



Warrell Creek to Urunga Upgrading the Pacific Highway

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

VOLUME 1 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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5. Community consultation

The RTA has consulted extensively with authorities, interest groups and the general public on this Proposal. This commenced at the time of the identification of the investigation area in 2003 and has continued through the route selection and environmental assessment process. This chapter describes the objectives and extent of the consultation undertaken and how this has influenced the development of the Proposal. Consultation will continue through during the display of the environmental assessment to construction of the Proposal.

Director-General's requirements	Where addressed in the EA
You should undertake an appropriate and justified level of consultation with relevant parties during the preparation of the EA, including but not limited to: - Local, State or Commonwealth government authorities and service providers, including the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, the Department of Industry and Investment NSW, Australian Rail Track Corporation, Bellingen Shire Council and Nambucca Shire Council; - Specialist Interest Groups including Local Aboriginal Councils, commercial aquatic enterprises such as oyster growers, mineral exploitation licence holders, chambers of commerce; and - The public, including affected landowners. The EA must describe the consultation process, document all community consultation undertaken to date and identify the issues raised (including where these have been addressed in the EA)	Section 5.1 Community consultation objectives Section 5.2.1 Government agencies and service providers Section 1.1.1 Public consultation Section 5.2.3 Affected landowners Section 5.2.4 Special Interest groups Section 5.3 Consultation activities undertaken to date Section 5.4 Key issues raised Section 5.5 How consultation has influenced the development of the proposal Section 5.6 Future consultation

5.1 Community consultation objectives

Community involvement is a key element for project planning and delivery. It enables local knowledge to feed into the identification of constraints and potential opportunities and facilitates development of a project that better integrates into the local setting, while achieving local and regional benefits.

At the commencement of the development of route options, a community stakeholder involvement plan was developed based on the principles of transparency, inclusiveness and responsiveness. These principles were maintained during the various stages of the development of the Proposal and are expected to shape consultation during subsequent stages of the Proposal, should it be approved. The following specific objectives have guided the development and implementation of consultation strategies:

- Provide a planned approach to community and agency communications.
- Create community and agency awareness of the Proposal and the need for the Pacific Highway upgrade.
- Provide the community and agencies with timely and relevant information on the Proposal.
- Provide the community and agencies with opportunities for involvement in the design and assessment of the Proposal.
- Ensure that all relevant issues raised by the community are considered and addressed.
- Minimise the impact of the Proposal on the local community by integrating their needs as much as possible.

The community stakeholder involvement plan was developed to be compliant with RTA community involvement procedures and policies. It is acknowledged, however, that any consultation program undertaken does not always satisfy all participants or resolve all differences of opinion or values.

Community consultation for the development of the Proposal has changed in focus and method through its different stages. The consultation process has evolved coincident with the development of the Proposal from an investigation area to a series of route options, to a preferred option and then to refinements to the concept design. The opportunity for two-way information flow between interested stakeholders and the project team has been ongoing throughout this process and is illustrated in **Figure 5-1**. For some community stakeholders, their involvement reduces or ceases when they have certainty that they would not be affected by the Proposal, or when their issues and concerns have been satisfactorily resolved. For other community stakeholders, their involvement increases as there is greater certainty that the Proposal is going to affect their interests.

5.1.1 Guidelines for major project community consultation

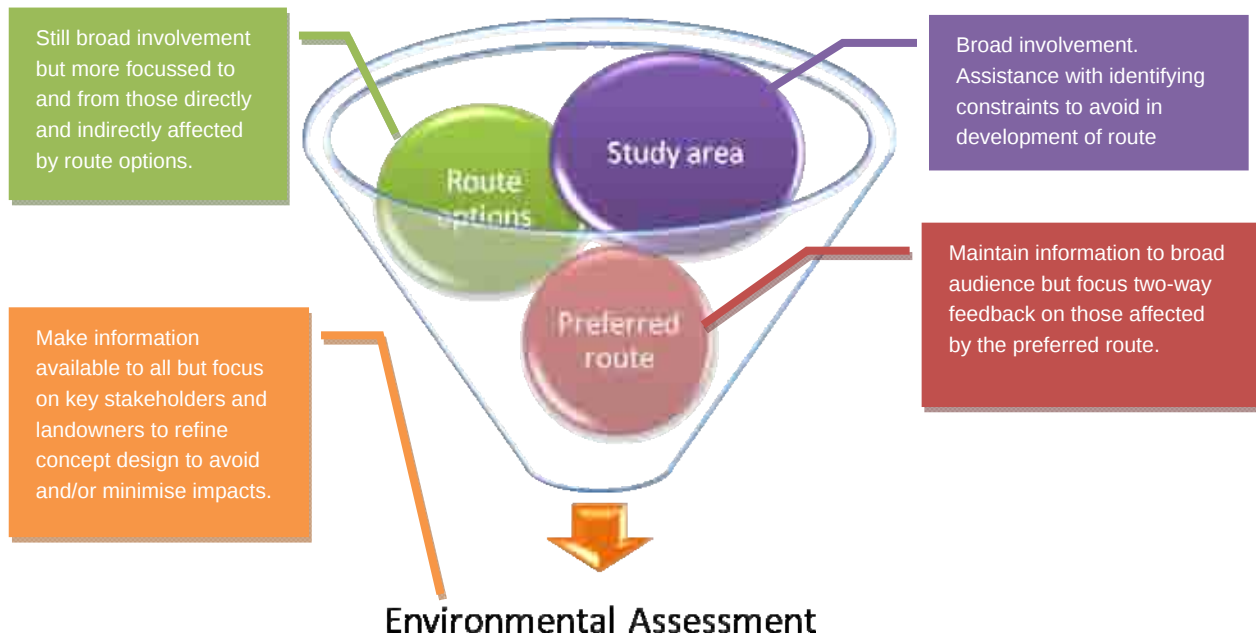
Consultation for the Proposal commenced in June 2003 when the RTA identified the broad investigation area for community comment. While development of the Proposal commenced four years prior to the release of the Guideline for Major Projects Community Consultation, October 2007 (Department of Planning 2007), consultation up to October 2007 has been consistent with the guidelines requirements.

