



Warrell Creek to Urunga Upgrading the Pacific Highway

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

VOLUME 1 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of how the Proposal fits within the context of the overall Pacific Highway Upgrade Program. It provides a brief description of the Proposal, an overview of the study area, and outlines the structure of this environmental assessment.

1.1 The Pacific Highway Upgrade Program

The Pacific Highway Upgrade Program is a joint commitment by the Australian and New South Wales (NSW) governments to improve the standard and safety of the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border.

The upgrading of the Pacific Highway commenced in 1996. Together, the Australian and NSW governments have committed \$3.6 billion to continue the upgrade of the highway over five years to mid 2014 as part of the Nation Building Program and Building Australia Fund.

It is planned to complete the upgrading of the Pacific Highway in three stages.

Stage one involves completing dual carriageway by mid 2014 in three key areas:

- From the F3 Freeway near Hexham to Port Macquarie.
- From Ballina to the Queensland border.
- Sections to the north and south of Coffs Harbour.

Stage two involves completing dual carriageway from Port Macquarie to Raleigh, south of Coffs Harbour. The Warrell Creek to Urunga project is one of three projects to complete the Stage 2 link. The other projects are the Oxley Highway to Kempsey upgrade and the Frederickton to Eungai upgrade. The completion of these projects would ultimately provide a four lane divided highway from Hexham to Woolgoolga.

Stage three involves completion of dual carriageway from north of Coffs Harbour to Ballina.

The proposed upgrade of the Pacific Highway between Warrell Creek and Urunga is referred to throughout this environmental assessment report as 'the Proposal'.

1.2 Overview of the Proposal and study area

The Proposal, which is located on Mid North Coast of NSW, is shown in the context of the wider study in **Figure 1-1**. The regional context, including the Pacific Highway Upgrade Program, is shown in **Figure 1-2**.

The Proposal commences at the northern end of the existing dual carriageway highway at Allomera (referred to as the Allomera deviation). It runs south of Warrell Creek and deviates north-east of the Warrell Creek village, before

veering north past Rosewood Road and then north-east to run parallel with the existing highway near Donnellyville. It then connects with the Bald Hill Road interchange, north-east of Donnellyville.

North of the Bald Hill Road interchange, the Proposal traverses the Gumma floodplain to the east of Macksville, before crossing the Nambucca River just to the west of the Nambucca Shire Council's sewage treatment plant. The new bridge to be constructed across the Nambucca River would be approximately 350 metres long. North of the Nambucca River, the Proposal generally follows the ridgeline in the vicinity of Old Coast Road, passing through Nambucca State Forest before running parallel along the western side of the existing highway, west of Nambucca Heads, connecting with the Nambucca interchange at Boggy Creek Road.

North of the Nambucca interchange, the Proposal runs alongside the western side of the existing highway before deviating north-west at Mines Road through Little Newry State Forest and then connects with a new interchange at Ballards Road. The Proposal then traverses Newry State Forest prior to crossing the Kalang River on a new, approximately 170 metre long, bridge near South Arm Road. It then runs generally to the north, passing to the east of Ridgewood Drive to rejoin the existing highway east of the Raleigh industrial area before connecting with the existing Waterfall Way interchange.

The general features of the Proposal are:

- A 42 kilometre motorway style (class M) upgrade comprising of four-lane divided carriageways (two lanes each way), with a wide median allowing for the future addition of a third lane in each direction and a 110 kilometre per hour posted speed limit.
- Controlled access to the upgrade from four new grade separated interchanges and an upgrade to the existing Waterfall Way interchange at Raleigh.
- New major highway bridges across the Nambucca River at Macksville, the Kalang River at Urunga and Warrell Creek.
- Retention of the existing highway as a local access road between Warrell Creek and Urunga.
- Floodplain bridges and culverts across sections of the Gumma floodplain at Macksville and the Kalang floodplain at Urunga.
- Noise barriers and low noise pavements at various locations.
- At residence noise treatments to houses in locations where required.
- Permanent spill containment basins at environmentally significant watercourse crossings.
- Combined fauna underpasses/drainage structures at river and creek crossings and key habitat locations.
- A dedicated fauna underpass structure, combined drainage/underpass structures and a wide vegetated median for overhead fauna movement in sections of the Nambucca and Newry State Forests.
- A major rest area for heavy and light vehicles at the Nambucca interchange.
- Ancillary construction facilities, including compound sites, batching plant sites and stockpile sites.

