

PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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Dear Sir/Madam

Submission on Woolgoolga to Ballina Pacific Highway Upgrade

I wish to comment on the recently released Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the upgrade of the Pacific Highway between Woolgoolga and Ballina. I

The main focus of my concern is the proposal to construct 48km of new highway through Glenugie to Maclean. This is the largest construction of new highway along the eastern seaboard and it will pass through the most ecologically diverse and relatively intact forested areas of anywhere in NSW. One of the key reasons for this high biodiversity is the absence of a major road to date.

The environmental costs of clearing over 948 hectares of vegetation including 337 hectares of Endangered Ecological Communities (EECs) including the Nationally listed Lowland Subtropical Rainforest cannot be measured nor replaced –that is why they are protected. The cumulative impacts on these EECs is unacceptable.

A primary reason for not duplicating the existing route is the cost of building bridges over flood plain. This has recently been achieved successfully with the Kempsey upgrade – it can be done, but the choice is one of internalising or externalising costs at the expense of the environment.

The proposed route would impact on threatened species (both state and federally listed) and ecosystems generally along the route. The proposed bridges and other methods to address this issue are not proven and all monitoring will do is document a further decline in the population.

I have serious concerns about the survival of over 80 threatened species and all of the non-threatened species that will lose their habitat when the forests are cleared for the highway. The protection of compensatory habitat elsewhere will not assist these habitats and species.

I therefore call on the determining authorities to reject the preferred route throughout the Clarence Valley and to adopt the orange option which is a much less damaging option for the Valley's ecosystems.

At a time of great biodiversity loss we cannot allow such a major impact on the Clarence ecosystems. There is a viable alternative and it needs to be adopted.

Yours faithfully

Ann Sharp