The consultation process as defined in the guideline is addressed in the sections of this environmental assessment as indicated in **Table 5-1**.

Table 5-1 Consultation process corresponding with consultation guideline

Consultation Process	EA reference
Those individuals and organisations likely to have an interest in the Proposal had enough opportunity to express their views	Section 5.2 and 5.3
Information regarding the nature of the Proposal have been accurately and widely distributed	Section 5.3
Community and stakeholder feedback was encouraged and recorded	Section 5.3 and 5.4. Route options and preferred route submission reports.
Consultation with community and stakeholders was inclusive	Chapter 5

Figure 5-1 Conceptual consultation focus



5.2 Parties consulted

5.2.1 Government agencies and service providers

Consultation with local and NSW state government agencies has been ongoing throughout the development of the Proposal. This includes:

- Officers and elected representatives of Nambucca Shire Council and Bellingen Shire Council.
- Department of Planning.
- Department of Environment and Climate Change (now part of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW)).
- Department of Primary Industries including the Aquatic Habitat Protection Unit and Agriculture (now part of the Department of Industry and Investment (DII)).
- Forests NSW (now part of the DII).
- Department of Water and Energy (now part of the DECCW).
- NSW Rural Fire Service (now part of the Department of Police and Emergency Services).
- Mid North Coast Police and Coffs/Clarence Police (now part of the Department of Police and Emergency Services).
- NSW Department of State and Regional Development (now part of the DII).
- Australian Rail Track Corporation.
- Commonwealth Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

As outlined in Chapter 4 – *Alternatives considered and route development*, a planning focus meeting was held at the commencement of the project (June 2003) to provide information about the Macksville to Urunga section of the Proposal to representatives of these agencies and to identify their issues and requirements. A second planning focus meeting was held in November 2004 with representatives of these agencies prior to the display of the route options for the Macksville to Urunga section. Submissions relating to issues and requirements were requested from all agencies following the planning focus meetings and display of the route options. In addition, a number of separate meetings were held with representatives of NSW government agencies to discuss specific issues relating to their areas of interest and responsibility.

In April 2005, a value management workshop for the Macksville to Urunga section was held. Representatives from key government agencies, the community and other stakeholders considered the feasible options and recommended a preferred route. These attendees included representatives from:

- Nambucca Shire Council.
- Bellingen Shire Council.
- Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (now part of the Department of Planning and the DECCW).
- Department of Environment and Conservation (now part of the DECCW).
- State Forests (now Forests NSW, part of the DII).
- NSW Fisheries (now part of the DII).
- Department of Agriculture (now part of the DII).
- NRMA.
- Nambucca Heads Chamber of Commerce.
- Urunga Mylestom Chamber of Commerce.
- Representatives from community liaison groups in Macksville, Nambucca and Urunga.
- Representatives from the Aboriginal community.

At the commencement of the review of the Warrell Creek approved preferred route (February 2006) a planning focus meeting was held with representatives of NSW state government agencies and Nambucca Shire Council to provide information about the review and to identify issues and requirements.

During the course of the Proposal's development, the project team has also attended several meetings with the Nambucca and Bellingen Shire Councils, including meetings with both Councils' officers to discuss specific issues. Council officers also provided representation on the community liaison groups listed in **Section 5.2**. Meetings have also been held with individual government agencies on specific issues. A summary of issues raised by Government agencies and service providers and where they are addressed in this environmental assessment is included in **Table 5-2**.

