

Proposed safety improvements along Big River Way between Glenugie and Tyndale – summary of feedback

As part of the NSW Government's Saving Lives on Country Roads program, we are proposing a number of safety improvements on the old Pacific Highway, now known as Big River Way, between Glenugie and Tyndale. The community was invited to provide feedback on the proposed safety improvements in July 2020.

The NSW Government is investing up to \$20 million over the next three years to deliver a number of road safety improvements including pavement rebuilding and resurfacing works on Big River Way.

The Woolgoolga to Ballina Pacific Highway upgrade has resulted in changes to the road network in the Clarence Valley region. The old Pacific Highway between Glenugie and Tyndale has carried a significant volume of traffic over the years. This volume has now reduced to about 5000 vehicles per day.

With the recent opening of the Glenugie to Tyndale section of the Pacific Highway upgrade, it is expected that the number of heavy vehicles travelling Big River Way between Tyndale to South Grafton and Glenugie will reduce by about 75 per cent. However, Big River Way will remain the main connection with Grafton, the New England region, and the Richmond Valley area to the north.

The Safer Assets Strategy has been developed to identify the most appropriate treatments to improve a number of intersections and safety along the road. The strategy aims to continue improving the road and provide a safer, efficient and reliable journey to road users.

We propose to:

- Install widened centre line on the highway to increase the separation between on-coming vehicles
- Install safety barrier to reduce the risk of vehicles leaving the highway and hitting an object or oncoming vehicle
- Improve intersections at Eight Mile, Six Mile and Four Mile lanes, Centenary Drive (south), Heber Street in South Grafton, Swan and McLachlans lanes and Coldstream Road
- Review bus drop off/pick up areas and improve where possible
- Provide safer turning facilities at Six Mile Lane
- Install roadside safety barrier for improved protection of pedestrians at Ulmarra
- Review the Ulmarra school zone for safety measures and opportunities.

This project will be delivered in stages, to minimise disruption to traffic during major work.

Consultation

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) advised the community and stakeholders about proposed safety improvements and their opportunities to provide feedback by:

- Updating the Pacific Highway website with the safety improvement proposal and an accompanying summary about the plan available for download
- Publishing two geo-targeted Facebook posts were encouraging the community and stakeholders to submit feedback.

Facebook post #1:

The first post announcing the proposed safety improvements ran from 27 June to 2 July. It reached 13,228 people and was shared 51 times.

Facebook post #2:

The second post, with the theme “feedback closing soon”, ran from 3 July to 10 July. It reached 7,480 people and was shared 34 times.

- Australia Post distribution within the project area (10,895 stakeholders) with details about proposed safety improvements and a link to the website and email to submit feedback
- A media release issued by TfNSW on Friday 26 June 2020
- Advertised on the TfNSW “Have your say” website:
<https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/have-your-say/>

Summary of feedback

Forty nine written submissions were received, with the key issues being:

- Objection to removal of overtaking lanes
- Property access with the installation of wire rope safety barrier
- Repairs to the road surface.

Responses to issues

Issue: Why are the existing overtaking opportunities being reduced?

Response: There has been a reduction in traffic on the road since the Glenugie to Tyndale Pacific Highway upgrade opened. The spacing and direction of the overtaking lanes on Big River Way will be changed to better match traffic needs. There will be adequate overtaking opportunities from the retained overtaking lanes.

Overtaking lanes south of Grafton

- The existing overtaking lane near Reilleys Lane will be reversed to serve northbound traffic. This provides an overtaking opportunity between the Pacific Highway upgrade at Glenugie and Grafton
- For southbound traffic a new, longer overtaking lane will start at Centenary Drive and end just before Four Mile Lane. This will allow traffic to overtake slower vehicles after leaving Grafton.

Overtaking lanes north of Grafton

- A northbound overtaking lane located near Duncans Lane will be retained, allowing traffic to overtake slower vehicles after leaving Grafton
- The divided road and overtaking lanes at Swan Creek and Cowper (Brushgrove) will be retained. These are well positioned to allow for safe overtaking.

In general, overtaking lanes are positioned along the road at locations where traffic has built up and needs to be able to disperse safely. With reduced traffic on Big River Way, the spacing between overtaking lanes can increase without adding to delays along the route.

The width gained by removing an overtaking lane will be used to install a widened median, which will significantly improve road safety by separating oncoming vehicles, reducing the risk of head on collisions. The wide median will allow for median safety barriers to be installed, this will further enhance safety along the route. There will be adequate overtaking opportunities on the Big River Way from the retained overtaking lanes.

Issue: Residents on Big River Way are concerned about changes to property access as a result of installing median safety barriers

Response: To reduce the potential for head on collisions, we are looking at a number of locations to install median safety barriers. This may result in a change to how residents access their property and could result in an increase journey times. If your access is impacted, you may have to access or exit Big River Way at a different intersection or use another intersection to safely turn around to head in the direction you need travel. We acknowledge this may be an inconvenience, however, we need to ensure we are improving safety for all road users.

Big River Way will remain the main connection with Grafton, the New England region, and the Summerland Way and carry about 5000 vehicles a day. Many property access points are located where it is not safe to stop in the traffic lane while waiting to turn and there is a risk of collisions.

In this situation, left-in and left-out turning movements are preferred for any access onto the highway, such as driveways, as they separate potential conflict points.

We understand some land owners have property on adjacent sides of the road and need to move between the separate parts of their land.

We will work with residents and businesses within the project areas to minimise any potential impacts, such as property access, during the development and construction stages of the work.

Issue: The road surface needs to be fixed. Will something be done?

Response: Some rebuilding of the road was deferred over recent years to minimise the traffic delays that would have been in addition to the Pacific Highway upgrade work. A reactive maintenance approach was taken frequently to patch sections of the pavement during this time.

The proposed safety upgrade will include rebuilding substantial sections of the road that have been damaged to provide a smoother travel journey.

Issue: Concerns were raised over bicycle access and safety along the road, particularly between Glenugie and Ulmarra

Response: Safety for cyclists will be improved by widening the road, which creates greater separation and space between vehicles and cyclists. Reduced traffic volumes will also improve cyclist safety.

We recognise the importance of shared cycleways and will investigate any future opportunities with Clarence Valley Council.

Issue: Will the speed limit be increased?

Response: Speed limits will be reviewed as part of the three year program to determine final proposed speed limits along Big River Way. TfNSW will continue to monitor conditions and make changes where required.

Some speed limits that have been in place during the Pacific Highway upgrade work will remain in place permanently. This is the case at Tyndale where the road alignment has changed due to the new interchange arrangements.

Issue: What is being done to improve safety along Big River Way in Ulmarra?

Response: A safety barrier is being provided adjacent to the southbound travel lane between King and Coldstream streets in Ulmarra to shield a pedestrian walkway. The Ulmarra school zone will also be reviewed for safety measures and opportunities.

TfNSW will work with the Ulmarra Progress Association to identify any additional opportunities to improve safety along Big River Way at Ulmarra.

What happens next?

Members of the project team will meet with directly impacted residents and businesses within the project areas to minimise any potential impacts, such as property access prior to any works taking place along the various sections.

We will provide regular updates to the community on the progress and delivery of the program of works.

Contact

If you have any questions or would like to meet with the project team to discuss particular areas of interest, please call the project team on 1800 653 092 (free call) or email grafton.regional.office@rms.nsw.gov.au



If you need help understanding this information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask them to call us on 1800 653 092.