



## **Ecological Focus Group Charter**

### **Preamble**

The NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) is forming an Ecological Focus Group (EFG) for the proposed Oxley Highway to Kempsey Upgrade project. The EFG will operate throughout the planning stages of the project. Members of the project team will attend all EFG meetings.

### **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.
- To act as a two-way communication link between the project team and the community, ecological interest groups and stakeholders.

### **Terms of Reference**

The EFG will:

- Meet at key stages to provide community input on the project;
- Consider and comment on a range of ecological information that will be presented to the EFG during the development phase of the project;
- Advise the project team on current and emerging ecological issues relating to the project from the community's perspective;
- Identify, communicate, represent and consider the ecological interests of the local community and other stakeholders potentially affected by the project; and
- Assist the project team to keep the local community and key interest groups informed about the project by disseminating information via existing networks.

### **Role of Ecological Focus Group**

The role of the EFG is to identify ecological issues relevant to the various planning stages. The project team will carefully consider all input from the group in the light of overall strategic objectives for the project, as well as statutory and other government policy requirements.

## Relationship to the Community Liaison Group

A Community Liaison Group (CLG) has already been established for the project with the role to exchange information on a wide range of issues of interest to the community.

The EFG will specifically concentrate on ecological matters, which may from time to time overlap with issues raised by the CLG.

## Membership of Ecological Focus Group

In order for the EFG to operate effectively, the group is likely to be made up of about 4-8 representatives.

Nominees may be supported by a local organisation or interest group, or they may nominate as individuals. Nominees who are supported by a group are still considered individual nominees to the EFG. Therefore, groups that support a particular nomination may not automatically revoke or change their representative once this person is accepted as an EFG member, as each nominee is selected according to specific criteria.

The EFG will include technical staff from the project team. Meetings will be restricted to EFG members only but the project team may arrange for guest speakers from time to time to provide specialist advice or information.

Note: Broader community interests will also be taken into account as part of the detailed design and construction phases of the project.

## Responsibilities of Ecological Focus Group Participants

The project team agree:

- To work within the framework of the charter for the EFG;
- To allow all members of the EFG to present their views;
- To report on planning progress and seek feedback from the EFG;
- To consider advice and issues raised by the EFG;
- To provide feedback on the outcomes of issues and advice provided by the EFG;
- To respond within agreed timeframes to requests for information; and
- To ensure that EFG members are provided with adequate information and technical support to assist them to contribute to EFG discussions relating to the development phase of the project.

Members of the EFG agree:

- To work within the framework of the charter for the EFG;
- To recognise the wide range of issues that must be considered by the project team (e.g. road safety, social, environmental, Government policy, value for money);
- to consider and respect the views of other EFG members and those they represent;
- To provide timely comments and recommendations to the project team that accurately represent current community opinion on ecological issues;
- To attend meetings and actively participate in discussions;
- To canvass and report a broad range of community views and issues;
- To provide feedback from EFG meetings to the local community and interested groups;
- To add value to the development phase by working cooperatively to achieve the best possible project and ecological outcomes; and
- To apply discretion with regards to preliminary (draft) documents and other information

### Meetings of the Ecological Focus Group

The EFG meetings will be facilitated by GHD Pty Ltd and will be as informal as possible to encourage open discussion/information exchange.

Members must commit to attending, and participating in, all EFG meetings. If a member does not attend a meeting without prior notice, they may be asked if they intend to continue their involvement. If a member decides not to continue his/her involvement, or is not in a position to do so, they will not be automatically replaced unless their withdrawal would impact on the ability of the group to represent all of the key ecological issues relevant to the project. In the latter case, any new member will be fully briefed by a member of the project team.

Notices of meeting will be sent to EFG members at least one week before the meeting. This will include an agenda and any support material that members should consider in preparation for the meeting.

The project team will be responsible for compiling agendas for EFG meetings, however at the preceding EFG meeting, EFG members may nominate issues for discussion. The number of issues placed on the agenda may need to be limited to a number that allows suitable time for presentation of information and discussion of each issue, and may need to be prioritised based on the immediacy of the issues raised and other critical issues already proposed for that meeting.

A record of EFG meetings and any actions and responsibilities arising from discussions will be distributed to EFG members within two weeks of each EFG meeting. EFG members will be invited at each meeting to comment on the record of the previous meeting to ensure its accuracy.

The EFG will meet at key stages in the development phase of the project. The first meeting will take place on Thursday 22 September 2005 at the Telegraph Point School of Arts, 7 Cooperbung Drive, Telegraph Point from 6:00 to 8:00 pm.

*Please note that some of your contact details may be made publicly available, for example, on the Project website.*

We, as members of the Ecological Focus Group for the Pacific Highway Upgrade – Oxley Highway to Kempsey – support and approve the Ecological Focus Group Charter.

1. _____	_____ Date
2. _____	_____ Date
3. _____	_____ Date
4. _____	_____ Date
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