5.2.2 Public consultation

The Proposal is located within the Nambucca and Bellingen local government areas. The communities within these local government areas have been engaged throughout the development of the Proposal (refer to Section 5.3). Consultation has been undertaken with the following:

- Residents in Warrell Creek village, Donnellyville, Nambucca Heads, Valla, Valla Beach, Raleigh, Macksville and Urunga areas.
- Potentially affected groups (residents, property owners, local businesses, schools and churches near the Proposal from Warrell Creek to Urunga).
- Potentially affected landowners and those living nearby the Proposal.
- Aboriginal community through the Aboriginal Focus Group (see Section 5.2.4).
- Community focus groups to provide information and feedback at the route development and preferred route phase.
- Advisory, community, local environmental groups, focus groups for the study area (e.g. members of community liaison groups from previous phases of the Proposal)
- Special interest groups set up for further investigation of specific issues including noise and ecology.
- Access groups including one for the whole project and one specifically for Section 3 (Nambucca Heads to Ballards Road) which include local residents, council, bus companies and local businesses.
- Local businesses within the study area.
- Extractive industries in the study area.
- Commercial aquatic enterprises (primarily oyster farmers).
- Utilities and emergency services.
- Wider community (motorists, cyclists, tourists).

5.2.3 Affected landowners

The RTA's approach during each phase of the development of the Proposal was to give priority to contacting potentially directly affected landowners. All properties within the investigation area were initially considered to be potentially directly affected. As such, each property owner was contacted directly by the project team to discuss the implications of the RTA's *Land Acquisition Policy Statement*. This occurred initially when route options were exhibited and was repeated when the preferred routes for the Macksville to Urunga and Warrell Creek sections were announced.

Table 5-2 Summary of consultation with government agency and service providers

Agency / service provider	Issues Raised	EA reference
Department of Planning	- Negative impacts of bypasses on town business. - Impacts on noise and water quality. - Impacts on threatened species and their habitat. - Impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage values. - Avoidance and mitigation of impacts, or compensation for unavoidable impacts upon threatened species and Aboriginal cultural heritage. - Impacts on biological, ecological and physical characteristics of estuarine and salt marshes. - Protection, rehabilitation and ongoing management of estuarine river banks, including mitigation of impacts on waterway stability to control erosion and sedimentation. - Flooding impacts on land, infrastructure and assets during and post development. - Methods used to address acid sulphate soils when found. - Consultation with others undertaking natural resource management projects in the area.	Chapter 12 Chapters 14 & 16 Chapter 10 Chapter 15 Chapters 10 & 15 Chapter 10 Chapters 10 & 18 Chapter 16 Chapter 18 Chapter 5
Department of Environment and Climate Change (now part of the DECCW)	- Existing acoustic environment should be assessed and reported with reference to the relevant sections of the DECC Guidelines 'Environmental Criteria for Road Traffic Noise' (ECRTN) and the NSW Industrial Noise Policy. - Assessment of predicted operational noise impacts of Proposal in accordance with ECRTN and RTA's Environmental Noise Management Manual (ENMM). - The Proposal will result in significant noise impacts for rural residential areas including those located in the vicinity of Donnellyville, Bald Hill Road, Letitia Close/Mattick Road, Old Coast Road, Florence Wilmont Drive, East West Road, South Arm Road, Short Cut Road and Ridgewood Drive. The environmental assessment should place particular emphasis on these locations with the aim of incorporating operational noise mitigation measures into the design of the highway. - Location of sensitive receivers (such as schools, residences or hospitals for example) should be clearly identified on any diagrams provided by the Noise Assessment Report (NAR).	Chapter 14 Chapter 14 Chapter 14 Chapter 14

Agency / service provider	Issues Raised	EA reference
	■ Criteria used to develop the proposed mitigation measures to control noise, vibration and blasting impacts caused by construction activities and associated traffic should be included in the NAR. The NAR should provide details of measures proposed to mitigate noise and vibration in relation to construction and blasting activities. ■ Assess the requirement for, and feasibility of, implementing operation stage noise mitigation measures prior to commencement of construction to provide a construction stage benefit, particularly for those rural residential areas listed above, and for those residences on Gumma Road, adjacent to the Nambucca River Bridge. ■ Impacts of the Proposal on watercourses along the road corridor should be assessed. ■ Ambient water quality conditions and the impact of the Proposal on SEPP 14 wetlands (Numbers 388, 353 and 351) should be assessed with reference to the <i>National Water Quality Management Strategy</i> (ANZECC, 2000) and River Flow and Water Quality Objectives. ■ Identification of the number and types of bridges and culverts for the Proposal. Should consider whether structures are to be placed in the watercourse and demonstrate how construction and operation stage impacts will be mitigated. ■ Description of any potential changes to flooding and drainage patterns arising from the Proposal. ■ Assessment of the presence of acid sulphate soils (ASS) on the site and determine the likelihood of the Proposal's construction processes disturbing ASS and appropriate measure that will be implemented to mitigate these impacts. This assessment should be conducted in accordance with the Acid Sulphate Soils Manual (ASSMAC, 1998). ■ Details of stormwater management with particular regard to soil dispersability (including imported fill), operational spill containment measure and approximate locations of temporary sediment basins. ■ Water usage requirements and potential supply sources of the construction stage of the Proposal and wastewater re-use opportunities should be considered. ■ Threatened biodiversity field surveys and assessments following steps listed in NSW Threatened Species Survey and Assessment Guidelines: June 2006, should be carried out under seasonal and climatic conditions, specifically within the preferred route corridor. ■ Detailed analysis of up-to-date biodiversity study data for the study area.	Chapter 14 Chapter 14 Chapter s10 & 16 Chapter 16 Chapters 6 & 10 Chapter 16 Chapter 18 Chapters 6 & 16 Chapter 7 Chapter 10

