

Executive summary

In January 1996 the New South Wales and Australian governments announced their joint commitment to upgrade the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border. Currently 263 of a total of 677 kilometres are double lane divided road. A further 91 kilometres are under construction, or have had a construction contract awarded, with the remaining kilometres either approved for construction, or with a preferred route identified.

The Pacific Highway is part of the AusLink National Network. By mid-2009 the New South Wales Government will have spent \$2.3 billion and the Australian Government \$1.3 billion towards the upgrade of the Pacific Highway. This is in addition to the \$2.31 billion committed since 1996 to upgrade the Pacific Highway, of which the NSW Government committed \$1.66 billion.

The Woolgoolga to Wells Crossing section of the Pacific Highway forms part of the Pacific Highway Upgrade Program. The Woolgoolga to Wells Crossing project involves the proposed upgrade of approximately 25.9 km of the Pacific Highway on the North Coast of NSW. The project would commence approximately 5.9 km north of Woolgoolga at Arrawarra Beach Road and end at the intersection of the highway with Bald Knob Tick Gate Road.

This section will join the Sapphire to Woolgoolga project to the south and the Wells Crossing to Iluka section to the north.

Purpose of the report

This report provides information regarding the development of the concept design for the Woolgoolga to Wells Crossing section of the Pacific Highway upgrade. This report provides information on the investigations undertaken and the constraints considered in the refinement of the design following the selection of the preferred route corridor.

Project development

The Woolgoolga to Wells Crossing section of the highway has undergone a process comprising the following:

- Route options development (refer Route Options Development Report – GHD 2005).
- Preferred route selection (refer Preferred Route Report – GHD 2006).
- Corridor refinement (refer Preferred Route Report Barcoongere Way and Luthers Road Areas – GHD 2007).
- Specialist investigations for the development of the concept design of the preferred route.

Following completion of the concept design phase, further development of the project will be required. These activities could include:

- Environmental assessment.
- Property acquisition.
- Detailed design.
- Further specialist investigations for both the environmental assessment and detailed design phase.
- Preparation of construction tender documentation.
- Construction of the project.

Investigations informing the concept design

A range of investigations have been undertaken in preparing the concept design. These are listed in detail in Section 1.9, and include, flora and fauna, non-indigenous heritage, indigenous heritage, traffic and transport, geotechnical, hydrology and hydraulics, public utilities and property impacts.

Project description

The project length is 25.9 km, comprising 18.9 km of duplication and 7.0 km of deviation, with 18.7 km of full reuse of the existing highway. Under current planning the project will have 14 at grade intersections, five bridge creek crossings on the main alignment, one overbridge carrying local traffic over the main alignment, one local access underpass on the deviation section across the Corindi floodplain, and one underpass for the existing highway just south of Range Road.

Design Standards

Two highway upgrade scenarios are being considered as part of the project:

- Arterial road style (referred to as Class A) — two lanes in each direction (median width to accommodate future upgrading to three lanes in each direction), 100 km per hour posted speed, limited access condition roadway with at grade intersections.
- Motorway style (referred to as Class M) — two lanes in each direction (median width to accommodate future upgrading to three lanes in each direction), 110 km per hour posted speed, controlled access condition roadway with grade separated interchange access, and a continuous alternative route.

The arterial style is likely to be adopted in the first instance, with the possible exception of the section from the future Arrawarra interchange to Range Road, which may be upgraded to a motorway style as part of the initial highway upgrade. Potential further upgrading to the motorway style design may occur at some time following the initial upgrade.

Staging

It is likely that the project will be staged, in the development of the initial upgrade to allow for appropriate consideration of funding, road user safety and construction constraints. Potential staging considerations have been discussed further in this report.

Way forward

The information contained in this report provides two key functions:

- Define a project impact boundary for display in relevant council local environmental plans.
- Provide a basis for the future environmental assessment of the project.

Following the display of the concept design, the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) will consider issues raised in any comments. Once this process is finalised the relevant local council will be approached to have the corridor formally reserved in its local planning instrument. The boundaries of the corridor will be based on the final concept design. Detailed environmental assessment will commence and formal planning approval sought closer to construction, the timing of which would depend on funding availability. Further refinements may occur during the environmental assessment stage of the project and in response to community comments.