



Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW

Oxley Highway to Kempsey Upgrading the Pacific Highway Environmental Assessment

MAIN VOLUME

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Executive summary

What is proposed?

The proposed upgrade, known as the Oxley Highway to Kempsey Pacific Highway upgrade, referred to herein as the 'Proposal', is part of the Pacific Highway Upgrade Program being funded by the Federal and NSW Governments.

The Proposal would commence approximately 700 metres north of the Oxley Highway interchange, tying in with the existing dual carriageways to the south, and continue northwards to tie in at Stumpy Creek with the dual carriageways of the proposed Kempsey to Eungai Pacific Highway upgrade. At the northern end of the Proposal, the eastern service road would extend approximately 320 metres further to the north of Stumpy Creek to tie in with the southern interchange of the Kempsey Bypass section of the approved Kempsey to Eungai upgrade now under construction. The majority of the Proposal would require duplication of the existing highway. Two main sections of the Proposal would deviate from the alignment of the existing highway. These are in the vicinity of the Hastings River and the Wilson River. The existing highway would be retained wherever possible for use as a service road or local road connection.

The general features of the Proposal are:

- Approximately 37 kilometres of four-lane dual carriageway (two lanes in each direction) with a wide median to allow a future upgrade to six lanes.
- A new alignment across the Hastings River and Wilson River floodplains and minor realignment within Maria River State Forest.
- 100 year average recurrence interval flood immunity, with the exception of the Wilson River floodplain where the road embankment would be above the 20 year average recurrence interval flood level.
- A bypass of Telegraph Point. Access to and from Telegraph Point would be provided by a new grade separated interchange in the area of Blackmans Point Road south of Telegraph Point and a half interchange in the area of Haydons Wharf Road north of Telegraph Point.
- Overbridges located to the south of Sancrox Road, at Bill Hill Road, Mingaletta Road, Wharf Road, Kundabung Road and Middle Gate Road.
- The existing Pacific Highway near Blackmans Point Road and Yarrabee Road passing under the Proposal.
- Major cuttings through Cooperabung Hill.
- New major bridge structures for the Hastings River and Wilson River crossings, and the crossing of the North Coast Railway to the north of the Wilson River.
- Smaller bridges for a number of creek crossings.
- Provision of two new rest areas south of Mingaletta Road.
- Provision of a service road network using sections of the existing highway, existing local roads and new roads.

For more details on the Proposal's design, refer to **Chapter 6 The Proposal** and **Chapter 7 Construction of the Proposal**.

Why is it needed?

The Pacific Highway is the major transportation link between Sydney and Brisbane as well as the coastal regions of northern New South Wales (NSW) and south-east Queensland. Many of these regions are currently experiencing significant rates of population growth and this trend is predicted to continue as local economies grow and become more diverse from traditional tourism-based economies. However, tourism is still important to local economies and tourist related traffic significantly increases highway traffic volumes in peak holiday times.

The existing Oxley Highway to Kempsey section of the Pacific Highway plays a vital role in linking the large urban settlements of Port Macquarie and Kempsey. The current mix of local and through traffic on the existing single carriageway highway is a major safety concern, particularly because of their differing needs and usage patterns. In addition to these safety concerns, it is anticipated that delays are likely to increase with the predicted population growth.

The upgrade of the existing highway to dual carriageway would improve transport safety and efficiency, reduce crashes, assist with economic development, improve freight costs and travel times, allow for the separation of local and through traffic and provide a safe and efficient section of the transport network of NSW.

The need for the Proposal is discussed further in **Chapter 2 Strategic need for the Proposal** and **Chapter 3 Proposal need, objectives and alternatives**.

What are the alternatives considered?

In the initial phases of the Proposal's development, a number of route options were considered and assessed for functionality and environmental performance. This can be found in the *Oxley Highway to Kempsey Route Options Development Report* (RTA 2005f). The Preferred Route Corridor was selected following detailed community consultation, engineering and environmental investigations, as well as value management workshops. Details on the preferred alignment can be obtained from the *Oxley Highway to Kempsey Preferred Route Report* (RTA 2006e).

For more details on route selection, refer to **Chapter 3 Proposal need, objectives and alternatives**.

What are the main benefits of the Proposal?

The Proposal would provide strategic and ongoing benefits to the region in the form of improved transport safety and efficiency. It would improve road conditions and provide for the separation of local and through traffic.

The Proposal would:

- Provide a safer section of the Pacific Highway.
- Provide for growth and improve the conditions for economic development in the immediate and surrounding areas.
- Improve transport efficiency including reducing freight costs and improving travel times.
- Improve water quality in areas adjoining the existing Pacific Highway through the use of permanent basins to capture highway runoff and spills from crashes.
- Provide better connectivity and contiguity for settlements along the route.

For more details on benefits refer to **Chapter 22 Strategic and Proposal justification**.

What are the main adverse impacts of the Proposal?

The main adverse impacts that would be caused by the construction and operation of the Proposal are:

- Loss of vegetation, habitat and state forest land.
- Loss of regionally significant farm land and agricultural productivity.
- Potential impacts on Aboriginal heritage items.
- Additional noise for some residences.
- Construction related impacts such as noise, vibration, and air and water quality issues.

For more details on impacts refer to **Part C** of this Environmental Assessment.

How would the adverse impacts be managed?

The route options development and preferred route selection processes have been undertaken with the aim of avoiding or minimising potential negative impacts. The concept design process has further refined the Preferred Route Corridor, with the aim of removing or reducing potential negative impacts.

This Environmental Assessment identifies proposed measures to minimise, manage and mitigate the remaining impacts of the construction and operation of the Proposal. These impacts and the proposed management measures are discussed in **Part C** of this Environmental Assessment.

A draft Statement of Commitments, which lists the proposed actions and environmental outcomes to be achieved, is provided in **Appendix B** of this Environmental Assessment. The Statement of Commitments would be finalised by the RTA following public exhibition of this Environmental Assessment and consideration of submissions received. The final Statement of Commitments would form part of any approval and would prevail for the construction and operation of the Proposal.

How can I comment on the Proposal and the Environmental Assessment?

The NSW Department of Planning will make the Environmental Assessment public for a minimum period of 30 days. During this period the Environmental Assessment will be available for viewing at selected RTA offices and other locations. The RTA will also be holding staffed displays. An information line will be available throughout the exhibition period on 1800 154 724 (toll free). Copies of the Environmental Assessment will be available on the RTA website at www.pacifichighwayupgrade.com.au and on the Department of Planning website at www.planning.nsw.gov.au.

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

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