

February 18th 2013

Major Projects Assessment
Department of Planning and Infrastructure
GPO Box 39,
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Attn: Director Infrastructure Projects

Name of Application: Bicycle NSW Submission in response to the Environmental Impact Statement re Woolgoolga to Ballina Pacific Highway Upgrade

Bicycle NSW appreciates the opportunity to provide this submission. We support the Northern Rivers Regional Action Plan in its priorities to:

- Improve access to public transport and improve road safety
- Support industry and grow local jobs – support regional tourism

Bicycle NSW is a community based not-for-profit organization with a growing membership base that currently stands at over 12,000 members. Our members tell us they want a better cycling environment and the organizational purpose of Bicycle NSW is "Creating a better environment for Cycling". We engage with government at the National, State and Local level.

Long Term Transport Master Plan

Bicycle NSW supports the policy directions and priorities relating to transport access as contained in the final report including the following:

- Improving the mix of transport options across regional NSW
- All **new road projects** or **road network upgrades** will be required to examine the feasibility of **providing for cycling** as an **essential component of the project**.
- Preserving the amenity and character of regional towns, which are attractive and amenable to walking and cycling.
- Connecting communities through
 - delivering rural highway upgrades, and address black spots and safety across the rural road network
 - Improving regional road safety
 - Investing in local cycleways in partnership with local councils
- Making travel safer – reducing road trauma for motorists, pedestrians and cyclist
- Improving the safety of our transport system
- Delivering new and improved public transport, walking, cycling and road links to growth centres across NSW
- Enhanced cycling routes in regional centres to increase the number of people who cycle

Bicycle NSW is committed to doing everything it possibly can to support the government at all levels in meeting the challenges inherent in this delivery task and makes comment on the Environmental Impact Statement for the Woolgoolga to Ballina Pacific Highway Upgrade in the context of the above policy framework.

Bicycle NSW supports the proposal in the context that it acknowledges the legislated use by cyclists of the road shoulders, including bridges, of the proposed motorway. The designated 2.5 or 3 metre width of the nearside sealed shoulder is a reasonable minimum standard that provides a cycling environment which is a definite improvement on the minimal or missing shoulders available on most regional and local roads in the geographical area. This improvement is especially significant given the high speeds of 90 and 100 kilometres per hour that are commonly posted on these regional and local roads. At the same time this degree of separation from trucks, including B-doubles and possibly B-triples, along with other motorized vehicles travelling at signposted 110 mph is not sufficient where there is potential for a growing and reasonable level of cycling use. There would be specific locations where a higher level of separation is required.

Bicycle NSW proposes that service roads, access roads and/or roads that are replaced for through use once the new Pacific Highway is complete, will have a much greater role for people riding bikes. They already do play a greater role, as for example our affiliate group in Ballina has commented to us with respect to the greater use local cyclists are now able to make of sections of the Old Pacific highway since the opening of the Ballina Bypass. In the area of the Woogoolga to Ballina Pacific Highway upgrade there are large and continuous sections of the existing Pacific Highway which can and should become service roads. These will be far less trafficked and therefore have potential to be much more suitable for cycling than the existing Pacific Highway and sections of the upgraded Pacific Highway.

Service roads by their very definition as continuous alternative routes for local and regional traffic and providing access to and from the upgraded highway, are equally useful for cyclists as other road users. With the recommended posted speed limit of 80 kilometres per hour, they provide an even more suitable environment for cycling than the motorway. Their direct connection to existing regional towns and villages such as Grafton, Ulmarra, Tyndale, McLean, Woodburn, Broadwater, Wardell and Ballina and to numerous other communities makes these service roads much more relevant for people using the bike, whether as an alternative form of transport, for recreation or for tourism.

Bicycle NSW notes that the Environmental Impact Statement states that sealed shoulders on service roads would be 2.5 metres where the road is also a cycle route and only one metre in other circumstance. We state that **all service roads must be considered cycle routes** for the reasons above. Such roads often would not be currently considered a cycle route due to the volume, speed and type of traffic currently using those roads. This usage would change once the Pacific Highway is upgraded as a deviation from the existing road. There is an opportunity for local councils to review their Bike Plan with respect to the changed road environment.

Bicycle NSW is concerned as to whether the suggested posted speed limit of 80 kilometres per hour would prove practical and acceptable by all road users, particularly on longer continuous lengths of road. If there were pressure to increase these speed limits to 90 and 100 kilometres per hour, the suggested 2.5 metre sealed shoulders would no longer be adequate. Greater separation would be required if higher speed limits were posted.

