

APRIL 2012

## **Foxground and Berry bypass – Austral Park Road interchange and heavy vehicle rest area working group**

The Austral Park Road interchange and heavy vehicle rest area working group held its second meeting on Monday 16 April 2012 at the Berry School of Arts.

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### **Attendees:**

Michael Andrews, Southern Rivers Catchment Authority Management  
Phil Bragg, resident  
Harvey Blue, Berry Landcare  
Helen Chittick, resident  
Tim Francis, resident  
Rick Gainford, resident  
Peter McAra, resident  
Ian Parker, Berry Landcare  
Richard Scarborough, resident  
Anne Seaton, resident  
Charles Seaton, resident  
Vanessa Seaton, resident  
Scott Wells, Shoalhaven City Council representative  
Lucy Cole-Edelstein, Straight Talk Facilitator  
Ron de Rooy, RMS Project Manager  
Julian Watson, RMS Environmental Manager  
Carla Brookes, RMS Project Communications  
Keith Pepper, RMS Design Manager  
Angela Malpass, AECOM Community Consultant  
Riley Dayhew, AECOM Graduate Engineer

### **Summary – Purpose of the meeting**

Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) convened a working group of registered community members to review various community and design issues for the Austral Park Road interchange and the proposed south bound heavy vehicle rest area.

The session was opened and facilitated by Lucy Cole Edelstein of Straight Talk.

Ron de Rooy, RMS Project Manager for the Foxground and Berry bypass, presented the actions and issues, which were outstanding from the previous meeting. Mr. de Rooy advised which issues RMS has addressed, for which suggested solutions were presented for discussion

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as part of this meeting. A copy of the presentation is available on the project website at [www.rta.nsw.gov.au/fbb](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/fbb).

Julian Watson, RMS Environmental Manager, presented noise level model data (predicted 2027 levels) and biodiversity issues.

Harvey Blue from Berry Landcare made a presentation to the group on wildlife corridor connectivity and the provision of wildlife crossings / a vegetation bridge.

*The following is a summary of the discussions held at the working group, responses and actions agreed to by RMS.*

<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Response / action</b>
<p><b>Wildlife corridor meeting and site visit</b></p> <p>Julian Watson advised the group that a separate meeting and site visit to discuss wildlife corridors and crossings was held on Saturday 10 March. A follow-on site visit was held two weeks later with residents who could not attend the first meeting.</p>	
<p><b>Noise model data</b></p> <p>Julian Watson advised that the heavy vehicle rest area falls under the Industrial Noise policy. RMS has been asked through the Industrial Noise policy and Director General requirements to assess the worst case scenario. RMS has used the Sapphire to Woolgoolga project on the Pacific Highway which has a total of nine per cent of total traffic entering the heavy vehicle rest area, which equates at Austral Park Road of two to four vehicles entering in a 50 minute period.</p> <p>Julian Watson advised that a total of three residencies fall in the area for which RMS may be required under the policy to investigate for noise mitigation.</p> <p>A working group member asked RMS to clarify the shadowing around one of the properties.</p> <p>Julian Watson advised that this could be a result of landscape features shielding the property from noise impacts.</p> <p>A working group member questioned this response and advised that the area is flat and there are no</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> RMS to provide graphical representations to enable a comparison of current highway noise, predicted highway noise levels following the upgrade and predicted noise levels originating from the heavy vehicle rest area.</p>

landscape features.

Julian Watson clarified that what the diagram showed RMS is that it needs to investigate noise impacts on this property as part of the project.

A working group member asked RMS to provide a comparison of what a noise level of 30dBA would sound like.

A working group member advised that a normal neighbourhood backyard in a residential area would have an equivalent noise level of 30 to 35dBA.

A working group member stated that there is a difference between urban and rural environments and that the ambient level in a rural area is lower so any noise impacts are more intrusive.

Scott Wells suggested that RMS could clarify the noise levels by providing the group with a means of comparing current highway noise levels.

A working group member asked if it was possible for RMS to extend the graphical representative to provide data for 20 to 25 dBA levels.

### **Austral Park Road southbound heavy vehicle rest area and Nungarry heavy vehicle rest area upgrade cost comparison**

Ron de Rooy advised the working group that RMS has undertaken a high level estimate for constructing the Austral Park Road heavy vehicle rest area as a standalone project - \$5.7 million.

