

Executive Summary

What is proposed?

The Australian and New South Wales (NSW) governments are providing \$3.6 billion as part of the Nation Building Program and Building Australia Fund to continue the upgrade of the Pacific Highway over the next five years to mid 2014. Included in this program is the proposed upgrading of about seven kilometres of highway at Glenugie on the mid-north coast of NSW.

The proposed Glenugie upgrade is located between Franklins Road and Eight Mile Lane, about 14 km south of Grafton. The Glenugie upgrade is referred to as 'the project' in this environmental assessment report.

The project is located to the east of the existing Pacific Highway, adjacent to the existing highway corridor. The general features of the project are:

- A motorway style (class M) upgrade comprising a 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 km per hour posted speed limit.
- An initial staging option involving a combination of arterial and motorway style road.
- A local road at-grade intersection at Franklins Road, and at-grade intersections at tie-in points to the existing two-lane highway in the vicinity of Franklins Road and Eight Mile Lane. For the motorway style upgrade, the at-grade intersection at Franklins Road would be replaced with a bridge over the upgraded highway to the existing highway.
- Retention of the existing highway as a local service access road to the west of the new roadway, to provide an alternative route for the highway, a connection between Grafton and Halfway Creek and access to properties and local roads.
- A new access track into Glenugie State Forest that would connect Eight Mile Lane to Lookout Road.
- Permanent spill containment basins at environmentally significant watercourse crossings.
- Fauna underpasses at creek crossings and key habitat locations.
- Overhead rope crossings for glider species
- Ancillary construction facilities, including compound sites, batching plant sites and stockpile sites.

Why is it needed?

The Pacific Highway is the major transport link between Sydney and Brisbane, and serves the growing population on the mid north coast and north coast of NSW. The section of the existing highway between Franklins Road and Eight Mile Lane at Glenugie requires upgrading to the standard that is being applied over the broader Pacific Highway Upgrade Program.

The existing highway at Glenugie is a two lane single carriageway with a poor safety record resulting from poor horizontal and vertical geometry, narrow shoulders and numerous traffic hazards in proximity to the highway. It has a number of intersections with local roads and private driveways.

The upgrading of the Glenugie section of the Pacific Highway, including improvements in the road standard and conversion to a dual carriageway, would provide substantial benefits for local and regional travel safety.

What alternatives were considered?

The project is a section of the Wells Crossing to Iluka Road Pacific Highway upgrade. Two options were considered for the Glenugie upgrade: the current project alignment and an option that veered away from the existing highway and to the east. The options were developed through an iterative process involving a range of environmental, community, engineering, urban design, safety and cost considerations.

The route options were then assessed in greater detail and publicly exhibited. From these options, the preferred route was selected after consideration of community and government agency submissions, the results of a value management workshop, and a technical assessment of the options. The preferred route (the project) provides the best overall balance of functional, ecological, social and economic considerations.

As part of the concept design investigations for the Wells Crossing to Iluka upgrade, two refinements to the preferred route were developed in the Glenugie area: one was located about 900 m to the east of the project and the other about 250 m to the west. The option located just to the east of the project would have increased environmental impacts in a section of state forest not previously impacted by a road corridor. The option to the west would have increased impacts on adjoining lands under private ownership and an endangered ecological community. Neither refinement was progressed as there were no clear benefits over the project.

What are the main beneficial outcomes expected?

The project would result in a range of benefits such as:

- A safer section of highway.
- Greater transport efficiency and safety for intra-state and inter-state movements.
- Improved amenity along the existing Pacific Highway.
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption in the long-term relative to the base case of 'no upgrade'.

What are the main adverse outcomes expected?

The project would result in some impacts, such as:

- Loss of forestry land.
- Loss of native vegetation and threatened species.
- Impact on endangered ecological communities.
- Impact on *Eucalyptus tetrapleura* and *Melaleuca irbyana*.
- Potential for indirect impacts on native vegetation and habitat.
- Potential for increased runoff from paved surfaces and for flow concentration, with impacts on deposition of sediment in creeks and bed and bank scour.
- Minor disruptions to traffic on the existing highway during construction.

How will the likely impacts be managed?

Measures to mitigate and/or manage the impacts have been proposed. The measures proposed aim to remove or minimise potential impacts through design in the first instance. Where a potential impact is unable to be mitigated through design, further management measures are outlined.

The impacts, and measures to minimise those impacts, are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8. A draft Statement of Commitments, that lists the intended outcomes and proposed actions, is provided in Chapter 10.

How can I comment on the proposed upgrade and/or the environmental assessment?

The NSW Department of Planning will make the environmental assessment publicly available for a minimum period of 30 days. During this period, it will be available for inspection at the Department of Planning website (www.planning.nsw.gov.au), on the RTA project website www.rta.nsw.gov.au/pacific (click on Wells Crossing to Iluka Road), at selected RTA offices, and in other locations.

The RTA will also be conducting community information sessions. The following project information line will also be available throughout the exhibition period 1800 557 673 (toll free).

Any person may make a written submission to the Director-General of the Department of Planning during the exhibition period. Submissions should be made to:

Director – Major Infrastructure Assessment
Department of Planning
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

