Coffs Harbour bypass project

Frequently asked questions – probable new species

November 2021

These FAQs have been developed to provide information about the two probable new species found during early work ecological surveys as part of the Coffs Harbour bypass project.

What probable new species have been found?

The previously unrecorded species included two species determined by the NSW and Qld Herbariums as probable new species: a *Fontainea* allied to *F. oraria* (Lennox Head Fontainea), and a species of *Pittosporum* that differs in several characteristics from other known species from that genus.

Where have the probable new species been found?

The probable new species were originally found just north of Coffs Harbour. Transport for NSW have conducted additional surveys which have identified additional populations of the new *Pittosporum* species in nearby Korora Nature Reserve and Orara East State ForestFurther surveys, in suitable habitat adjacent the project alignment, will occur to determine whether additional populations of the new species are present.

How were the probable new species found and who found them?

The probable new species were found during ecological surveys currently being undertaken prior to construction of the Coffs Harbour bypass to gather information on the number and size of the threatened species - Rusty Plums (Niemeyera whitei). During this survey the two probable new plant species were discovered by specialist, Dr Andrew Benwell. Dr Benwellwas engaged by the project to carry out the ecological investigations.

How will the probable new species be protected?

Transport's "unexpected finds" procedure has been followed. This includes the collection of floristic samples and submission of samples to the Queensland Herbarium and Royal Botanic Gardens for further determination of species type.

Transport is treating the *Pittosporum* find as though they will be listed as a Threatened Species. The *Fontainea* has been provisionally listed as Critically Endangered.

Transport is committed to protecting and minimising impacts to the probable new species through:

- Protecting as many species in-situ as possible
- Looking at feasible translocations
- Propagation
- Protecting the probable species in-situ
- Minimising impacts during construction

Additional specialists have been engaged in developing a management plan in consultation with the State Government's Environment, Energy and Science Group (EEG) of the Department of Primary Industry and Environment (DPIE).

Transport are confident that any impact to the new species will be minimised and the management plan will provide an opportunity to expand the size of the population and improve our understanding on the ecology and science of the species.

What is included in the management plan?

Transport is developing a management plan for the probable new species with advice from botanical specialists. Key measures will include:

- Potential design refinements of the alignment to avoid direct impacts wherever possible
- Propagation of plants from cuttings and seeds with specialists in rainforest plant propagation
- Translocation of plants which cannot be avoided under the construction footprint. Translocation sites would be selected to suit the likely ecological requirements of the new species based on expert advice
- Undertaking genetic analysis of new species finds and comparing to other species of same genus
- Considering edge effects from clearing and taking precautionary approach to ensure clearing impacts are minimised as much as possible.

A Threatened Species Management Plan for the Coffs Harbour Bypass Project has been prepared and will also be updated to reflect final management measures for new species. The plan can be found in the Document Library on the project website – www.pacifichighway.nsw.gov.au/coffsharbourbypass.

What impact will this current find have on the Coffs Harbour bypass project timeline?

Transport are working in collaboration with the EESG to create a management plant to ensure all strategies will avoid as much impact as possible on the probable new species.

This management plan will be carried out while Transport continues its current planning pathway for the Coffs Harbour bypass project to meet the committed timeframes to the community for delivering this important piece of infrastructure.

What will happen should another probable new species be discovered along the bypass route?

Should additional probable new species be discovered along the bypass route the Unexpected Threatened Species Find Procedure would again be implemented. This procedure involves additional assessment of the impacts including additional surveys and investigation into management options to minimise impacts to the newly identified species. Transport works closely with regulatory agencies and engage with ecologists/specialists as needed to ensure management measures are appropriate.

Will the project come to a halt if future significant new finds are made?

Once construction starts, if newly identified species are identified and deemed to be at immediate risk, construction works in that area would halt until suitable management measures are implemented in consultation with regulatory agencies and input from ecologists/specialists.

Are the Transport team experienced in dealing with these types of finds?

Transport for NSW has extensive experience in the preservation of rare species in Northern NSW, including:

- working with a local Aboriginal group to preserve the endangered Bolivia Wattle during work on the New England Highway upgrade at Bolivia Hill.
- Woolgoolga to Ballina - 16 threatened flora species have been re-established close by in the local area
- Warrell Creek to Urunga project: 6 species translocated
- Tintenbar to Ewingsdale – re-established threatened species

Where can I find out more information about the probable new species?

Further information about the probable new species, can be found in the Document Library on the project website – www.pacifichighway.nsw.gov.au/coffsharbourbypass.

General information about the Coffs Harbour bypass, can be found on the on the project website – www.pacifichighway.nsw.gov.au/coffsharbourbypass.

To contact the Coffs Harbour bypass project team please call 1800 550 621, email coffsharboubypass@transport.nsw.gov.au or visit the display office at 11a Park Avenue, Coffs Harbour.

Fontainea

Pittosporum

Senior Project Delivery Manager, Rochelle Hicks with the *Fontainea*