Bicycle NSW is also concerned as to the potential usage of some service roads by a significant volume of heavy trucks. For example the proposed route of the Pacific Highway upgrade is located quite distant from the major regional centre of Grafton. We expect that the service roads north and south of Grafton will experience significant traffic from trucks servicing this major centre. There is also a high possibility that trucks needing to access other major centres, such as in the New England area and other towns accessible from the Summerland Highway will also use these service roads to access Grafton and then beyond. With this greater potential use by large heavy vehicles, most likely

travelling at higher speeds than 80 kilometres per hour, greater separation would be required between the travel lane and the shoulder used by cyclists.

The service roads do not provide a continuous route between Woogoolga and Ballina but a continuous bicycle route can be provided by the judicious use of sections of the upgraded Pacific Highway. These sections would have a greater role to play in cycle use and would be potential areas requiring a greater degree of separation.

Continuity of the cycling route between Woogoolga and Ballina is critical. While only a minority of cyclists will be expected to travel the full distance, there will be many commencement and destination points along the route, mostly linked to the major centres, towns, villages and communities along the existing Pacific Highway. By providing a continuous cycling route, these communities can be all connected by bike, enabling people to choose an alternative, cheap, healthy, clean and fun form of transport.

With the provision of a continuous high quality north south cycling route between Woogoolga and Ballina, local councils will be far better placed to focus on providing the shorter and safe cycling links from their outlying villages and popular tourist towns such as Yamba and Evans Heads to the main cycling route and the towns on that route. This will create a wonderful boost for cycling tourism and enable the many locals, regular holiday makers and tourists to extend their use of the bike for transport beyond their own town boards to nearby towns.

There are sections along this route with much greater potential for pedestrian use, including those using mobility scooters who can travel longer distances at the prescribed limit of 10 kilometres per hour. With an aging population and many retirees attracted to the Northern Rivers, there is great potential for enabling longer aging in place with more people able to continue to live in communities outside town when they have access to safe pedestrian and cycling paths. For the more mobile, use of the bike, including power assisted bikes and tricycles, would also provide much greater mobility as people age and become more uncomfortable with driving a car. Such sections would require higher separation from the motorized traffic.

Bicycle NSW recognizes that the requirements for cyclists and cycling varies along the Woogoolga to Ballina corridor. Some area such as along the Coffs Coast as far north as Red Rock are under development, already with growing residential areas and new commercial areas, which together with recreational and tourism destinations provides frequent and closely located cycling destinations. Such areas need to be able to provide for many types of bike riders, including children and inexperienced cyclist as well as pedestrians including people on mobility scooters. Such areas have a need for a higher level of separation and are more suited to a two-way separated shared use path. In other sections of the corridor there are longer distances between destinations and are unlikely to attract the younger and less experienced riders, except as part of larger groups of recreational riders. Some sections have high tourism potential and if developed with good separation will attract large numbers of domestic and international tourists and holiday makers who will want good separation from large and fast traffic.

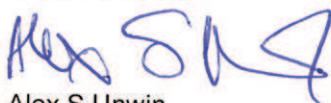
Bicycle NSW recommends that:

- All service roads, access roads and other sections of existing Pacific Highway that are replaced be considered cycling routes and appropriate provision made for cyclists
- Where service road posted speeds exceed 80 kilometres per hour, greater separation than the proposed 2 metre sealed shoulders be provided
- Where service roads will carry significant volumes of large trucks including B-doubles and potentially B-triples, which is very likely on the service roads north and south of Grafton, greater separation than the proposed 2 metre sealed shoulder be provided
- Where service roads run through areas of growing higher residential development, such as along the full extent of the Coffs Coast, greater separation than the proposed 2 metre sealed shoulder be provided
- Where there is no service road alternative available, connecting sections of the Pacific Highway be considered for greater separation than the proposed 2.5 – 3 metre sealed shoulder. In this case priority should be given to areas of growing higher residential density where less experienced and younger cyclists as well as pedestrians and motorised devices such as mobility scooters, would be expected to need use the facility.
- The detail regarding type of cycling facility and separation and appropriate posted speeds to be further developed through consultation with Bicycle NSW, our local affiliates and members and other local cycling groups and cyclists.

Bicycle NSW is grateful for the opportunity to make this submission and we look forward to the opportunity to work with the NSW Government to contribute to the development and delivery of a better environment for cycling.

Please direct any questions or requests for further information to Bicycle NSW Board Member Carolyn New on 0427 018 516

Yours Sincerely



Alex S Unwin

Chief Executive Officer