FIGURE 1-1 | THE PROPOSAL

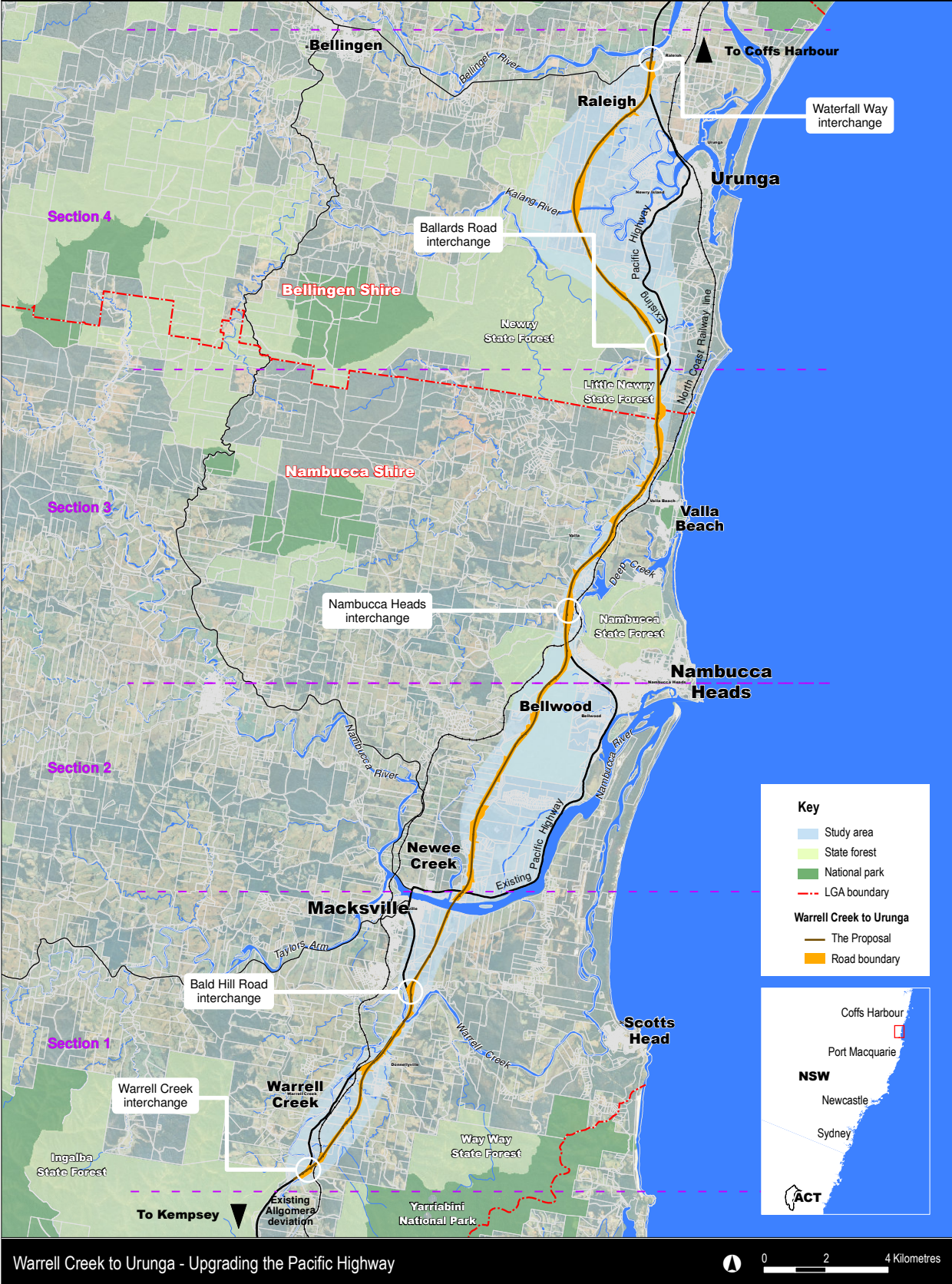
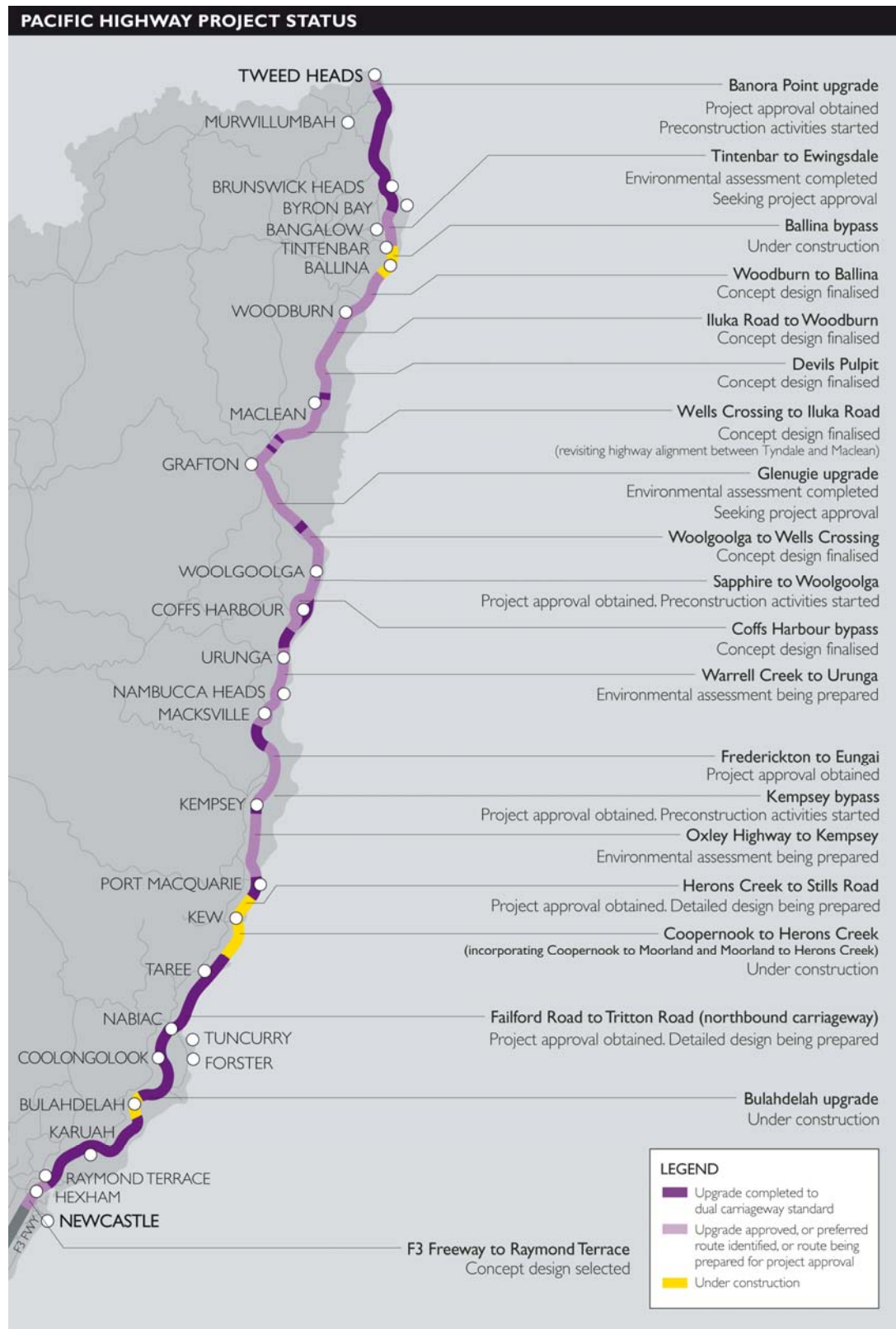


