

PHO M2799



The Director-General
Department of Planning
PO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Attention: Michael Young

**PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE – SAPPHIRE TO WOOLGOOLGA PROJECT
PROPOSED MODIFICATION OF THE PROJECT APPROVAL**

Dear Michael,

The Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) are requesting a modification of the project approval for the Sapphire to Woolgoolga project to incorporate a rest area at Arrawarra.

Rest Area withdrawn from original Project.

The environmental assessment of the Sapphire to Woolgoolga Pacific Highway project identified a rest area location at the Arrawarra Interchange (Section 7.5.11 of the environmental assessment). During the exhibition of the environmental assessment, a number of submissions were received in relation to the rest area location.

On the basis of the range of concerns raised in relation to the proposed rest area, including ecological amenity and need, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure advised the RTA that it could not support the inclusion of the rest area in this location at this time. These issues included:

- the cultural and environmental sensitivity of the area including the surrounding Yarrawarra and Arrawarra Estuary systems;
- its habitat value for endangered frogs, gliders, and microbats;
- its location within a wildlife corridor between the vegetation on the western side of the proposal and Garby Nature Reserve on the east;
- fragmentation of existing glider habitat which could lead to long term decline in glider populations east of the Pacific Highway; and
- potential noise, lighting and visual impacts on the Arrawarra Beach community.

Based on the submissions received, the RTA recognised the need for further consideration into the location of a rest area. The RTA therefore decided to remove the proposed rest area at Arrawarra interchange from the project approval process. Condition 1.1 d) removed the rest area from the Project approval.

The Director-General's report for the approval of the Sapphire to Woolgoolga Upgrade of the Pacific Highway advised that any future proposal to reinstate a rest area at this location would need to consider and address the issues raised in submissions. The attached Sapphire to Woolgoolga upgrade: Rest Area Environmental Assessment Report, April 2011 and Sapphire to Woolgoolga Upgrade: Rest Area Environmental Assessment Submissions Report, October 2011 considers and addresses the above issues.

Rest area comparative assessment

The RTA further reviewed options for a location of a rest area and produced the Rest Area Assessment Report (Sapphire to Woolgoolga Upgrade: Rest Area Assessment Report, September 2009). The report identified a number of options for potential rest area locations and provided a comparative assessment of two short listed locations (south Woolgoolga and Arrawarra). As well as comparing a rest area at both locations, the construction of a potential future highway service centre was also assessed.

Submissions from exhibition of Rest Area Assessment Report

The Rest Area Assessment Report was placed on public display for community comment from 28 September to 30 October 2009. The report identified options for the location of rest areas and potential future highway service centres and examined and compared the key features of the options. Sixty-two submissions were received from the exhibition of the Rest Area Assessment Report.

From these submissions the Sapphire to Woolgoolga Upgrade: Rest Area Assessment Submissions Report, May 2010 was prepared.

Selection of preferred location for rest area

The Arrawarra interchange was selected as the preferred location for a rest area for the upgrade based on consideration of issues raised in the submissions, consultation with government agencies and RTA's own technical investigations.

The Arrawarra interchange was selected as the preferred location as, compared to the south Woolgoolga option, it would:

- Have less noise and other amenity impacts.
- Have less impact on existing agricultural properties.
- Have less impact on properties proposed to be rezoned for industrial purposes.
- Be less expensive to build.

It is acknowledged that a rest area at Arrawarra would have a greater impact on native vegetation and animals than one at south Woolgoolga. To avoid impacts on the native vegetation in the State Forest north of Arrawarra Beach Road, the possible future highway service centre has been moved to the rest area site south of the road. The concept design for the rest area has been refined to accommodate the possible future highway service centre.

Display of Rest Area Environmental Assessment Report

With the location for the rest area identified, the RTA prepared an environmental assessment for the preferred rest area location at Arrawarra. The Sapphire to Woolgoolga upgrade: Rest Area Environmental Assessment Report, April 2011 (rest area environmental assessment report) was displayed for public comments between 6 April 2011 and 9 May 2011.

Submissions Report

During the exhibition of the Rest Area Environmental Assessment Report, 16 submissions were made in relation to the Report. Several submissions were received by the RTA after the advertised period for public comment. All submissions received until the end of September 2011 have been addressed within this submissions report.

This submissions report has addressed issues and concerns raised in submissions received in response to the rest area environmental assessment report, a modification to the Sapphire to Woolgoolga Pacific Highway Upgrade project.

In consideration of the above, the RTA seeks the approval of the Minister for Planning for a modification of the Project approval under Part 3A of the EP&A Act to include the rest area as described in the rest area environmental assessment report.

If approved, construction of the rest area is proposed to be undertaken as part of the Sapphire to Woolgoolga Pacific Highway Project.

The Sapphire to Woolgoolga Upgrade: Rest Area Environmental Assessment Submissions Report, October 2011 is attached along with the application for modification form.

Please contact Chris Clark on 02 6690 7013 or Janelle Bancroft on 02 6604 9331 should you require any additional information or require clarification on any of the above.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Campbell', written in a cursive style.

Jim Campbell
Acting General Manager, Pacific Highway

Encl.