

Oxley Highway to Kempsey

Upgrading the Pacific Highway

ROUTE OPTIONS SUBMISSIONS REPORT

MAY 2006



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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to assist the RTA in the decision-making process with respect to the selection of a preferred route.

The report describes:

- » Consultation activities undertaken during the route options display;
- » Issues raised by the community and other stakeholders for consideration in the selection of the preferred route; and
- » Next stages in the project.

The report aims to consider and address the community concerns and suggestions raised.

1.2 Background

The NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) engaged GHD Pty Ltd (GHD) to undertake route option investigations, selection of a preferred route, and concept development to upgrade a 38 km section of the Pacific Highway between the Oxley Highway and Kempsey on the north coast of NSW.

The Pacific Highway Upgrade Program is a commitment by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments to improve the condition of the highway, reduce road accidents and improve transport efficiency. The RTA is implementing the program.

1.3 Study area and route options

The study area is located between the intersection with the Oxley Highway (to the south) and Kempsey (to the north). Port Macquarie is the closest major town.

The study area consists of a corridor up to three kilometres wide, which surrounds the existing highway. The study area is dominated by rural land and forest reserves, with scattered rural residential development and a number of small towns.

Due to the length of the proposed upgrade, the study area has been divided into four sections from south to north as follows:

- » Section A – 700 metres north of the Oxley Highway interchange, to Blackmans Point Road.
- » Section B – Blackmans Point Road to Cooperabung Drive.
- » Section C – Cooperabung Drive to Mingaletta road.
- » Section D – Mingaletta Road to Maria River.

Four route options were placed on public display from Friday 21 October 2005 to Friday 2 December 2005 for community consideration. Public submissions were sought on the route options during the display period.

The four route options placed on public display are identified as the:

- » Blue Option;
- » Green Option;
- » Purple Option; and
- » Orange Option.

The options are shown as broad corridors (250 metres in width) within which the new highway could be located. It should be noted that the full 250m wide corridor would not be required to construct the proposed upgrade. The 250m corridor has been selected to enable environmental investigations to adequately investigate potential impacts of the proposed upgrade.

Preliminary road alignments within these four route options have also been developed and investigated by GHD. In developing the route options it became evident that there existed two distinct common sections within the study area in which all four route options co-existed. These common sections (or common corridors) occur in the following locations:

- » Common Corridor No. 1 – Oxley Highway to the south of Hastings River Drive; and
- » Common Corridor No. 2 – Mooreside Drive to north of Ravenswood Road.

The location of the four route options, the common corridors and a typical road cross-section can be found in Appendix A.

1.4 Pacific Highway Upgrade Program objectives

The Oxley Highway to Kempsey upgrade is part of the Pacific Highway Upgrade Program. The objectives of the program are to:

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

1.5 Project objectives

The objectives of the Oxley Highway to Kempsey project are to:

- » Develop a dual carriageway road with potential to reduce crash rates to 15 crashes per 100 million vehicle kilometres (MVK) over the project length;
- » Develop a refined design that meets or exceeds B-double requirements, including at intersections, where required;
- » Maximise the use of the existing road reserve, where possible;
- » Integrate input from local communities into development of the project through the implementation of a comprehensive program of community consultation and participation;
- » Satisfy the technical and procedural requirements of the RTA with respect to the design of the project;
- » Provide for transport developments that are complementary with land use;
- » Allow for all connections, modifications and improvements necessary to upgrade the existing highway where it is retained as part of the project;
- » Consider delay management strategies to minimise disruption to local and through traffic and maintain access to affected properties and land during construction;
- » Provide flood immunity on at least one carriageway:
 - Target a 1 in 100 year flood event (1% AEP); and
 - Minimum of at least a 1 in 20 year flood event (5% AEP);
- » Provide intersections designed to achieve at least a level of service C 20 years after opening for the 100th highest hourly volume;
- » Develop solutions that address community expectations for access to the new highway;
- » Retain or replace existing rest areas within the study area;
- » Develop a refined design generally meeting the criteria for a 110 km/h design speed for the vertical alignment and horizontal alignment;
- » Ensure the project outcomes achieve value for money;
- » Provide a strategy for future upgrades to be easily integrated into the project from both engineering and environmental perspectives; and
- » Minimise the need to modify the preferred route option and refined design during subsequent project phases.

1.6 Consultation objectives

The overall aim of the community involvement program is to ensure that the development of the preferred route and detailed concept involves the community and considers their interests.

The objectives of *the community involvement program* are:

- » To integrate input from local communities into development of the project through the implementation of a comprehensive program of community involvement and participation;
- » To develop solutions that address community expectations for access to the new Highway;
- » To minimise the physical and traffic impacts of the route such as traffic noise levels, intrusion, community severance and access patterns;
- » To minimise the physical impacts on heritage (indigenous and non-indigenous); and
- » To provide transport developments, which are complementary with existing and proposed land use.

The objectives of the *community involvement* process are to:

- » Equitably engage the broad community involvement for the full duration of the project;
- » Create broad based community and stakeholder understanding of the Pacific Highway Upgrading Program objectives;
- » Work with community and stakeholders in a timely fashion throughout the project phases;
- » Provide transparent facilitation and information exchange;
- » Effectively manage community/stakeholder expectation, for the duration of the project;
- » Understand and accurately documenting stakeholder and community issues and concerns relative to the project;
- » Integrate community and stakeholder issues into each progressive stage of the project and adaptively to the community involvement plan;
- » Raise community and stakeholder awareness of the route options and the technical considerations and constraints for decision making;
- » Facilitate clear and cooperative communications and relations between the RTA, government agencies and the community; and
- » Identify a process on how any community and stakeholder issues will be managed e.g. following the announcement of decisions related to major milestones.

2. Route options consultation

Community involvement activities undertaken to date have focussed on:

- » Informing the community about the project;
- » Involving the community in the project; and
- » Ensuring community input and concerns are considered in the development of route options.

Described below are the details of the activities that were undertaken leading up to and/or during the route options displays in October and November 2005.

2.1 Notifying potentially affected landowners and businesses

A number of landowners and businesses were identified as being potentially affected by one or more of the route options. The project team notified these stakeholders via letters, telephone calls and meetings.