Figure 1-2 Pacific Highway Upgrade Program overview



The 42 kilometre long Proposal has been designed as a motorway standard (or Class M) project with direct access available only at the five grade separated interchanges. The existing highway would be retained as a local service road and separate access roads would be provided for local traffic to the nearest cross roads, where required. A detailed description of the Proposal is provided in Chapter 6 – *Description of the Proposal*.

1.3 Environmental Assessment Requirements

The Proposal has been declared to be a project to which Part 3A of the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) applies. It has also been declared as critical infrastructure under the EP&A Act. A preliminary environmental assessment report has been prepared for the Proposal under Part 3A of the EP&A Act (RTA 2007a). The Director General of the NSW Department of Planning issued the requirements for the Part 3A environmental assessment on 23 September 2007. These requirements were subsequently reissued on 13 October 2009.

1.4 Structure of the environmental assessment

The RTA is seeking project approval for the Proposal under Part 3A of the EP&A Act. This environmental assessment has been prepared in response to the requirements issued by the Director General of the NSW Department of Planning. The environmental assessment report is divided in two volumes, with the structure shown in **Table 1-1**.

Table 1-1 Outline of environmental assessment report structure

Chapter	Content
VOLUME ONE – Environmental Assessment	
Executive Summary	
Part A	Background to the Proposal
Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	Process for assessment and decision making
Part B	Justification and project development
Chapter 3	Strategic justification and project need
Chapter 4	Alternatives considered and route development
Chapter 5	Community consultation
Part C	Project description
Chapter 6	Description of the Proposal
Chapter 7	Construction of the Proposal
Chapter 8	Environmental management
Part D	Assessment of key environmental issues
Chapter 9	Environmental risk analysis

Chapter	Content
Chapter 10	Flora and fauna
Chapter 11	Land use and property
Chapter 12	Social and economic
Chapter 13	Visual amenity and design
Chapter 14	Noise and vibration
Chapter 15	Aboriginal heritage
Chapter 16	Water quality and hydrology
Chapter 17	Traffic and transport
Chapter 18	Soil characteristics and erosion control
Part E	Other environmental issues
Chapter 19	Other environmental issues
Part F	Justification and conclusion
Chapter 20	Justification and conclusion
References	
Appendices	
Appendix A	Director-General's requirements
Appendix B	Director-General's requirements checklist
Appendix C	Other issues raised checklist
Appendix D	Draft Statement of Commitments
Appendix E	Study team
Appendix F	Minister's Orders and Letter of Confirmation from the Director-General
Appendix G	Community updates
VOLUME TWO – Working papers	
1	Flora and fauna
2	Visual amenity and design
VOLUME THREE – Working papers	
3	Noise and vibration
4	Aboriginal heritage (not included due to sensitivity of information to Aboriginal community)
5	Water (flooding and water quality)
6	Traffic and transport