across range at Red Root Road.
- The movement corridors are wide (hundreds of metres or even kilometres). If we were to consider fauna crossings, they would need to be substantial and would need exclusion fencing to funnel them.
- There is a problem of Emus running into fencing? Would need appropriate fencing designs.
- The emus are able to roll through 3-strand and 5 strand wire fences.
- Not sure if it is possible to funnel them, they'll get stuck in one spot and won't move.
- Stephen Davies from W.A. Expert on Emus. PR to follow up.
- Emus have trouble with fences.
- Contours would be good / useful
- Emus had to relocate emus at Cowper and Tucabia. Hessian on fence to block view. Not easy took ½ day to move Emu.
- Good fence for emu could see bad fence for other animals.
- Underpasses – would need lots of light.
- Main fauna corridors. Need to look at specific areas.
- Need to look after eastern area. But also need to look after people. This area is the only high land for many people and the only land out of the flood. Needs to be taken into consideration.



Item

- Ecotourism will be the future of Clarence Valley
- What happens to existing highway
- Large scale disturbance
- Mitigation is only that. No such thing as compensatory habitat.
- Costs of mitigation need to be taken into consideration at the VMW.
- Ongoing impact to species needs to be considered.
- MC to provide fauna records when he updates the Wildlife atlas. End March.
- Fauna hotspots discussed and noted on map.
- WIRES would like to see funding and management plan for dealing with injured animals.
- Worried about effect of headlight on animals, especially owls. Potential for owl roadkill as rodents are easier to spot in the cleared road verges.
- To provide paper on owls and roadkill.
- Need to consider that area might be very different in 10 years time when the road gets built.
- Interchange options need to be known because they attract development.

KEY MESSAGES FROM EFG TO TAKE TO VMW

- Stress the sensitivity of the area.
- Flooding known quantity. Mitigation for ecological issues is an unknown quantity.
- Minimum standard upgrade would solve all problems. Can we adopt a minimum standard?
- Project may be more expensive for eastern route when fauna mitigation is taken into consideration. Whole costs should be considered.
- Eastern: Quiet, rural, habitat protection.
- Traffic / social impacts should be given weight.
- Significance of highway leaving coast. Important area bordered by current highway.
- Species other than emus are threatened and important. This includes owls which are attracted to clearings through forest road kills.
- Ecotourism will take over cane farms in the future. Should not give high weighting



Item

to a dying industry.

- Cost of mitigation on eastern routes as well as ongoing costs of monitoring etc should be considered on the eastern option.
- Social cost – local people still being killed. Won't change with the eastern route.
- Only land for expansion James Creek / Gulmarrad. Bypass will affect Grafton Region. Need it to be left.
- NSW Minister for Planning – one of his duties is to keep inland areas alive and to protect bushland. Should be reminded of his duties.
- Need to look at environment ways of moving traffic.
- Need to look at Summerland way.

ACTIONS ARISING

Bigger vegetation maps.

List of who will be on VMW.

Hydrology report.

Species lists – full set.