2.1.1 Letters

Landowners and businesses that fell wholly or partially within one of more of the 250m route option corridors were sent personalised letters together with a copy of the community update on the day of the Minister's announcement. The letter (refer to Appendix B) advised them to visit one of the staffed display locations to obtain more information and offered them the opportunity to arrange a meeting with members of the project team to discuss any concerns they may have.

2.1.2 Phone calls

Potentially affected landowners and businesses that could have had their premises directly affected by one or more of the route options were also telephoned on Monday 24 October 2005, and advised that the route options had gone on public display (a message was left where possible if there was no answer). They were encouraged to visit one of the staffed display locations and informed that they could arrange a meeting with members of the project team.

2.1.3 Meetings

Landowners and businesses requested meetings with the project team by calling the 1800 number or visiting one of the staffed displays.

Approximately 76 meetings have been held with potentially affected landowners and businesses. These meetings were held at the staffed display locations and at individual residences/business premises.

2.2 Advertisements, media releases and announcements

The commencement of the route options display period was announced on Friday 21 October 2005, by the Minister for Roads, Joe Tripodi MP. Two newspaper and radio advertisements were run during the route options display period (refer to Appendix C).

Newspaper announcements

The first advertisement announced the route options display for the initial four-week period (advertising occurred in the weeks commencing 24 & 31 October 2005 and the 14 & 21 November 2005).

The second advertisement announced the extension of the display period (a two-week extension to the original four-week display period) from 18 November 2005 to 2 December 2005.

Both advertisements appeared in the following newspapers:

- » The Daily Telegraph - 25 October and the 16 & 25 November 2005;
- » Sydney Morning Herald – 25 October and the 16 & 25 November 2005;
- » The Macleay Argus – 28 October and the 8, 18 & 25 November 2005; and
- » The Port Macquarie News – 26 & 28 October and the 9, 16 & 25 November 2005.

Two media releases coincided with the advertisements.

Radio Announcements

The Oxley Highway to Kempsey radio announcements were in a combined advertisement to cover the various projects.

The recorded message played on the 27 and 28 October, and the 9, 10, 11, and 16 November 2005 during the morning, breakfast and afternoon drive time slots, on the following stations:

- » ABC Mid North Coast 684AM, 756AM, 95.5FM, 93.3FM;
- » 2GF AM 1206;
- » 2GF FM 104.7;
- » Star FM 102.3, 105.1; and
- » 2MC FM 100.7 FM, 106.7 FM.

The stations announced the extension of the display period on the 24, 25 and 30 November 2005, during morning, breakfast and afternoon drive time slots.

2.3 Flyers

A flyer was also prepared to raise awareness about the route options display and encourage people to visit one of the display locations (refer to Appendix D).

Copies of the flyer were hand-delivered to the following locations in the vicinity of the study area for placement on noticeboards and, where applicable, front counters:

- » Kundabung Community Hall
- » Kundabung Post Office
- » Telegraph Point Lead Lighting and Trinkets Store
- » Telegraph Point Community Sports Club
- » Port Macquarie Visitor Information Centre
- » BP Service Station (Doughnut)
- » Wauchope Library
- » Port Macquarie Hastings Council Chambers (Wauchope)
- » Kundabung BP Service Station
- » Telegraph Point Post Office & General Store
- » Telegraph Point Hotel
- » Telegraph Point Public School
- » Port Macquarie Hastings Council Chambers
- » Coles, Port Macquarie (notice board)
- » Visitor Information Centre (Doughnut)

2.4 Community update No. 2 – route options display

Community update No. 2 announced the route options display, advised the community of the display locations and how to obtain more information, and sought feedback on the route options. More than 1,000 copies were distributed to households and owners of properties in the study area. In addition, copies of the community update were made available at both the static and staffed display locations.

A copy of community update No. 2 is provided in Appendix E.

2.5 Feedback form

A feedback form was enclosed in the community update (refer to Appendix E). The purpose of the feedback form was to assist community members provide their comments on the route options and the key issues that should be considered when determining the preferred route.

An online version of the feedback form was uploaded onto the project website on the day of the announcement (refer to Appendix F).

2.6 Public displays

The route options display comprised of the following seven posters (copies of the display materials can be viewed in Appendix A):

1. Completing the Upgrade of the Pacific Highway – context of the Oxley Highway to Kempsey Crossing project in relation to the overall Pacific Highway Upgrade Program.
2. All options – overview and comparison of key features of the options and cross section of the upgraded highway.
3. Blue Option – features and issues associated with the Blue Option.

4. Green Option– features and issues associated with the Green Option.
5. Purple Option– features and issues associated with the Purple Option.
6. Orange Option– features and issues associated with the Orange Option.
7. Study area characteristics– key features and environmental constraints of the study area in relation to the options.

2.6.1 Staffed displays

Representatives from the RTA and GHD project team were available to discuss the route options at the following locations during the route options display period:

- » Settlement City Shopping Centre,
Bay Street, Port Macquarie, Thurs 27 October 2005, 2pm-8pm and
Thurs 3 November 2005, 2pm-8pm.
- » Telegraph Point School of Arts,
7 Cooperabung Dr, Telegraph Point, Fri 28 October 2005, 10am-4pm and
Sat 5 November 2005, 10am-4pm.
- » Kundabung Community Hall, Kundabung Rd,
Kundabung, Sat 29 October 2005, 10am-4pm and Fri 4 November 2005,
10am-4pm.

Copies of the following materials were available at the staffed displays (refer to appendices E and G):

- » Community update;
- » Feedback forms;
- » Completing the upgrade of the Pacific Highway community update;
- » Fact sheets:
 - How is noise addressed?
 - Property acquisition
 - Meeting environmental needs
 - Environmental assessment – Part 3A

Project team members were available to answer questions on the route options and address any individual concerns. The project geographical information system (GIS) was available at the display to show property owners the route options in relation to their property and assist discussion.

2.6.2 Static displays

Static (unstaffed) displays were provided at the following locations:

- » Telegraph Point Post Office,
21 Cooperabung Drive, Telegraph Point, Mon–Fri 8am-5pm.
- » Kundabung Post Office,
100 Ravenswood Rd, Kundabung, Mon–Sun 8am-6pm.