Agency / service provider	Issues Raised	EA reference
	- Describe, quantify and address likely direct and indirect impacts associated with the Proposal to threatened biodiversity, their habitats and native vegetation distribution, including cumulative impacts and a qualitative and quantitative landscape impact assessment. - Where biodiversity impacts are unable to be demonstrably mitigated or avoided, these should be described and quantified to determine the extent to which compensatory habitat or other offsets will be required. Consideration should be given to applying the DECC Biobanking Credit Calculator. - Identify whether the Proposal constitute Key Threatening Processes (KTPs) listed under the <i>Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995</i>. Where KTPs are identified, relevant threat abatement measures proposed to be implemented are required. - Describe objectives and assess the feasibility of implementing appropriate flora and fauna mitigation measures during construction and operation, including nature and extent of expected impacts. - Where appropriate and feasible mitigation measures are identified, environmental assessment should define and commit to measure to ensure impacts to threatened species and biodiversity are managed in accordance with current environmental best practice. Where fauna crossing structures are proposed, the environmental assessment must consider the suitability of such structures by gaining a thorough understanding of pre-development threatened fauna population dynamics including a habitat assessment of the adjacent landscape. Any proposed mitigation measures should be evaluated against a clearly defined and measurable goal. - Flora survey work needs to target <i>Marsdenia longiloba</i> (Slender Marsdenia), <i>Amorpha permium whitei</i> (Rusty Plumb), <i>Acacia chrysotricha</i> (Newry Golden Wattle), <i>Achronychia littoralis</i> (Scented Acronychia), <i>Parsonia dorrigoensis</i> (Milky Silkpod) and any additional threatened flora species known or predicted to occur along the Proposal. - Evaluate direct and indirect impacts to EECs (endangered ecological communities) including Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains, Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains, River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains, Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest, and Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest. These contain indigenous plant and animal assemblages that are generally poorly conserved in the region and are subject to further fragmentation and erosion of genetic stock. Must evaluate and propose mitigation measures for EECs.	Chapter 10 Chapter 10 Chapter 10 Chapter 10 Chapters 6 & 10 Chapters 6 & 10 Chapter 10

Agency / service provider	Issues Raised	EA reference
	■ Determine direct and indirect impacts and mitigation measures for SEPP 14 wetlands through alteration of hydrological regimes, particularly near Gumma Swamp south of Nambucca River, Newee Creek, Deep Creek complex near Boggy and Cow Creeks, and wetlands west of Urunga and Newry Island. Evaluate impacts of altered hydrological regimes on EECs associated with SEPP 14 wetlands. ■ Address how the RTA has met the information, survey and consultation requirements as set out in the draft Guidelines for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment and Community Consultation. ■ Identify nature and extent of impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage values across Proposal. Identify direct and indirect impacts of the Proposal and document the number, nature and significance of Aboriginal sites to be impacted including consideration of impacts resulting from ancillary activities and infrastructure. ■ Aboriginal cultural values should be assessed in consultation with the Aboriginal community and appropriate mitigation measures determined to offset or avoid these impacts for incorporation in concept designs and future environmental management plans. ■ Describe actions that will be (or have been) taken to avoid or mitigate impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage values during construction and operation of the Proposal. Describe activities and actions which will be undertaken and any agreements made with the Aboriginal community and DECC, which will attempt to compensate for unavoidable impacts of the Proposal on Aboriginal cultural values. This should include an assessment of likely effectiveness and reliability of the measures proposed and any residual impacts after these measures are implemented. ■ Demonstrate that effective Aboriginal community consultation has been undertaken in determining and assessing impacts, developing options, determining Aboriginal site management and salvage requirements and making final recommendations.	Chapter 16 Chapter 15 Chapter 15 Chapter 15 Chapter 15 Chapters 5 & 15
Bellingen Shire Council	■ Improved access to the south of Urunga to avoid isolation of the Urunga township. ■ Consider threatened species habitat located north of the Kalang River and south of the Short Cut Road. ■ Noise mitigation measures to land adjacent to and either side of Short Cut Road, zoned Rural 1 (c1) Rural Residential. ■ Minimisation of environmental and visual impact of highway between Raleigh and Raleigh Industrial estate,	Chapters 4 & 6 Chapter 10 Chapter 14 Chapter 13