Keith Pepper clarified that if the heavy vehicle rest area was not built RMS would still need to provide a junction at this location to provide access to the highway for residents. This cost difference has therefore been excluded from the estimate.

A community member asked RMS to clarify whether toilets and shelters, which have been included in the estimate, are shown on the plan.

Ron de Rooy advised that facilities were not shown on the plan. RMS has produced a strategic estimate and used data from other projects to calculate these costs.

A community member queried whether using examples from other projects was appropriate due to the steep profile and rocky nature of the Austral Park Road site and the amount of earthworks which would

RMS provided the working group with a copy of the latest concept design for the Austral Park Road heavy vehicle rest area.

**Action:** RMS to keep the working group updated on the progress of the internal RMS process for approval of undertaking the Nungarry upgrade as a separate project. **Note:** This matter has been escalated within RMS following the meeting.

**Action:** RMS to investigate whether the original road project EIS is still active and if the upgrade of the Nungarry facilities through the SEPP 14 wetlands could be covered by this EIS. **Note:** RMS has investigated this issue and the original planning approval has lapsed.

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be required.

Ron de Rooy advised that RMS has included a contingency in its estimate.

A working group member questioned the exclusion of design costs from the estimate and suggested these would be a lot less for Nungarry as facilities were already in place and RMS are only proposing to add compliant acceleration and deceleration lanes.

Ron de Rooy advised that the design requirements for upgrading the Nungarry facilities would involve considerable work beyond just the acceleration and deceleration lanes.

Scott Wells asked RMS to confirm that acceleration and deceleration lanes were included as part of the estimates.

Ron de Rooy confirmed acceleration and deceleration lanes were included.

Ron de Rooy advised that the estimate for upgrading the Nungarry facilities is \$5.1 million.

Ron de Rooy clarified that the Nungarry facilities currently have non-compliant acceleration and deceleration lanes.

A working group member suggested that upgrading the Nungarry facilities was a preferred option as it would require the provision of compliant acceleration and deceleration lanes and RMS would also not have the additional cost of maintaining two facilities.

Ron de Rooy advised that the current estimates do not include whole of life maintenance costs.

Ron de Rooy advised that a small section of the Nungarry upgrade impacted on an area of SEPP 14 wetlands, which is not a show stopper but would require additional work by RMS.

A working group member queried how the original road project had been granted permission to go through the SEPP 14 wetlands.

Julian Watson advised that the original project had been undertaken against an EIS.

A working group member queried whether this EIS was still active and whether this project could work against this EIS.

Ron de Rooy advised that the determining factors for

deciding on whether the Nungarry facilities would be upgraded rather than new facilities built at Austral Park Road are: 1) cost; 2). internal process within RMS for funding Nungarry upgrade as a separate project.

Working group members also suggested that RMS should also consider the environmental benefits from upgrading Nungarry, ongoing maintenance costs of running two facilities and the safety issue of Nungarry currently having non-compliant acceleration and deceleration lanes.

A working group member asked if RMS had any advice as to what the community could do to assist in the process to get the Nungarry upgrade project approved.

Lucy Cole-Edelstein advised that the community was open to using any of the available avenues to lobby RMS.

### **Design options for Austral Park Road interchange if heavy vehicle rest area was removed from the project.**

Ron de Rooy advised that RMS has looked at other suggestions / option for this interchange but these have been discounted due to safety requirements.

Scott Wells advised that council has suggested alternative designs including the introduction of a roundabout at the end of the northbound off load ramp / access to be provided on the ridge. This would mean residents would not need to travel beyond the 'Big Dipper' to turn around to access properties as required by RMS's current design.

A working group member advised that they had not previously been aware of councils' suggestions and would like to see RMS investigating all options.

Keith Pepper advised that RMS has reviewed these suggestions but was unable to provide the necessary sight distances for the posted speed limit on ramps of 80 kmh.

Ron de Rooy advised that RMS's preferred option is Option 1 – T-junction.

A working group member asked RMS to clarify, from a safety perspective, if the Option 1 solution was a better option than the inclusion of the heavy good rest

RMS provided the working group with copies of concept designs for two alternative options for the Austral Park Road interchange if the heavy vehicle rest area was not built.

A copy of these options drawings has been uploaded to the project website and can be viewed at [www.rta.nsw.gov.au/fbb](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/fbb).

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area.

Ron de Rooy advised yes for a number of reasons: a heavy vehicle rest area is not included; RMS is able to rationalise a number of individual accesses onto the highway and provide an acceleration lane rather than a standard T-junction; and to travel north you no longer need to travel to Tindalls Lane to turn around.