- » Settlement City Shopping Centre,
Bay Street, Port Macquarie, Mon–Wed & Fri 9am–5.30pm,
Thurs 9am–9pm, Sat 9am–4pm and Sun 10am–4pm.
- » Port Macquarie Library,
Gordon Street, Port Macquarie, Mon–Fri 9.30am–6pm and
Sat 9am–Noon.
- » RTA Motor Registry,
55 Elbow Street, West Kempsey, Mon–Fri 9am–4pm.
- » RTA Pacific Highway Office,
21 Prince Street, Grafton, Mon–Fri 8.30am–4.30pm.

Copies of the community update with the feedback form, the route options development report, and flyers were left at each display location. These materials were regularly replenished throughout the display period.

2.7 Website

The project website has been regularly updated since the project commenced. Electronic copies of all communication materials regarding the route options and the route options development report were uploaded onto the website on the day of the Minister's announcement (refer to Appendix F).

Internet users had the opportunity to view the route options development report online or request that a CD or hard copy be mailed to them. They also had the opportunity to complete and submit an online version of the feedback form (refer to Appendix F).

2.8 Community liaison group meetings

As part of the ongoing involvement of the community in the project, a community liaison group (CLG) was formed in December 2004, with the following aims:

- » To create a forum for discussion and exchange of information on topics related to the development phase of the project.
- » To assist the project team to identify local issues related to the project that will input into the route development phase.
- » To act as a two-way communication link between the project team and the community and stakeholders.

Four CLG meetings have been held. The fourth meeting occurred in October 2005, where community liaison group members had the opportunity to go on a bus tour to view the various routes. Commentary on the route options was provided during the bus tour by the project team and discussions occurred during the meeting that followed.

2.9 Ecological focus group meetings

As part of the ongoing involvement of stakeholders in the project, an Ecological Focus Group (EFG) was formed in September 2005, with the following aims:

- » To create a forum for discussion and exchange of information on ecological topics related to the development phase of the project;
- » To assist the project team to identify local ecological issues related to the project that will input into the development phase of the project; and
- » To act as a two-way communication link between the project team and the community, ecological interest groups and stakeholders.

EFG members were sought by invitation to ensure the group represented a broad range of environmental interests.

The group has met twice since it was formed. At the meeting in October 2005, EFG members also had the opportunity to go on the bus tour with the Community Liaison Group members.

2.10 Council presentations

Presentations to Councillors and council officers of both Port Macquarie-Hastings Council and Kempsey Council were undertaken during the route options display period.

2.11 Management of information requests

During the display period, the project team received a number of requests for information. This included requests for route options development reports and more detailed maps of the route options from the Geographical Information System. Approximately 40 route option development reports were sent to community members on request. Approximately 14 maps were generated and sent to potentially affected property owners and businesses, following meetings.

3. Participation in consultation activities

At the beginning of the project the following contact facilities were established to provide the community with a range of ways to contact the study team, have easy access to information and have an opportunity throughout the project to make comment:

- » Project information line: 1800 154 724
- » Email: communityinput@ghd.com.au
- » Freepost address: Pacific Highway Upgrade Program
Reply Paid 65079
GHD
10 Bond Street
Sydney NSW 2000
- » Project website: www.rta.nsw.gov.au/pacific
(Click on Oxley Highway to Kempsey)

3.1 Summary of community involvement

Table 1 and Table 2 below provide a summary of participation in consultation activities and contact made with the project team during the route options display.

Table 1 Summary of participation in consultation activities

Activity	Number of participants
Staffed displays (27, 28 & 29 October and 3, 4 & 5 November 2005)	Approximately 80
Meetings with potentially affected property owners and businesses	Approximately 76

Table 2 Summary of community feedback

Method of contact	Number of responses
Calls to the 1800 number	78
Feedback forms (Submission number 153 has been included as one submission – please refer to Appendix H.)	147
Online feedback forms	4
Emails	15
Letters (including one letter to the Minister for Roads)	33

Method of contact	Number of responses
Faxes	16 (Copies of mailed submissions)

4. Consideration of submissions on the route options

4.1 Overview

In total 199 submissions were received which comprised of:

- » Written submissions from statutory authorities;
- » Written submissions from individuals, organisations and businesses; and
- » Feedback forms from individuals and organisations.

The project team considered all submissions received by 9 December 2005.

The term 'submission' refers to any written correspondence received by the project team. At this stage in the project, submissions related to the route options and issues to be considered in the selection of the preferred route.

4.2 Processing of submissions

Each submission was given a unique identification number. The comments raised were classified against issues headings and entered into a submissions database. Appendix H contains a list of all submissions, with the submission identification number and the classification of the issues raised. Section 4.4 provides a summary of the feedback received.

Where applicable, preliminary responses (based on current knowledge) to the issues, concerns and suggestions have been provided by the project team (refer to Appendix I).

4.3 Summary of responses to questions asked in the feedback form

The feedback form gave the community the opportunity to:

- » Indicate which section of the study area they were most interested in;
- » Identify and rank key issues to be considered in the selection of a preferred route; and
- » Nominate which route they felt best addressed those key issues.

The results are discussed below. The feedback form also gave the community the opportunity to explain their reasons for selecting a particular option or to highlight any other concerns or issues. A summary of this feedback is contained in Section 4.4.

4.3.1 Key area of interest

As shown in Figure 1 most respondents were interested in Section B. Some respondents ticked more than one box. This may have been because they live in one section and travel to other sections on a regular basis, for example, to get to work.