Agency / service provider	Issues Raised	EA reference
	within 7(s) Special emphasis zone, on surrounding forest. ■ Design for dual carriageway at South Arm Road will need to ensure that there is no change to flood effects for this section of road. ■ Provision will need to be made to enable convenient pavement rehabilitation of the section of road under the dual carriageway at South Arm Road. ■ Extensive sections of the existing highway will be used as local access roads (such as bridge over Kalang River). Consideration of options required as ongoing maintenance will impose significant additional cost burden on Council. ■ Assessment of south bound exit at the Raleigh deviation to ensure that traffic does not back up the south bound carriageway. ■ The Proposal should be referred to the Rural Fire Service to assess whether there are any adverse impacts on fire trails. ■ Provision of new Rest Area / Visitor Information Centre at Waterfall Way Interchange to replace existing facility.	Chapter 16 Chapter 6 Chapter 6 Chapters 4 & 6 Chapters 5 & 6 Chapters 4 & 6
Nambucca Shire Council	■ Impact on local infrastructure and access to local towns ■ Access to Valla, Boggie Creek and Cow Creek urban release areas.	Chapters 4 & 12
State Emergency Services (now part of the Department of Police and Emergency Services)	■ Access for emergency vehicles on to and off the highway.	Chapters 6 & 12
Department of Primary Industries (Forests NSW) (now part of the DII)	■ Loss of productive land for timber production and impact on local forest agreements. ■ Impact on productive native forests, plantation estates, and conservation areas (as Special Management Areas established under s21A Forestry Act). ■ Impacts on state forest access, including the effect upon local road and forest roads during and post construction. ■ Severance of roads and fire trails, therefore alternate road and fire management needs to be addressed. ■ Parts of the areas have a high wildfire frequency and the assessment should consider the impact of the	Chapter 12 Chapter 12 Chapter 12 Chapter 12 Chapter 12

Agency / service provider	Issues Raised	EA reference
	proposed upgrade on fire management in bush fire prone areas, particularly in relation to access.	
Department of Primary Industries (Fishing and Aquaculture) (now part of the DII)	■ Potential impacts on SEPP14 wetlands. ■ Impacts on aquacultures. ■ Number of waterways and the ability to construct structures over these waterways. ■ Impact on marine vegetation including mangroves, sea grass and salt marsh. Any impact on marine vegetation will need to be address through compensatory habitat. ■ Proposed width of the alignment including predicted temporary crossings and haulage routes to identify footprint over waterways and their impacts on aquatic vegetation. ■ Potential staging or timing of works (to consider migratory fish movements). ■ Provide description of temporary or permanent sediment retention ponds adjacent to waterways. ■ The environmental assessment should capture the area known as Gumma Flat where low lying tidal flats and wet lands are identified as potential acid sulphate soils conducive to the production of iron sulphides. This may result in acid run off during earth moving works and a poor outcome for water quality. ■ The environmental assessment should include that the impact of acid water is directly linked to red spot disease in fish and high mortality in oysters. Water-flows from the proposed alignment form a direct link to Gumma Creek which confluences with Nambucca River just upstream of commercial oyster growing leases. ■ Detailed risk assessment of all potential impacts to fish habitat during and after works. Include consideration of impacts on the oyster industry, commercial fisheries, and any recreational fishery issues. ■ Description of measures and initiatives to avoid, minimise, manage and mitigate impacts of the project to waterways and fish habitat.	Chapters 4 & 10 Chapters 5 & 2 Chapter 6 Chapter 10 Chapter 6 & 10 Chapter 7 Chapter 6 Chapter 16 Chapter 10 Chapter 9 Chapters 8 & 10
Department of Primary Industries (Minerals) (now part of the DII)	■ Consultation with operators of the Nambucca Valley Quarry and assessment of risks associated with blasting is recommended.	Chapter 5
Department of Primary Industries (Agriculture) (now part of the DII)	■ Property dislocation and machinery access.	Chapters 6 & 12
Department of Primary Industries (North Coast)	■ The <i>Draft Mid North Coast Regional Strategy</i> should be addressed in the environmental assessment.	Chapter 3

Agency / service provider	Issues Raised	EA reference
Region) (now part of the DII)		
Department of Water and Energy (Water) (now part of the DECCW)	■ If extraction of water from a surface water source or the course of a river is changed, a permit or licence is required under Part 2 of the <i>Water Act 1912</i>. ■ If the Proposal is in a gazetted Water Sharing Plan (under provisions of the <i>Water Management Act 2000</i>), approval requirements may be satisfied under the Act. ■ Address the decommissioning of bores in accordance with Chapter 18 of <i>Minimum Construction Requirements for Water Bores in Australia</i>, Edition 2 Revised September, 2003. ■ Details of any proposed works likely to intercept groundwater. ■ Details of any proposed groundwater extraction and use. ■ Details of proposed method of disposal of any water extracted and approval from the relevant approval authority. ■ Details of any existing bores on the development site and in the immediate vicinity. ■ Details of the existing groundwater users (including the natural environment) within the area of the proposed development and any potential impacts on these users. ■ Management strategy to deal with potential impact on groundwater with the disturbance of acid sulphate soils. ■ Details on protective measures for groundwater dependent ecosystems. ■ Details to prevent groundwater pollution, so that future remediation is not required. ■ Monitoring program for assessment on groundwater. ■ Contingency plans linked to the groundwater monitoring program.	Chapter 2 Chapter 2 Chapter 16 Chapter 16 Chapter 16 Chapter 16 Chapter 16 Chapter 16 Chapter 10 Chapter 16 Chapter 16 Chapter 16
Australian Rail and Track Corporation	■ Alternatives to road transport. ■ Construction method for railway crossings.	Chapter 3 Chapter 17

