Dear stakeholder,

Update on the Bemboka Bridge Widening Project

This letter is to provide you the latest update on the Bemboka Bridge Widening Project and advise you of the decision to widen the bridge on the downstream side. This decision is as a result of community consultation, environmental investigations and several design changes to minimise impacts.

Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) is continuing with the planning and design for the widening of the Bemboka Bridge on the Snowy Mountains Highway at Moran’s Crossing, approximately 8 kilometres south west of Bemboka. Funding for this project is part of the NSW Governments Bridges for the Bush infrastructure program.

The project involves widening the existing bridge by constructing a parallel, bridge beside the existing bridge. This will provide 3.5 metre wide traffic lanes, two metre wide shoulders to allow for cycle facilities, upgraded road approaches and improved road safety. This will bring the bridge up to current bridge standards and enable it to accommodate modern traffic volumes including Higher Mass Limit (HML) vehicles.

Recent Progress

Two design options were considered for the upgrade, one on either side of the existing bridge.

RMS engaged consultants NGH Environmental to undertake a Preliminary Environmental Investigation (PEI) to assess the impact of both the upstream and downstream design options. The investigation assessed a number of areas including hydrology, air quality, flora and fauna (including platypus), noise impacts, Aboriginal heritage and non Aboriginal heritage.

Consultation began in September 2012 with local residents and stakeholders to discuss the project and address their concerns.

As a direct result of consultation with local landowners RMS instructed NGH Environmental to undertake additional biodiversity investigations to further evaluate the potential impacts of both designs on the local platypus colony.

Following the community consultation and review of the PEI potential risks, recommendations and conclusions, RMS made several design changes to the original upstream and downstream options to minimise the potential environmental impacts.

The PEI was updated and the impact of both revised design options reassessed.
Design decision

RMS undertook a lengthy risk and impact assessment of the bridge options and PEI findings. A range of different factors including environment, heritage, community, constructability, land acquisition and utilities were considered.

After analysis of the investigations and assessment, the decision was made to widen the bridge on the downstream side.

The revised downstream option reduces the impact on local flora and fauna (including the local platypus), does not require expensive realignment of utilities, minimises the amount of land acquisition required and reduces the number of affected land owners.

The main reasons the upstream option was not chosen was due to the additional property acquisition required, expensive relocation of utilities and significant impact to prime river bank platypus habitat.

What happens next?

A Review of Environmental Factors (REF) is now being prepared and will consider a number of factors including biodiversity, visual impact, property acquisition, land use, bridge design and constructability. The REF is expected to be completed May 2013.

In parallel to the REF the detailed design of the downstream bridge and road approaches has also started. RMS will continue to consult with local residents during the design phase.

Construction is expected to start late 2013.

Please contact me directly if you have any questions or require further information on the project.

Yours sincerely

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Project Manager

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Enclosed:
1 x Preliminary Environmental Investigation, Bemboka Bridge Duplication
1 x Letter requesting addendum Preliminary Environmental Investigation due to proposed design changes
1 x Addendum to the Preliminary Environmental Investigation, Bemboka Bridge Duplication