Keith Pepper advised that with the current option RMS still needed to resolve access to one property.

## **Residual land at Austral Park Road if heavy goods vehicle rest area removed**

A working group member queried what RMS was proposing to do with the residual land if the heavy vehicle rest area was not built.

Ron de Rooy advised that RMS would be open to suggestions from the community.

A working group member noted that the residual land would not be isolated if one of the intersection arrangements presented by RMS was adopted and therefore it could be converted back to pasture.

## **Biodiversity issues**

Julian Watson asked the working group to consider which areas of residual land they would like to see RMS concentrate on replanting and what form revegetation should take. Mr. Watson suggested that areas along creek lines and those areas currently being managed by Landcare are appropriate areas for consideration.

A working group member expressed concern that the revegetation tenders could go outside the area when the expertise and the seed sources are in the local area. Concerned if contract went outside the district the opportunity for to vegetate with ecological integrity could be missed with mass propagation by an outside contractor.

Julian Watson advised that RMS would make a commitment to use local expertise and involve local Landcare groups and the CMA as part of the environmental assessment.

A working group member asked RMS to clarify what studies on endangered flora and fauna had been undertaken. Advised that they were concerned that

RMS provided the working group with copies of plans which highlighted residual land which would remain following the upgrade.

**Action:** RMS to provide profile details to working group member.

**Action:** RMS to provide the working group member with full details of flora / fauna impact mitigation measures to be implemented by RMS and details of discussions with OEH.

**Action:** RMS requested working group to provide feedback on areas where the community would like RMS to focus its conservation / revegetation efforts to provide the most benefit.

**Action:** RMS to review ways it can assist local Landcare groups in promoting the need to identify local species and promote seed collection as part of the project.

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some species, particularly flora may have been missed.

Julian advised that extensive studies have been undertaken including surveys on individual properties, but was happy to discuss working group members concerns following the meeting.

A working group member queried why the vegetated land bridge as referenced in the *Preferred Option - Toolijooa Ridge report, June 2009* has been removed from the current design.

Julian Watson advised that a land bridge would need to be shared with a local road (access to a property) and therefore tree planting would be restricted. Also, the geometry of the area also means that RMS would need to provide a tunnel which would increase the cost. Mr. Watson confirmed the provision of a vegetated land bridge has been discussed with the Office of Environment and Heritage and it was concluded that the conservation benefits do not justify the cost and OEH would rather RMS concentrate on other conservation / connectivity initiatives.

A working group member challenged the decision and requested RMS to provide details on profiles in this area.

A working group member requested RMS to clarify how it would address the Director General Requirements to improve or maintain wildlife corridors / connectivity.

Julian Watson advised that RMS would need to address the Director General Requirements as part of the environmental assessment and is looking at alternative ways to mitigate.

A working group member queried whether the vegetated land bridge could be moved to an alternative location within the wildlife corridor where the cutting is not as deep.

A working group member stressed that the community is currently undertaking a number of initiatives to connect wildlife corridor / vegetation areas and serious consideration needs to be made by RMS to maintaining connectivity in the area.

A working group member challenged whether one of the reasons for RMS's decision to proceed with the 'Pink' option was the provision of a vegetated land

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bridge.

Julian Watson advised that RMS investigated two potentially viable options (tunnel and cutting) for which environmental investigations were undertaken, and it was not until further work was done on the preferred option that the feasibility of providing a vegetated land bridge was questioned.

A working group member advised that the community feels let down by the process when something which determined their input and discussions has been removed contrary to the advice in a RMS published report.

Lucy Cole-Edelstein clarified that the decision has been made by RMS following advice from the OEH.

Julian Watson advised that the discussion with and advice provided by the OEH will be included in the environmental assessment.

A working group member queried whether RMS could assist local conservation groups by promoting the need to identify local sub-tropical rainforest species and identify local property owners willing to give access to these groups to undertake seed collection.

## Noise

A working group member asked if RMS could provide noise maps for the area between the two creek crossings.

**Action:** RMS to provide noise data / maps for the area identified by the working group member.

## Working group process

A decision was made that the working group would not meet again and that when a decision was made by RMS on the upgrading of the Nungarry facilities, the working group and the wider community would be advised.

**Action:** RMS to advise the working group and wider community when the decision is made on which facility will be provided (Nungarry or Austral Park Road)