Agency / service provider	Issues Raised	EA reference
NSW Heritage Council	- Assessment of heritage significance of identified sites and any impacts upon heritage sites, including those of Aboriginal, historic or archaeological significance. Also consideration of wider heritage impacts in areas surrounding the Proposal. - Lists maintained by the National Trust under the EPBC Act and the local council should be reviewed to determine areas of historical significance which may be affected by Proposal. - Non-Aboriginal heritage items within the study area affected by the Proposal should be identified by field survey. A statement of significance and an assessment of the impact of the Proposal on the heritage significance of these items should be undertaken. Measures to conserve their heritage significance should be identified. - The field survey and assessment should be undertaken by a qualified practitioner/consultant with historic sites experience. - Where it is likely that the project will impact on Aboriginal heritage, adequate community consultation should take place regarding the assessment of significance, likely impacts and management/mitigation measures.	Chapters 15 & 19 Chapter 19 Chapter 19 Chapters 15 & 19 Chapter 15
Ministry of Transport (now part of the Department of Transport and Infrastructure (DTI))	- Potential for disruption of existing school bus services during construction. - Opportunity for provision of cycle way connections along the highway and to adjoining communities.	Chapters 6 & 12 Chapter 6
Maritime NSW	Identified the necessary vertical and horizontal clearances required on the Nambucca and Bellinger River bridges to ensure adequate clearances for river vessels.	Chapter 12
Coffs Harbour Local Aboriginal Land Council	Management of Aboriginal artefacts.	Chapter 15
Nambucca Heads Local Aboriginal Land Council	Methodology for investigation of Cow Creek Aboriginal Reserve.	Chapter 15

Information on the route options and the potential impacts of the Proposal was also provided to potentially indirectly affected property owners. These were defined as those being within 400 metres of the centreline of the route options.

Letters were sent to potentially directly affected and indirectly affected property owners prior to the display of the route options. The letter to potentially directly affected property owners also contained a copy of the RTA's *Land Acquisition Policy Statement*. Property ownership information was obtained from existing data sets provided by Nambucca and Bellingen Shire Councils.

Where it was possible to do so, potentially directly affected property owners were contacted by telephone with an offer to arrange an appointment with project team members to discuss the implications of the route options for individual properties. The project team has met with most directly affected property owners along the preferred route to discuss the implications of the Proposal. The project team has also received input from affected property owners that has resulted in modifications to the design that have minimised land acquisition and also impacts on the operation and amenity of some properties. Briefings on property impacts were also provided to both Councils.

5.2.4 Special interest groups

Local Aboriginal Land Councils and registered stakeholders

The investigation area lies with the Coffs Harbour and District, Bowraville, Nambucca and Unkya Local Aboriginal Land Council areas and within an area of interest to the Gumbular Juliri and Gumbaynggirr Elder groups. Contact with these parties was initiated during the route options stage in 2003.

Subsequent to commencing consultation with the Aboriginal community, two key guidelines have guided the project team in the development of the Aboriginal and cultural heritage investigations and the associated consultation. These guidelines are the Interim Community Consultation Requirements for Applicants (DECC 2005) and the Procedure for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation and Investigations (RTA 2008b).

Following initial consultations with the local Aboriginal land councils, it was determined by the project team that the establishment of a dedicated Aboriginal focus group would be the most effective ongoing mechanism to liaise with the various key stakeholders in the study area. As a result, an Aboriginal focus group was formed in accordance with the then draft Procedure for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation and Investigations (RTA 2008b). The Aboriginal focus group included stakeholders who registered an interest in the Proposal and was generally comprised of representatives of the Coffs Harbour and District, Bowraville, Nambucca and Unkya local Aboriginal land councils. Members of the focus group participated in a sample field survey of the various route options during the development of the Proposal and provided information regarding the location and significance of ceremonial, spiritual, historical and other types of sites to facilitate the selection of a preferred route that would minimise impacts on Aboriginal heritage.

Details of consultation with members of the Aboriginal community are in Chapter 15 – *Aboriginal heritage*.

Commercial aquatic enterprises

Commercial fishing and oyster growing are the key aquatic enterprises undertaken in the study area. Potential impacts to oyster lease areas were considered in the route development process. Discussions have been held with representatives of the Oyster Farmers Association of NSW and the Nambucca River Sydney Rock Oyster Growers Association.

Finfish and crabs account for most of the commercial production of the Nambucca River. The whole of Bellinger River, Kalang River and Deep Creek were closed to commercial fishing in May 2002 after these river systems were declared Recreational Fishing Havens (RTA 2004c).

