

5 Proposal description

5.1 Overview

The Proposal subject to this application comprises a bypass to the east of the village of Warrell Creek and the preferred route for the upgrade of the Pacific Highway between Macksville and Urunga announced in November 2005. The Proposal includes site investigations and ancillary facilities required for the further development and construction of the project.

The total length of the project between the northern end of the existing Allomera deviation, south of Warrell Creek and the southern end of the existing Raleigh deviation, north of Urunga is approximately 45 kilometres.

The upgrade has been developed as a motorway standard (or Class M) project with a separate access road for local traffic (see Section 2.2.3). Access to the highway will be provided at a proposed new at-grade intersection south of Warrell Creek village, proposed new grade-separated interchanges located south of Macksville and west of Nambucca Heads and at the existing grade separated interchange at Raleigh. Access to townships, communities and properties will be provided by the existing highway and new and existing local roads. Where required, these access roads will pass over or under the new highway.

The Proposal was shown in detail in **Figures 4-1 to 4-4**. A brief description of the Warrell Creek and Macksville to Urunga sections of the Proposal is provided below.

Warrell Creek section

The Proposal will include the outcomes of the review of the Warrell Creek section. The review has identified a shortlist of four feasible options. The four options commence at the northern end of the existing Allomera deviation and deviate to the east of the existing highway through the village of Warrell Creek before reconnecting with the highway west of Donnellyville.

Based on the investigations undertaken to date, one of the four options (the Purple Option) is considered to be one of the best performing options overall and to provide the best value for money and is considered, on balance, to have more merit than the other options developed.

The RTA is seeking community comment on the new options before making a final decision on the outcomes of the review of the Warrell Creek Upgrade.

Macksville to Urunga section

The announced preferred route for the Macksville to Urunga section involves:

- Options 1c and 2a to the east of Macksville.
- An upgrade of the existing highway between Nambucca Heads and Mines Road south of Urunga.
- The Option 4b bypass of Urunga.

A brief description of the Macksville to Urunga section of the Proposal is provided below:

- North of Warrell Creek, the Proposal diverts to the east of the existing highway in the vicinity of Bald Hill Road and crosses the Nambucca River immediately downstream of the confluence with Newee Creek. The bridge crossing the Nambucca River would be approximately 350 metres long.

- North of the Nambucca River, the route generally follows the ridgeline in the vicinity of Old Coast Road before rejoining the existing highway west of Nambucca Heads. The route avoids direct impact on the Newee Creek wetland (SEPP 14 wetland No. 383) and has been located to allow Old Coast Road to be reconstructed as an access road for adjoining properties.
- Between Nambucca Heads and Mines Road south of Urunga, the Proposal would be located on the western side of the existing highway which would be utilised as a local access road, with some realignment and modifications north of Valla Beach. A new bridge would be required to be constructed across Deep Creek.
- North of Mines Road, the route diverts to the west of the existing highway to traverse through Newry State Forest and cross the Kalang River in the vicinity of South Arm Road before passing to the east of Ridgewood Drive and the Raleigh Industrial Area to rejoin the existing highway at Raleigh. The route would require the construction of a new bridge of approximately 155 metres over the Kalang River. Floodplain culverts and/or bridges would also be required.

5.2 Highway design standards

The general standard for design of the Proposal is based on the *Draft Pacific Highway Design Guidelines* (RTA, 2005) to ensure that a consistent form and quality of road asset is delivered along the whole Pacific Highway corridor from the F3 to the Queensland border.

The design development process for the Proposal was ongoing at the time of preparation of this report. While the overall alignment is expected to remain, essentially, as shown and described above, it is likely that further localised refinements will be made in response to the findings that will become available from a range of investigations now under way (eg. survey, geotechnical, urban design development, assorted environmental studies) as well as consideration of local development proposals and ongoing property owner consultations.

Data provided by these and other investigations will be used to further refine the concept design for the Proposal during the preparation of the environmental assessment. The refined design will be assessed in the environmental assessment for the project.

Matters to be addressed during the refinement of the design include:

- Refinement of intersection and interchange layouts.
- Possible development of rest area facilities as part of the RTA's Rest Area Strategy for the overall Pacific Highway.
- Refinement of property access arrangements.
- Refinement of property boundaries for the proposed upgrade and, hence, definition of land acquisition.
- Completion of hydrological and hydraulic studies to enable sizing and preliminary design of bridges and culverts over watercourses and floodways along the route and also to influence the siting, layout and sizing of both temporary and permanent drainage, water retention and water quality control basins / ponds.
- Refinement of the road design to integrate a variety of environmental mitigation and improvement features. This will include acoustic attenuation measures, urban design (including revegetation and landscaping) arrangements and features that respond to local ecological conditions such as protection of key habitat and specific provisions for fauna movement across the corridor.

5.3 Staged construction

While the RTA is seeking approval for the whole highway upgrade Proposal as summarised above, there is clearly potential for the Warrell Creek to Urunga project to be delivered in discrete stages or packages. At this time, there are no specific staging proposals and the possible arrangements will be addressed in more detail in the environmental assessment. The assessment will address the related benefits of any staging plans and establish mechanisms to effectively manage the potential environmental impacts.

A decision on any staging Proposal would be influenced by factors such as funding availability and the expected benefits arising from the staged work. It is anticipated that staging proposals could be implemented in a manner that delivers substantial early benefits for the travelling public.

In general terms it is noted that the Warrell Creek to Urunga project is particularly conducive to staged implementation when compared to many other highway projects as the Proposal connects with or crosses the existing highway at five locations within the 45 kilometres length of the project and runs parallel with and adjacent to the existing highway for 9 kilometres between Nambucca Heads and Mines Road south of Urunga (Macksville to Urunga Section 3).