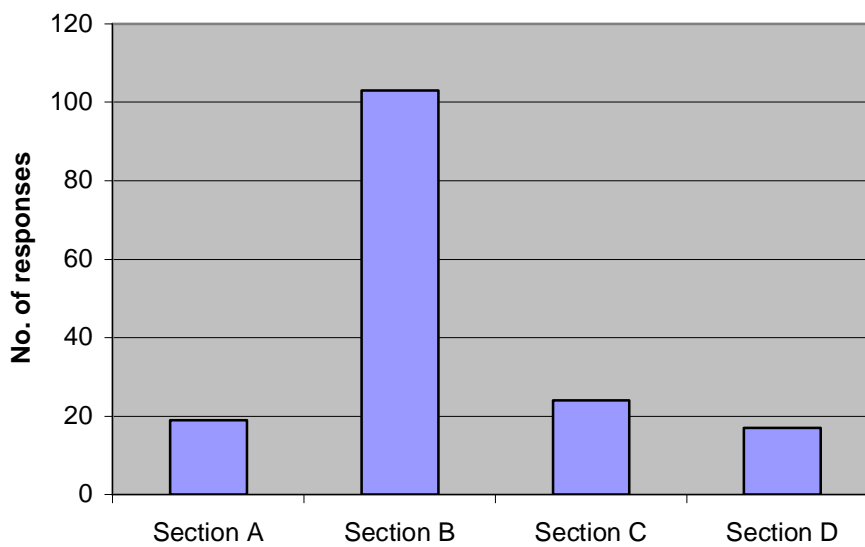


Figure 1 Key areas of interest

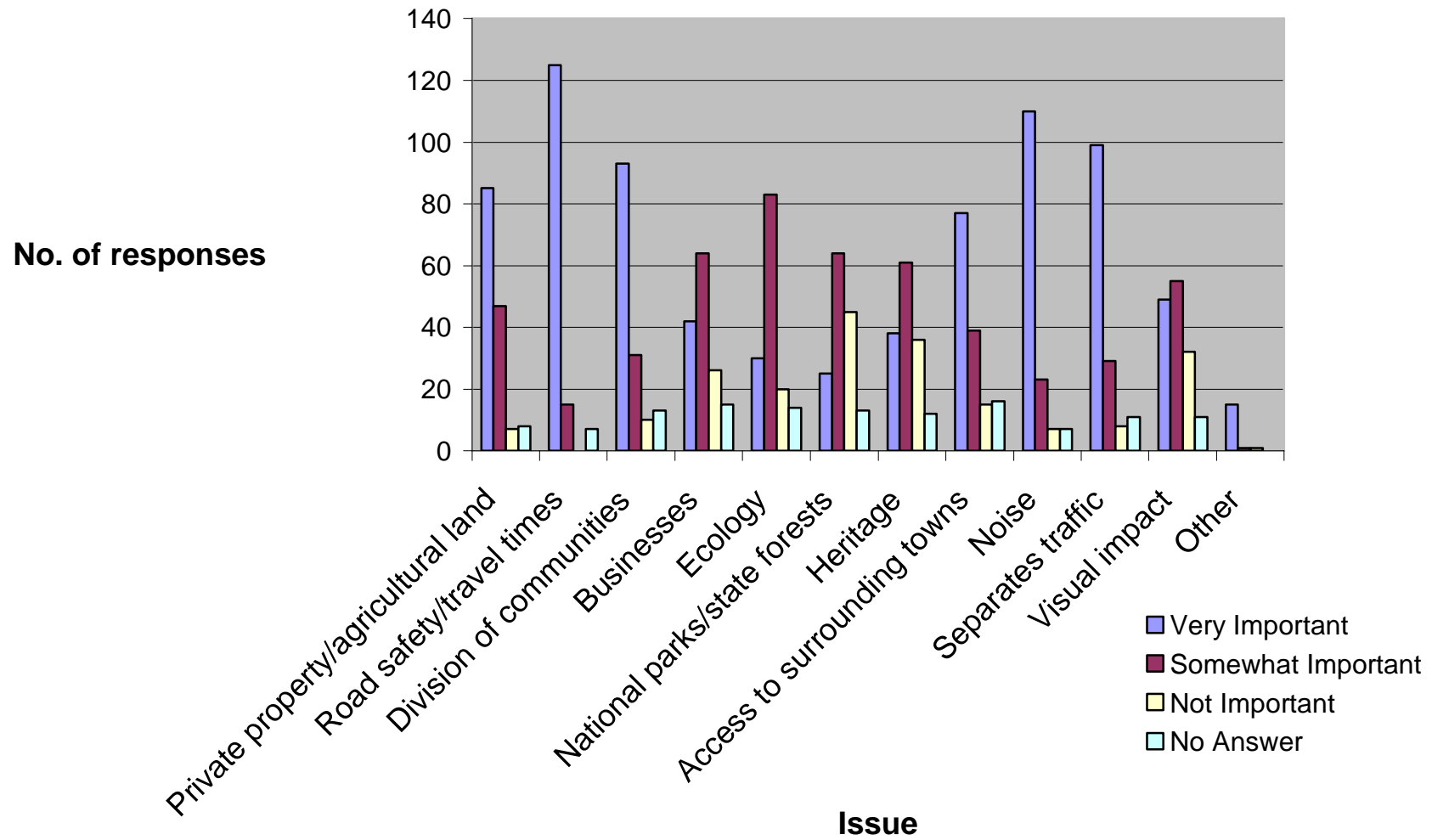
4.3.2 Feedback on issues to be considered in the selection of the preferred route

As shown in Figure 2 the top five issues considered most important by the community when deciding the preferred route are:

1. Road safety and travel times
2. Noise
3. Separates traffic
4. Division of communities
5. Impact to private property / agricultural land.

Issues raised under the category 'other' included: completion cost and timeframe for completion; property acquisition and compensation; impact on lifestyle and families; loss of land; drainage; and pollution.

Figure 2 Key issues to be considered in the selection of a preferred route.



4.3.3 Which option best addresses the issues?

As shown in Figure 3, 78% of respondents felt that Orange Option best addressed the issues. However, it should be noted that most feedback forms returned were from people who live in Section B. Section B of the Orange Option bypasses Telegraph Point to the east. Indeed the majority of respondents selected Section B as their key area of interest as well as selecting Orange as their preferred option.