Input has been provided on measures to effectively manage run-off upstream of existing oyster leases and provide the necessary vertical and horizontal clearances required on the bridges to ensure that passage of commercial and recreational fishing vessels is not impeded. These management measures have been included in the concept design.

Extractive industries and mineral exploration licence holders

The Nambucca Valley Quarry is present in the vicinity of the Proposal. Consultation with the owner of Nambucca Valley Quarry led to design refinement of the Proposal to enable effective truck access to and from the quarry. It also resulted in confirmation of quarry planning that verified that the quarry face would be outside the blast risk distance by the time of opening of the upgrade.

The historic Valla Gold Mine was confirmed to be beyond the road boundary of the Proposal and would therefore not be affected. The Proposal passes through an existing mining exploration lease (No. 6702) owned by Norvale Pty Ltd. Consultation with that company confirmed that it is not considering utilising the location of the Proposal for any potential mining or extractive industry operations. The company's area of interest was further west of the Proposal.

Chambers of Commerce

The following Chambers of Commerce operate within the study area:

- Bellingen Chamber of Commerce.
- Macksville and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- Nambucca Heads Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- Urunga/Mylestom Chamber of Commerce.

As part of the community liaison groups formed during route development, the Chambers of Commerce were instrumental in facilitating communication between the project team and the local community and provided opportunities for detailed discussions of key project issues. A key focus of the groups was efficient access to town centres, and an important outcome of consultation with the Chambers of Commerce was the addition of the Ballards Road interchange (south of Urunga) to provide better access to and from Urunga.

5.3 Consultation activities undertaken to date

5.3.1 During route development

The project team implemented a range of different communication mechanisms to facilitate effective two-way flow of information between the project team, the community, Councils and agencies. Seven community update newsletters were publicly released corresponding to key milestones of the development of the Proposal. The community update newsletters provided an update on the Proposal's development, and provided details on how to obtain further detailed information (project reports) and details about staffed and static displays. Copies of these community updates are included as Appendix G. The key aspects of the consultation program included:

- Formation of a contact database that members of the public were able to register to receive community updates.
- Advertising open information sessions and public displays (both static and staffed).
- Provision of a freecall project information line (1800 800 612) for direct inquiries to the project team.
- Distribution of seven community update newsletters inviting written submissions and completion of survey forms by individuals and interest groups.
- Advertising in local and regional newspapers.
- Distribution of a survey to 85 businesses in Macksville, Nambucca Heads and Urunga during 2003 to collate socio-economic data and consult businesses over potential impacts.
- Formation of, and meetings with, three community liaison groups (Macksville, Nambucca/Bellwood and Urunga) comprising residents in and around the study area and members of the local Chambers of Commerce.
- Meetings and presentations with local interest groups.
- Formation of, and meetings with, the Aboriginal focus group formed with representatives from Coffs Harbour and District, Nambucca Heads, Bowraville, and Unkya local Aboriginal land councils and Aboriginal Elders.
- Value management workshop with diverse agency, Council and community representation.
- Interviews / meetings with relevant stakeholders including property owners and local businesses.
- Public notices and media coverage (print and electronic).
- Establishment of a project website at www.rta.nsw.gov.au/pacific.
- Information evenings and staffed displays which provided the community with an opportunity to discuss and provide input into the development of the Proposal.
- Community meetings.
- Interchange workshop held with Council representatives to assist with the identification of interchanges.

5.3.2 Consultation during environmental assessment preparation

Following the announcement of the preferred route of the Macksville to Urunga section of the Proposal, a review was undertaken of the effectiveness of the community liaison groups in moving forward through the preparation of the environmental assessment. The focus was changed from area based liaison groups to issues based focus groups. These included:

- Ongoing consultation with community stakeholders by telephone, email and on-site meetings.
- Meetings with noise and flora and fauna interest groups in October 2007 and August 2008.
- A meeting with the Bellingen Shire Council Floodplain Management Committee in November 2007.
- Meetings with access groups in the Valla and Valla Beach areas to gauge initial thoughts and concerns, after preliminary local access concepts had been completed in October 2007 and December 2007.
- Meeting with emergency services to seek input into the preliminary concept design.
- Public display of interchange layouts, local access designs and preliminary concept designs, including static and staffed displays and briefings to both Nambucca and Bellingen Shire Councils in June 2008.

The consultation process has provided the project team with important insights into the key issues raised by the local community and agencies. The public displays held at key stages of the project provided an important opportunity to obtain input and feedback from the wider community. The project team has also responded to queries received through the project information telephone line, website and email.

5.4 Key issues raised

Much of the feedback obtained throughout the development of the overall Proposal has been from people potentially directly affected or nearby the various corridors and routes assessed. Many of these issues have been addressed in the development of the route options and the selection of the preferred route, as part of the Warrell Creek Review Report (RTA 2008a) and the Macksville to Urunga Preferred Route Submissions Report (RTA 2007b). The key issues raised through the consultation process during the development of the preferred route between the Macksville and Urunga section of the Proposal, the review of the Warrell Creek section and the sections where they are addressed in the environmental assessment are provided in **Table 5-3**.

