

EXHIBITION OF PREFERRED INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT

Pacific Highway Upgrade – Woolgoolga to Ballina

Clarence Valley Council offers the following comments on the Preferred Infrastructure Report for the Pacific Highway Upgrade – Woolgoolga to Ballina.

Riparian restoration and vegetation offset plantings.

The construction of the highway upgrade will involve significant clearing and will require the restoration of riparian areas and vegetation offset plantings. For this purpose plants need to have local provenance and sufficient lead time allowed for sourcing and propagating appropriate plantings. Detailed schedules for planting need to specify species selection and provenance and be included in the contracts for plantings.

Offsetting for clearing and environmental impact needs to take account of Clarence Valley Council's adopted Biodiversity Strategy 2010. Offsets should be targeted to identified priority conserve and repair priority areas and corridors in the adopted Strategy.

At the detailed design stage, RMS will need to specify offset ratios, specific locations and security of tenure to provide appropriate offsets.

RMS will also need to ensure that requirements for rehabilitation standards are included in contract specifications and that they are implemented at construction stage.

Hydrology and flooding

Five potential issues with hydrology and flooding are:

- Potential blockage of waterway structures from debris during a flood event,
- Shark Creek drainage and flooding,
- James Creek drainage network,
- Provision of adequate opening in approach roads, and
- The impact of the interchange layout at Maclean.

Council's EIS submission noted that concerns regarding the potential impact of culvert blockages had been addressed with additional modelling and that the assumptions used appeared reasonable. Appendix C of the PIR contains an assessment of bridge and viaduct debris blockage during the January 2013 flood event. The assessment concludes that the evidence of debris blockage supports the blockage assumptions used in the EIS.

Appendix C of the PIR contains a detailed assessment of the Shark Creek drainage network, which has been raised as an issue by various property owners in that area. The PIR concludes there are several options which can be further explored at the detailed design stage to address the identified issues. Environment Management Measure HF27 in Section 5 of the PIR requires that during the detailed design phase RMS in consultation with CVC and relevant landowners consider opportunities to improve the drainage system performance in the Shark Creek area where feasible and reasonable.

EIS submissions from the community raised issues with the impact of the recent Farlows Flat works on flood behaviour in James Creek. Appendix V of the PIR has indicated it may be possible to undertake works to improve flood drainage in James Creek, and Environment Management Measure HF27 in Section 5 of the PIR requires investigation during the detailed design phase of viable options to maintain the existing flood behaviour in James Creek

A concern raised in Council's EIS submission was whether the hydrology working paper had assessed required openings under approach roads (overpasses and interchanges), and Council's submission recommended that the determination report require the detailed design to assess localised flooding impacts due to these structures with a requirement that adverse flooding impacts not exceed the EIS targets. The PIR indicates (Section 2.10.2) that the EIS assessed culvert and flood relief structures for all overpass roads, service roads and embankments for interchanges, but notes that further hydrology modelling will be undertaken during the detailed design phase. Environment Management Measure HF23 in Section 5 of the PIR requires RMS to meet the design objectives for road flood immunity and flood management during the detailed design phase.

The Maclean interchange has the potential to significantly impact on flood storage (and hence flood levels in the town of Maclean) because the existing culvert at the Goodwood Street underpass is the main means of filling an existing area of flood storage located on the eastern side of the highway known as Chaselings Basin. Section 4.4.8 of the PIR has assessed the revised interchange design and concluded that it would result in an additional increase of flood levels of between 0.5mm and 2.5mm, with no noticeable change to the duration of flood impacts. The revised design provides a bank of eight 2.4x1.2m culverts, which is the same as in the original design. However, as noted above, the detailed design will need to ensure that the interchange's approach embankments do not adversely impact the performance of these culverts. Environment Management Measure HF16 in Section 5 of the PIR requires a drainage structure with an equivalent capacity of the current Goodwood Street underpass to be installed for the duration of construction.

Comments from Council's Floodplain Risk Management Committee

At the Floodplain Risk Management Committee meeting of 26 November 2013, the Committee resolved:

"That the Committee request that Council seek assurances from the Roads and Maritime Services that the Highway design will not adversely impact on current flood patterns and levels of protection, including the post-flood draw down."

Old Sections of the Pacific Highway

No discussions have yet been held in relation to the sections of existing highway north of Glenugie. In relation to this section of road Council is of the view that once the new Highway is completed, its connection to the current state road network is crucial. In particular, the connections from the Gwydir Highway to both the Glenugie and Tyndale interchanges should remain as part of the state road network.