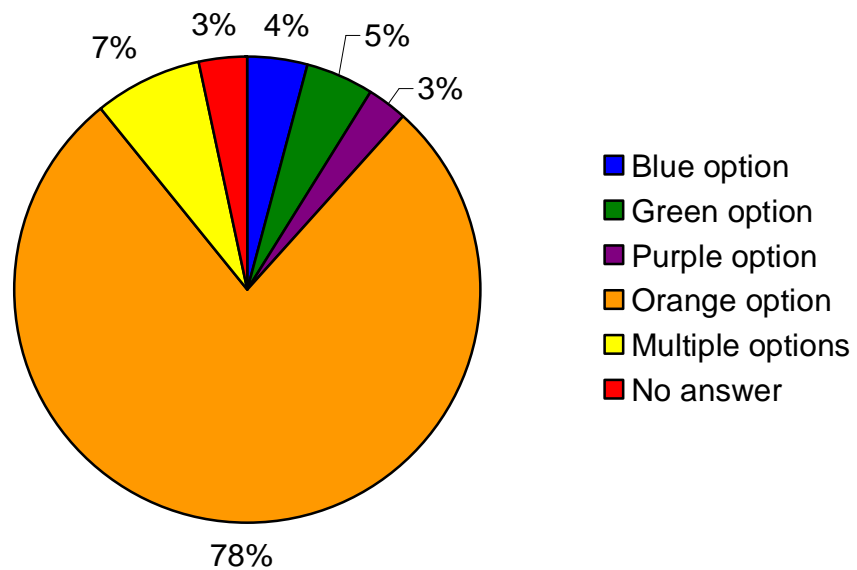


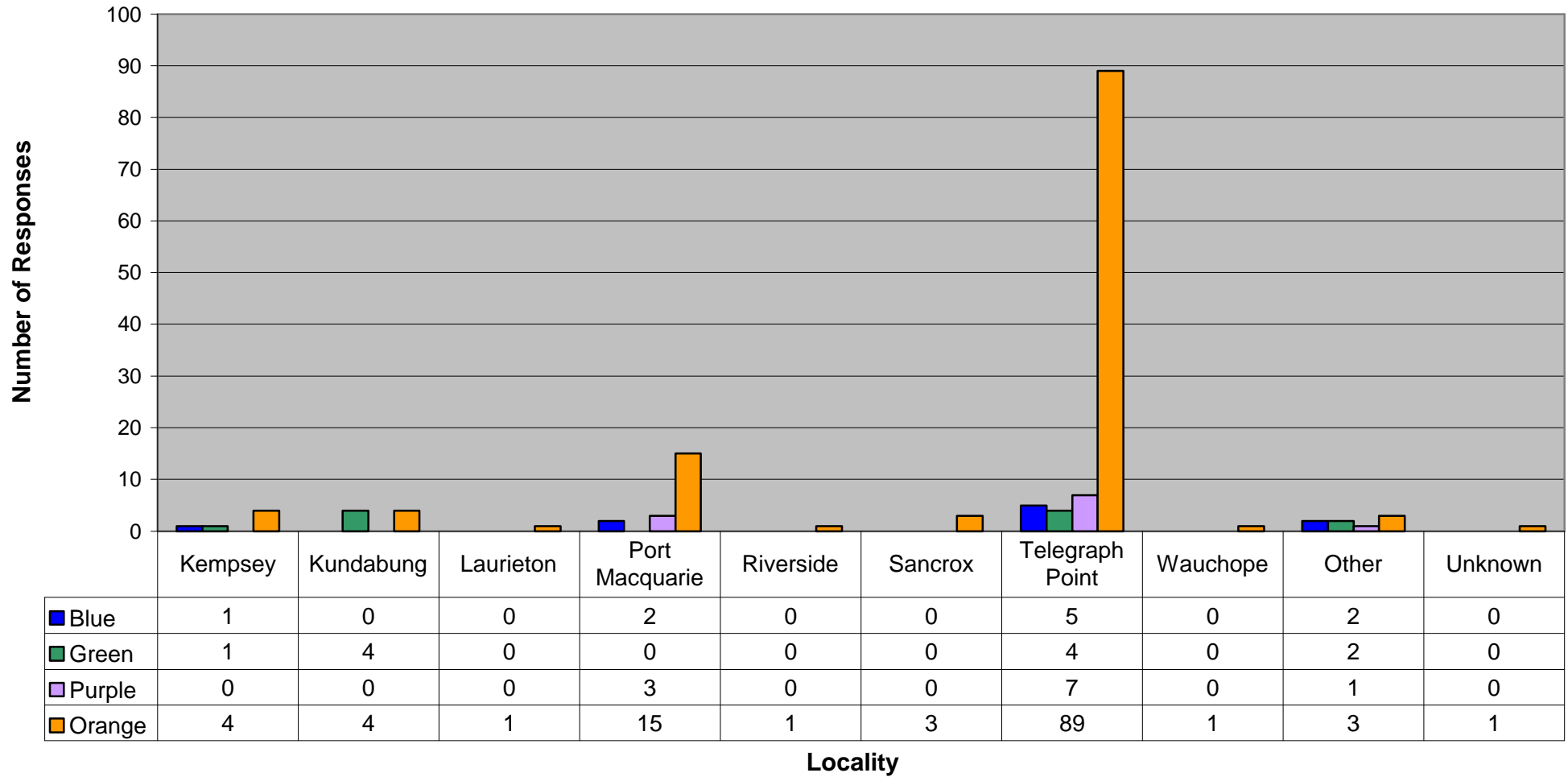
Figure 3 Which route best addresses the issues?

4.3.4 Suggested preferred option

The display materials indicated that different sections of different options could be joined together and people were invited to refer to specific sections of options on the feedback form. However, many respondents just ticked an option colour. Figure 4 illustrates the option selected by residents of each locality.

'Other' incorporates localities that were not within or in close proximity to the study area. For the purposes of analysis, feedback from non-resident property owners was classified against the locality where their property was located as opposed to the locality where they resided.

Figure 4 Preferred option by locality of residence



4.4 Summary of qualitative feedback from the community

Below is a summary of the main issues that were raised in community submissions. Respondent's comments have been summarised to provide an overview of the key issues, therefore it is not a verbatim record of community comments. Refer to Appendix I for a record of the comments made grouped under issues headings.

The feedback from the community has been considered in the value management workshop and will be considered further in selecting the preferred route.

4.4.1 A - Access to highway

The community expressed their expectation that access to the highway will be made safer and easier through the construction of better quality intersections, particularly around the Sancrox Rd, Telegraph Point and Kundabung areas.

4.4.2 B - Access to properties

Various opinions were raised regarding access to private properties. However, most submissions were strongly in support of using the existing highway as a local service road to improve safety and functionality for local traffic.

4.4.3 C - Air quality

A number of submissions expressed the opinion that the Orange Option would keep the pollution away from residential areas. Concerns were also raised regarding other pollutants that could be emitted into the environment.

4.4.4 D - Business impacts

A number of submissions expressed the opinion that the highway should be routed away from built up areas, although this should not impact upon businesses that rely on passing traffic.