Table 5-3 Issues raised by community and government agency stakeholders and corresponding location within the environmental assessment

Issue raised by stakeholders	EA reference
Property impacts, e.g. area of land required for Proposal and access arrangements	Chapter 11
Biodiversity impacts	Chapter 10
Noise	Chapter 14
Concept design issues	Chapter 6
Transport / safety issues	Chapter 17
Amenity	Chapter s12 & 13

Issue raised by stakeholders	EA reference
Severance of properties	Chapters 11 & 12
Loss of wildlife corridors	Chapter 10
Water quality	Chapter 16
Air quality	Chapter 19
Economic impacts in localities	Chapter 12
Minerals issues	Chapter 11
Aboriginal heritage issues	Chapter 15
Route options development process	Chapter 4

5.5 How consultation has influenced development of the Proposal

Throughout the development of the Proposal, many issues have been raised or options have been put forward by the community, government agencies and Councils. The project team has responded by investigating the issues raised and, where appropriate and possible, by implementing suggested options.

Key influences of the community consultation on the development of the Proposal include:

- Community input was a significant factor in the decision to cease further consideration of options to upgrade the existing highway through Macksville, Nambucca Heads and Urunga.
- Examination of options to the west of Macksville (outside the original investigation area) in response to requests from sections of the community and Macksville Chamber of Commerce.
- Consideration of alternatives to the preferred route to the north of the Nambucca River suggested by community members.
- Information in regard to the potential presence and location of threatened flora and fauna species.
- Identification of flooding behaviour and drainage issues.
- Identification of revised property access arrangements and modifications to local roads between the Nambucca Heads interchange and the Ballards Road interchange, south of Urunga.
- Identification of a number of significant Aboriginal sites.
- An increased understanding of Aboriginal heritage issues in the study area.
- Identification of European heritage items within private property.
- Inclusion of an interchange at Ballards Road, south of Urunga in response to concerns raised by Bellingen Shire Council, the Urunga Chamber of Commerce and local emergency services. This provides improved access into Urunga and Valla Beach.
- Location of the Nambucca Heads interchange to facilitate the growth of Nambucca Shire Council's future urban area at Boggy Creek.
- Inclusion of noise barriers and visual mounds to reduce the noise and visual impacts at some receivers.

5.6 Future consultation

5.6.1 Exhibition of the environmental assessment

This environmental assessment report will be advertised and placed on public exhibition for a period of no less than 30 days or as determined by the Department of Planning. The full environmental assessment report would be available for viewing at the following locations:

- Nambucca Shire Council, 44 Princess Street, Macksville (Mon- Fri 9am – 4pm).
- Bellingen Shire Council, 33-39 Hyde St, Bellingen (Mon- Fri 8:30am – 4:30pm).
- Urunga Post Office, 19 Bonville Street, Urunga (Mon- Fri 10am – 5pm).
- Nambucca Heads, RTA Motor Registry, Shops 11 and 13 Seascope Shopping Centre, Ridge Street (Mon-Fri 9am to 4pm).
- Warrell Creek Community Hall, Albert Drive, Warrell Creek.
- NSW Department of Planning, Information Centre, 23-33 Bridge Street, Sydney (Mon- Fri 9am- 5pm).
- NSW Roads and Traffic Authority, 101 Miller Street, North Sydney (Mon- Fri 8.30am- 5pm).
- RTA Pacific Highway Office, 21 Prince Street, Grafton (Mon- Fri 8.30am- 4.30pm).

Staffed displays and stakeholder meetings will be held during the exhibition of the environmental assessment to enable community representatives to ask questions about the details in the environmental assessment and provide further information for consideration in the assessment process.

The environmental assessment will also be available on the NSW Government Planning website as follows:

- <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au> (click on “Development Assessment”, then “On Exhibition”, then “On Exhibition Major Projects Part 3A”).
- Direct link for Part 3A projects on exhibition - <http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/page/on-exhibition/>.

During the exhibition period, the community, government agencies and other interested parties are invited to make written submissions on the Proposal to the Department of Planning. Following exhibition of the environmental assessment, the Director General, Department of Planning will consider the submissions received and provide copies of submissions or a report containing a summary of the issues raised to the RTA. The Director-General, Department of Planning will prepare a report on the project. The Minister for Planning will consider any advice from the Minister for Roads and the Director-General's report. The Minister for Planning will then decide whether or not to approve the project and the conditions to be attached.

5.6.2 Post environmental assessment community involvement

Following the display of this environmental assessment report, the RTA will consider community and agency submissions. The Proposal will then be assessed by the Department of Planning and considered for approval by the NSW Minister for Planning. If approved by the Minister for Planning, the Chief Executive of the RTA will decide whether to proceed with the Proposal.

Community involvement would continue as part of the construction of the Proposal. A community involvement plan would be developed and implemented at a point nearer to construction.

Further details regarding the communication and consultation procedures that the RTA has committed to are contained in Appendix D - *Draft Statement of Commitments*.