

1. Introduction

1.1 The Pacific Highway Upgrade Program

The Pacific Highway forms a heavily trafficked link between Sydney and Brisbane and is a State Highway providing local and regional transport links to numerous land use activities. Heavy vehicles comprise approximately 20% of the vehicles that use the highway.

The Pacific Highway between Newcastle and Brisbane forms part of the Australian Government's AusLink National Network. The AusLink National Network is based on national, regional and urban transport corridors, links to ports and airports, and intermodal connections between road and rail. The highway is predicted by 2026 to carry approximately double the freight tonnage between Sydney and Brisbane compared to 2002 tonnages.¹

The Pacific Highway Upgrade Program, which is being managed by the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA), commenced in July 1996.

The Pacific Highway Upgrade Program aims to:

- ▶ Significantly reduce road crashes and injuries;
- ▶ Reduce travel times;
- ▶ Reduce freight transport costs;
- ▶ Develop a route that considers community interests;
- ▶ Provide a route that supports economic development;
- ▶ Manage the upgrading of the route in accordance with ecologically sustainable development principles; and
- ▶ Provide the best value for money.

The \$2.2 billion, 10-year upgrade program has achieved significant improvements to road conditions, safety and travel times. A total of 45 projects have been opened to traffic and a further 22 projects (including the Oxley Highway to Kempsey project) are at various stages of planning and development.

1.2 Project Overview

The project involves upgrading the Pacific Highway between its intersection with the Oxley Highway at Port Macquarie through to Maria River (south of Kempsey). The location of the project is shown on Figure 1.1. Figure 1.2 shows the project in its local area context. The project length is approximately 37.6 km and involves upgrading the existing highway to a dual carriageway and controlled access highway. The project is likely to comprise duplication and upgrading of the existing highway as well as construction of sections on a new alignment.

The objective of the route options development phase of the project is to identify feasible options for the highway upgrade in consultation with key stakeholders. The route options identified have been assessed and a preferred route selected. The next stage of the project will involve the refinement of the preferred route design and environmental assessment.

¹ GHD and Booz Allen Hamilton, 2005, 'South East Queensland Inter-modal Freight Terminal Study, Stage 2'



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<p>Map Projection: Universal Transverse Mercator Horizontal Datum: Geodetic Datum of Australia 1994 Grid: Map Grid of Australia, Zone 56</p>		
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State Map

Spatial layers courtesy of Geoscience Australia.

Figure 1.1

1.3 Report Purpose and Structure

The route development and selection process is documented in this report. This report includes the following information:

- ▶ Section 1 – Provides introductory information;
- ▶ Section 2 – Summarises the project scope, objectives and planning methodology;
- ▶ Section 3 – Describes the characteristics of the study area, including the main features of the existing environment and the key issues and constraints;
- ▶ Section 4 – Provides a summary of the context for the project, including an overview of relevant planning reports, the traffic and transport context and need for the project;
- ▶ Section 6 – Presents a summary of the issues raised in public submissions in response to the display of the route options;
- ▶ Section 7 – The outcomes of the VMW and additional investigations of the publicly displayed options are summarized in this section;
- ▶ Section 8 – Describes the methodology and outputs for the selection of the preferred route. The methodology includes assumptions, inputs, assessment criteria and the scoring and ranking process. The outputs include a review of the selection criteria, scoring and ranking of the selection criteria and a summary of the findings;
- ▶ Section 9 – Includes a description of the preferred route and a summary of the potential impacts of the preferred route; and
- ▶ Section 10 – Describes the steps that will be undertaken to progress the project to the next stage.

1.4 Study Area for the Project

The study area for this project is located on the mid north coast of New South Wales between Port Macquarie and Kempsey. The project commences 700 metres north of the intersection of the highway with the Oxley Highway and extends along the existing highway for 37.6 km, over the Hastings River, the Wilson River and Cooperabung Hill, to the Maria River.

The study area for the project consists of a corridor, up to three kilometres wide, which surrounds the existing highway (as shown on Figure 1.2). In response to requests from sections of the Telegraph Point community, the study team has also investigated the feasibility of route options to the east of Telegraph Point. These options are located outside the November 2004 study area shown in Figure 1.2.

1.5 Overview of Project Methodology

The planning phase of the project consists of the following:

- ▶ Preliminary investigations – to determine the opportunities and constraints for route options;
- ▶ Development of route options – the outcomes of the route option development process are summarised within this report;
- ▶ Selection of the preferred route – the route options would be assessed and a preferred route selected. Community feedback would be considered as part of the assessment;
- ▶ Refined design of the preferred route; and
- ▶ Environmental assessment and determination of the preferred route.

Further information on the methodology is provided in Section 2.