4.4.5 E - Community severance and disruption of community services

Many submissions raised 'connectivity of towns' as a key issue eg. Crossing one side of the highway to the other, particularly around Kundabung and Telegraph Point, in relation to accessing local services, such as the post office and general store.

4.4.6 F - Compensation and property values

Concerns were raised in a number of submissions that adequate compensation should be provided for those affected by the upgrade, including costs to cover re-establishment.

4.4.7 G - Construction impacts

The community appears to be generally in support of the Orange Option as it has less construction impacts on both the local community and highway users, compared to other options.

4.4.8 H - Consultation process

Several complaints were received regarding the consultation process, in particular the lack of consultation, inaccuracies in the consultation materials, and the community liaison group not being a true representation of the local community.

4.4.9 I – Environmental impacts

A number of submissions expressed concern about the impact upon habitat for native species. There was some opposition to the Orange Option as it passes through an EEC and recognised Koala habitat.

4.4.10 J - Flooding protection

Concern was raised in relation to the Orange and Purple Options crossing the floodplain and over wetlands, and the damage to properties from flooding and water levels associated with a new highway.

4.4.11 K - Highway design and layout

A number of submissions were received that related to the highway design and layout. Most of the submissions were in support of the Orange Option for Section B, as this is located further from Telegraph Point than the other option. Some submissions were in support of the Blue / Purple Option for Section B as this option has the greatest utilisation of the existing road corridor. There were also many concerns and suggestions regarding overtaking and turning lanes, shoulder widths and the location of interchanges.

A 'fifth option' was also suggested which would run further east than the Purple and Orange Options, taking a direct line from the Dennis Bridge through the floodplain to join the existing highway north of Telegraph Point.

4.4.12 L - Impacts on areas of environmental significance

Concern was raised over the impacts on Koala habitats and areas of environmental significance during design, construction and operation.

In general, preference was for an option that would increase safety to road users and the community, while at the same time minimising impacts to the Koala habitat and endangered ecological communities respectively.

4.4.13 M - Indigenous and Non-Indigenous heritage

Items of historical significance were raised in submissions as important to the community, including the heritage aspects of the Telegraph Point Village.

4.4.14 N - Local agricultural land

The submissions received regarding local agricultural land expressed concern over the Orange and Purple Options due to the amount of rural land that would need to be acquired for the highway upgrade.

4.4.15 O – Noise (Operational)

Most submissions expressed support for the Orange Option, as it would move the highway away from Telegraph Point and therefore potentially reducing noise impact on the village.

4.4.16 P - Property acquisition and property impacts

A number of submissions expressed concern regarding the acquisition of private property and the ability of people to relocate within the area.

4.4.17 Q - Recreational impacts

Concerns were expressed regarding the impact to community facilities such as the community hall at Telegraph Point and the local picnic areas.

4.4.18 R - Safety

Safety for road users and the local community was raised as a priority in many submissions. Using the existing highway as a service road was also raised as a safe option, particularly for the school.

4.4.19 S - Timing of upgrade

Residents expressed their desire for the upgrade works to be carried out as soon as possible.

4.4.20 T - Traffic concerns

One of the major concerns raised in the submissions was the need to separate through and local traffic. Orange and Purple Options were considered to have the least impact on existing traffic.

4.4.21 U - Travel time

Many submissions received expressed support for the Orange Option because of the potential to save travel time for highway users. Concern was raised over the potential increase in travel time for the local community to access highway to travel north or south.

4.4.22 V - Visual impact

The visual impact of the upgrade was raised in several submissions. Respondents were divided between whether the new road infrastructure required with the Orange and Purple Options would be worse than the noise mitigation measures that would need to be installed with the Blue and Green Options.

4.4.23 W - Water quality and wetlands

Respondents highlighted that water quality in surface runoff and local watercourses would be of concern, and that adequate planning would need to take place to prevent damage to sensitive wetland areas.

4.4.24 X - Other

Submissions were also received relating to a number of other issues and concerns.

4.5 Summary of qualitative feedback from potentially affected property owners and businesses

Many of the concerns raised during meetings with potentially affected property owners were specific to individual circumstances, however they generally included:

- » Devaluation of property values – concerns over devaluation caused by announcement of the route options and ultimately announcement of the preferred route.
- » Loss of productive land, livelihood and incomes.
- » Loss of investment – some were concerned over investment they had put into their land and/or property.
- » Uncertainty of level of impact – some expressed insecurity of not knowing if, how and when they will be ultimately be affected.
- » Uncertainty about the amount of land to be acquired for the upgrade and the potential that they would not be able to sell land - division of land into small unmarketable parcels.
- » The process, eligibility for and timing of land acquisition.
- » Restriction/modification of access to properties/businesses – concerns over indirect access to the highway and whether they would be consulted over access arrangements.
- » How the options would affect their plans to develop/subdivide their land.
- » Where the service roads would be located and the impact of these on people's lifestyle.
- » Noise, drainage and structural impacts – how these issues would be addressed should highway move closer to their properties.
- » Loss of exposure to passing trade (businesses) – in particular visibility from the highway and ability to access businesses.

4.6 Summary of qualitative feedback from statutory agencies

The following statutory agencies provided feedback on the route options:

- » Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC);
- » Forests NSW;
- » Kempsey Shire Council;
- » Department of Primary Industry; and
- » Port Macquarie-Hastings Council.

Table 3 provides a summary of the comments received.

Table 3 Feedback from statutory agencies

Agency	Issue
<p>Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC)</p>	<p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The four proposed route options have the potential to impact on the biodiversity of the study area in different ways and to different levels. » The responses of affected biota will be influenced by seasonal factors such as fluctuations in weather and dispersal patterns of native fauna, and the type, duration and location of activities associated with the survey, construction and operation phases of the project. » DEC supports the route option/s that will have the least potential to adversely impact on the ecological integrity, persistence and long-term survival of threatened and protected flora and fauna and their habitat within the local and regional landscape. <p>Biodiversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Feasibility measures designed to reduce potentially adverse impacts on ecological processes and local and regional biodiversity will need to be assessed against each option to ensure that high standards of environmental performance can be achieved in the survey, construction and operation phases of the project. » Temporary measures to ameliorate potential impacts on native flora and fauna and their habitats will need to be agreed upon before construction commences. Proposed works will need to provide underpasses and overpasses to facilitate the movement of terrestrial and arboreal fauna to and from foraging and habitat areas either side of the dual carriageway route. » With the exception of the Orange Option in Sections C & D, the proposed routes bisect parts of three DEC reserves – Kumbatine National Park, Cooperabung Creek Nature Reserve, and Rawdon Creek Nature Reserve.

