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Received for SSI #4963 Woolgoolga to Ballina Pacific Highway Upgrade (SSI)

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Pacific Highway Upgrade: Woolgoolga to Ballina

Clarence Valley Council Submission to Environmental Impact Statement

February 2013

First and foremost Council strongly supports the upgrading of the Highway, both within and outside our valley, and so the preparation and release for consultation of the Environmental Impact Statement is seen as a major step to eventual construction. It also goes without saying that Council strongly supports the commencement and completion of that construction at the earliest possible dates.

At a more specific level, Council has a number of concerns which we believe need to be addressed, being:

1. McIntyre's Lane, Gulmarrad

The concept design currently states "Further investigation required at McIntyre's Lane". Council's strongly held position, as previously stated in writing to the RMS, is that an overpass is required at this location. This will:

- Allow for future access to the existing Pacific Highway
- Allow for access for cane farmers and their equipment to cultivated land dissected by the new Highway
- Recognise the growth potential at Gulmarrad, including that resulting from the recent rezoning of over 40 hectare of land in Sheehan's Lane from rural/residential to residential (additional housing yield approximately 500 dwellings).

The provision of an overpass at this location also removes the need for an access road connecting McIntyre's Lane.

As previously discussed with the RMS, Council would be interested in exploring the opportunity for the highway contractor to win the material at required to lower the crest in McIntyre's Lane by approximately 8.0 metres no cost to Council. This would then allow for the future construction of a compliant 80k/hr sealed road.

Recommendation: That the concept design be amended to include an overpass at McIntyre's Lane, Gulmarrad.

2. Connection to Brooms Head Road

The concept design states "Investigate alternate connection to Brooms Head Road and review geometry of the southbound off ramp to the Maclean interchange".

The current design indicates access to Brooms Head Road via Jubilee Street or Goodwood Street. Jubilee Street is the current link and passes through Townsend residential area. Goodwood Street is a gravel lane which leads east and then turns north and connects to Jubilee Street. Use of this current alignment would still direct all traffic, including trucks servicing the Townsend industrial area, through the residential area.

Council favours further investigation of the extension of Goodwood Street in an easterly direction, connecting to Brooms Head Road in the vicinity of Pine Ave. This by-passes the residential area and allows direct access to the industrial estate. It is acknowledged that this would involve construction through wetland areas, and so the need for further investigations is supported. Council supports the general

concept for the Maclean interchange as it integrates the new Highway well with Maclean and future growth at Townsend/Gulmarrad.

Recommendation: That an alternate connection to Brooms Head Road via an easterly extension of Goodwood Street be investigated.

3. Connection to Yamba Road

Council's concerns relate to access to Yamba Road for traffic travelling south on the new Highway. The concept design requires vehicles to leave the Highway at Watts Lane Harwood, cross the existing bridge and onto Yamba Road and then to Yamba or Maclean.

The concept design includes a 'possible future ramp' exiting the Highway south of Harwood Bridge and looping back to connect to Yamba Road.

Yamba is a popular tourist destination, for both stayers and day trippers, and the local economy is heavily reliant on that trade. Many of those tourists, if not the majority, come from points north. The current proposal has potential to create confusion (even if well signposted) as the turn-off is a considerable distance from Yamba Road (and on the opposite side of the river).

Recommendation: That the possible future ramp from the Highway south of Harwood Bridge connecting to Yamba Road be included in the initial construction phase.

4. Ecological Impacts

Council acknowledges that a significant assessment of ecological impacts has been carried out and that many potential impacts are a consequence of the route alignment previously adopted. It is also acknowledged that actual impacts will be determined in part by detailed design, which has not yet been undertaken. While Council does not possess the specific expertise to comment in detail, it recognises the potential for adverse impacts on endangered communities, in particular the coastal emu.

Council's Biodiversity Management Strategy and Riparian Action Strategy as a principle also identifies the need to provide offsets for the environmental impact of development involving unavoidable clearing of vegetation or land. To that end compensatory habitat is required to be provided in accordance with those Strategies and Council would like to be consulted and seek concurrence to identify suitable land and riparian areas for offset and rehabilitation.

Recommendations:

- a. That the detailed design take every measure reasonable practical to eliminate or minimise any impact on endangered communities and take into account ameliorative measures as recommended by Government agencies.
- b. That compensatory habitat be provided to offset the environmental impacts of the proposal in accordance with Council's adopted Biodiversity Management Strategy and Riparian Action Strategy. Council is to be consulted and seek concurrence for suitable land and riparian areas to be offset and rehabilitated.

5. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impacts

Council acknowledges the potential for impact on sensitive aboriginal cultural heritage sites.

Recommendation: That the detailed design process continue with on-going dialogue with the local aboriginal community to address any on-going cultural heritage impacts.

6. Glenugie Interchange

Council acknowledges that the general location and concept design of the Glenugie interchange has been determined at route development stage.

Recommendation: That the detailed design of this interchange seeks to maximise access to the existing Grafton airport and associated future development in that vicinity.

7. Hydrology and Flooding

- The flooding and hydrology assessment has taken into account issues raised by Council. It is noted in Section 6.11.3 that an impact of the upgrading will be a decrease in the “flood immunity” of the Maclean levee from an estimated overtopping at 2.7% AEP (1 in 36 years) to 2.8% AEP (1 in 35 years), which is an increase in the chance in flooding in any one year of 0.1% (1 in 1000).
- Concerns regarding the potential impact of culvert blockages have been addressed with additional modelling, and the modelling assumptions used appear reasonable and in accordance with industry best practice.
- The requirement for maintenance of the current flowpath under the highway into Chaselings basin was assessed in Section 5.3.4 and is a required mitigation measured under Section 8.2.4.

While Section 6 of the working paper specifies the required waterway opening requirements under the highway itself (which should therefore be included in the project determination) a concern is that required openings under approach roads (overpasses and interchanges) has not generally be assessed in the working paper and therefore are not specified. Some of the interchanges on the floodplain (e.g. the Harwood interchange) have significant embankments on the approach roads which may result in greater localised impacts than those modelled in conjunction with the EIS if insufficient openings are provided.

Recommendation: That the capacity of openings under approach roads be addressed via the determination report requiring detailed design to assess the localised flooding impacts on approach embankments on overpasses and interchanges, with a requirement that adverse flooding impacts not exceed the EIS targets.