<p>Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) (cont)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Design of the selected option will need to avoid allowing easier public access, other than for fire fighting, to the reserves from the highway. » Threatened flora and fauna species, populations and ecological communities and their habitat must be protected from the proposed roading activities and habitat restoration measures devised and implemented. » In Sections B, C and D, the Blue and Green Options appear likely to have less impact on threatened plants and animals than the Purple and Orange Options. » The Orange Option proposes a new carriageway through National Parks and Wildlife Service designated key habitat areas in the south of Section C and part of Rawdon Creek Nature Reserve in Section B. » The Purple Option will remove large areas of endangered swamp oak coastal floodplain forest and swamp sclerophyll forest communities in Section B. » The Purple and Orange Options in Section B would pass through or over a SEPP 14 wetland on Dalhunty Island and on the northern bank of the Wilson River. <p>Aboriginal and European cultural heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Significant Aboriginal and cultural heritage material occurs in Cooperabung Creek Nature Reserve. » Aboriginal sites are recorded in all of the DEC reserves potentially affected by the various route options. » Kumbatine National Park contains convict limekilns. These are some of the earliest convict constructions in Australia. » Areas potentially containing evidence of past convict activities are those adjacent to waterways used for transport, together with known convict corduroy in Rawdon Creek Nature Reserve, Kumbatine National Park Line Kilns and associated works in Maria National Park, Maria River State Forest and adjacent lands. <p>Noise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Whilst the Orange and Purple Options impact on fewer receivers in Section B and C, they impact on receivers who currently experience low background and local traffic noise levels.
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<p>Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) (cont)</p>	<p>Water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The Green, Purple and Orange Options require the construction of additional bridges, which can pose a risk to the environment during the construction phase. » In Section B the Purple and Orange routes both cross the Wilson River flood plain for a considerable distance requiring several culvert crossings over soft soils requiring significant engineering works during construction. » The Blue Option requires only one new bridge over the Wilson and Hastings River, and is supported by DEC. <p>Space required for mitigation measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Sufficient corridor width should be allowed for the installation and maintenance of appropriate mitigation measures for noise, water quality and fauna during both the construction and operation phases of the upgrade.
<p>Forests NSW</p>	<p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Route preference is solely determined by the amount of additional encroachment on to state forests, therefore Forests NSW preference is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 1st – Blue or Green Options – 2nd – Purple Option – 3rd – Orange Option » Access to the new highway alignment for vehicles up to the size of B-double semi-trailers will be required for the purposes of timber movements and fire control. » From a timber production perspective any additional encroachment on state forests is undesirable. Fragmentation of sections of forest into smaller units may render smaller isolated sections operationally non-economic and hence effectively removed from the resource base. » Further fragmentation of the forest areas will also impact on conservation values, particularly on the movement of Koalas.

<p>Forests NSW (cont)</p>	<p>Section A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Orange Option involves an additional easement through productive state forest and is not favoured by State Forests. Other options appear to be much the same. » Endangered fauna detections in the vicinity of this section of forest include: Koala, Glossy Black Cockatoo, Little Bent-wing Bat & Green Thighed Frog. <p>Section B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The Orange Option cuts through Cairncross State Forest, which would possibly render this section of forest economically unviable. The other options are much the same from a Forests NSW perspective. » Two occupation permits for apiary sites in this section of forest would be affected. » Parallel fire trails would need to be restored and access for harvesting considered. » Endangered fauna in the vicinity of this section of forest include: Koala, Glossy Black Cockatoo, Little Bent-wing Bat & Green Thighed Frog. » If the Orange Option is favoured for the purpose of bypassing Telegraph Point, an alignment east of the forest boundary would have less impact on timber production and conservation values, and less of a fragmentation effect on these values. <p>Section C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The Orange Option is least favoured due to greater incursion into existing state forest. It would be likely that the whole of the effected section of Ballengarra State Forest would be rendered uneconomic. » Similar harvesting road and fire trail issues would exist.
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<p>Forests NSW (cont)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Several Koala records are present in the vicinity. » Parallel fires trails would need to be restored and access for harvesting considered. » If the Orange Option is preferred, it should go entirely to the east of the state forest thus reducing impact on timber production and conservation values. <p>There is a hard rock gravel resource in this section of Ballengarra State Forest.</p> <p>Section D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Parallel fires trails would need to be restored and access for harvesting considered. » Several Koala detection records as well as Brush-tailed Phascogale and Spotted-tailed Quoll.
<p>Kempsey Shire Council</p>	<p>Connectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Improve the current connectivity between Kundabung and eliminate the use of staggered T intersections. » An underpass for pedestrian/cycles/local traffic may improve such connectivity. <p>Local access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Access from adjoining properties and existing access roads needs to be considered and provided. » It is important to maintain a manageable asset for Council. <p>Bus stops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Future design should examine existing and future needs of public transport in the area, specifically in relation to school bus routes/stops. <p>Ecological significance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Endangered ecological communities within the study area.

<p>Kempsey Shire Council (cont)</p>	<p>Yarrabee Road Quarry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Design of the highway should consider and not detract from available resource material in this area. » Adequate access for quarry related transport should be ensured.
<p>Department of Primary Industry (DPI)</p>	<p>Agricultural issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » There are no obvious impacts for agriculture for the routes following the existing highway, though local property impacts, including access arrangements, will require attention. » The Orange and Purple Options will have some localised impacts on better quality agricultural land and property severance as well as potential property management impacts. » The Orange Option could possibly impact on the Tea Tree Plantation in Section B. <p>Fisheries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The DPI Aquatic habitat Protection Unit prefers that the option selected should have the least impact upon fishing activity, fish and aquatic habitat such as wetlands, especially SEPP 14 wetlands, mangroves and seagrass beds. <p>Minerals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Concerned over transport access, resource access and safety issues in relation to the Yarrabee Road Quarry, Sancrox Quarry and Dows Quarry at Telegraph Point. » Recommend against adopting the Orange Option in Section C, as DPI believe it would potentially threaten future quarry operations and could raise issues of public safety.
<p>Port Macquarie-Hastings Council</p>	<p>Section A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » All options to Fernbank Creek are considered compatible with future land use. » From Fernbank Creek, the Blue and Purple Options retain existing bridge over Hastings River for southbound traffic. » The Green and Orange Options are likely to result in significant road and bridge assets to Council for future care

	and control.
Port Macquarie-Hastings Council (cont)	<p>Section B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Construction constraints, property acquisitions and related social impacts associated with the Blue and Green Options. » The Purple Option appears to be poorly aligned. » The Orange Option is better aligned although is a significant deviation of the existing highway and provides for a bypass of Telegraph Point. » The Orange Option impacts on some significant economic developments including Tea Tree plantation and existing businesses off Mooney Street. » The Orange Option has the potential to impact on the biodiversity and visual quality of estuarine environment. <p>Section C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The Blue, Green and Purple Options maximise the use of the existing road reserves. » Possible visual and ecological impacts with the Orange Options. <p>Section D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » All options are acceptable at this location.

5. Process for selection of the preferred route

5.1 Route corridor selection

The process for selection of the preferred route is illustrated in Figure 5. Key stages in the process are described below.

5.1.1 Consideration of submissions raised by the community and other stakeholders

All submissions received during the route options display period will be considered in greater detail by the RTA and GHD in recommending a preferred route. The recommendation will be made to the Minister for Roads. Issues raised will also be used throughout the planning phase of the Project in developing the preliminary design for the preferred route.

5.1.2 Reports and ongoing field investigations

The RTA and the GHD Project Team will assess the route options against preliminary environmental and engineering investigations, and selection criteria developed by the RTA and the GHD Project Team, which relate to the Pacific Highway Upgrade Program objectives and the Oxley Highway to Kempsey Project objectives. The outcomes of this assessment will assist the RTA in making a recommendation to the Minister for Roads on a preferred route option.

5.1.3 Value management workshop

A value management workshop was held on 12-13 December 2005, and involved various stakeholders including government agencies, local councils, community representatives, environmental groups, the GHD project team and the RTA. A summary of submissions was considered at the value management workshop.

5.2 Announcement of the preferred route

The NSW Minister for Roads will announce the preferred route taking into consideration the recommendation of the RTA which would be based on the outcomes of the value management workshop held in December 2005, the route assessment process, and public submissions.

5.3 Public display of preliminary design

It is anticipated that the preliminary design for the preferred route will go on public display in mid 2006.

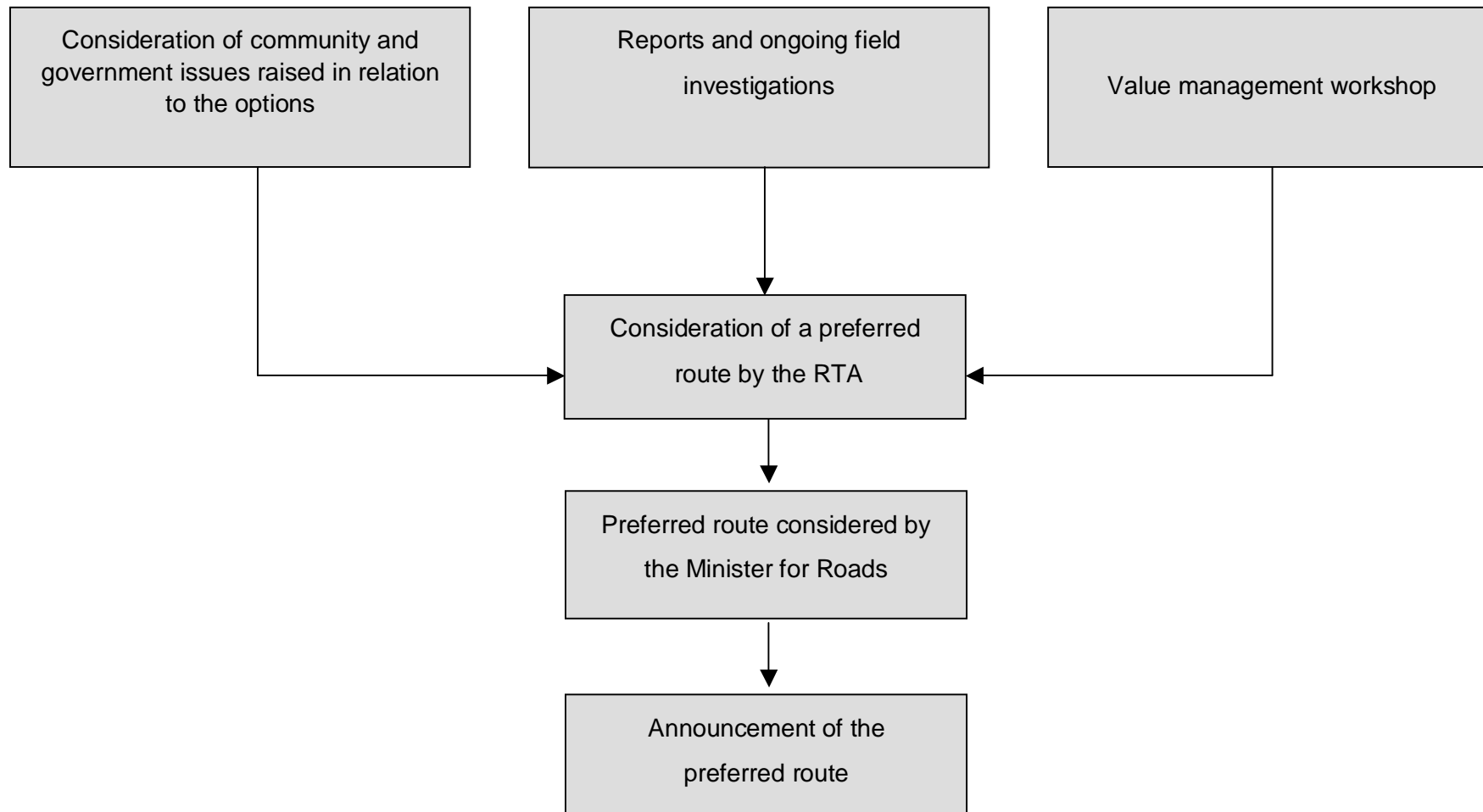


Figure 5 Process for selection of the preferred route.