

**DIRECTOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
REPORT**14th December 2004**DSDS10 PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE – KEMPSEY TO EUNGAI
FILE: R Pacific Highway PMK****SUMMARY:**

Reporting on the status of the planning for the Pacific Highway Upgrade – Kempsey to Eungai, including the Kempsey Bypass.

**DESCRIPTION****Background**

As Council is aware, the RTA is currently planning the upgrade of the Pacific Highway from South Kempsey to Eungai. This section includes the bypass for the towns of Kempsey and Frederickton.

There are four major steps in the RTA's process for planning, assessment and construction of the Highway. These are discussed below with comment on the work that has been undertaken to date and the input required by Council in the future.

Planning and Design Process

Step one involves the planning and concept design of the route. This step was commenced in September 2001 and has been finalised with the announcement of the Preferred Route Option including the sub-options at East Kempsey and Collombatti in July 2004. The preferred route swings east of Kempsey, crosses the Macleay River just north of Frederickton and then swings out to the east and back to join the existing Highway at Eungai. ([Appendix W](#)).

Concept Design and Environmental Impact Statement

The second stage involves the preparation of the Concept Design for the preferred route and the Environmental Impact Assessment. Parsons Brinkerhoff have been engaged by the RTA to undertake this next stage of the project

The RTA will be preparing the Environmental Impact Statement and Species Impact Statement while the concept design is being finalised and made public for comment.

The timetable for this second stage is tight. It is intended that the concept design will be completed and on display by mid 2005 and the EIS will be completed shortly thereafter. Then DIPNR and the other government authorities concerned will undertake the assessment of the EIS with final approvals expected in early 2006.

As a precursor to this work, the RTA and its consultants held a planning focus meeting with agencies and government stakeholders on 3rd December 2004. The aim of the meeting was to advise on the status and the timetable for future action and ask for input to help identification of key issues for the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement.

Council Staff were present to make comment and a letter confirming the issues will be sent to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources to ensure that the issues of importance to Council are covered.

The RTA has advised that there will be ongoing community consultation throughout all of this stage and that Council will be closely involved.

The RTA will put in place five or six community groups based on geographical areas and Council staff and Councillors will be expected and encouraged to be involved. These groups will be put together early next year.

Delivery of the project

The final stage of the project will involve the detailed design and construction. The timing associated with this stage will depend on available funding. No dates were discussed.

ISSUES IDENTIFIED TO DATE

A wide range of issues has been identified to date. The more significant include:

Flood management

This has been identified as the most crucial of the issues for the bypass. Much time was spent at the focus meeting discussing the options and implications.

Other Issues

Aboriginal issues

There has and will continue to be significant involvement of the Aboriginal community

Access to the local road networks

Both Council and the affected community need to be involved with access through and around the highway. School Bus routes,

Emergency Services, Agricultural businesses (split farms) for instance.

Tourism

Tourism is potentially a big economic benefit to the Shire. The highway should serve to attract rather than detract.

Service Centre location and rest areas

The number and position of Service Centres along the highway is controlled by the RTA and state planning policy. The number along this stretch and the way passing traffic and trucks is serviced will be important for Kempsey in the future. This is an issue that the Council will need to consider at a future meeting. Initial planning has commenced by staff. The RTA has advised that it is interested in approaching the issue from a regional perspective. It may be of value to approach the Regional Group of Councils to see if Hastings, Nambucca, Bellingen and Coffs Harbour would be interested in participating in a regional study to determine an overall strategy for Highway Service Centres.

Servicing the Trucking Industry

Urban Design and Landscape

It will be important that this fits with any design work that the Council does for Kempsey and Frederickton so that the RTA and Council are working together. Some work has commenced on the South Kempsey area and the Town Centre.

Impact on highway business

Impact on agricultural businesses

Noise

Threatened species and habitat

Waterways and aquatic communities

Soils

Public Utilities

The level of ongoing Community consultation through this process

It will be important that Council is closely involved so that when the EIS is made public, most of Council's issues will have been addressed.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

- ***Environmental***

A wide range of Environmental Issues will be dealt with through the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement and Species Impact Statement

- ***Social***

The Environmental Impact Statement will need to deal with the Social issues as well. Moving the through and heavy traffic from the town centre will have a significant positive benefit to the town

- ***Economic (Financial)***

The Environmental Impact Statement will need to deal with the economic issues as well. In order to ensure the bypass will not have negative economic impacts on Kempsey, it is important that a strategy is developed to revitalise the Kempsey CBD.

There will be financial implications for the Council in work that needs to be done in the town centre and along the main routes into the town from South Kempsey and Frederickton.

- *Policy or Statutory*

No impact on current policy

- *Director Sustainable Development Services Review*

The Council will continue to be briefed on all major issues associated with this project as and when they arise.

RECOMMENDATION:

- A That Council note the status report on the planning for the Pacific Highway – Kempsey to Eungai upgrade.
- B That Council seek the involvement of neighbouring Councils to prepare a regional Highway Service Centre strategy.
- C That Council review the Kempsey Town Centre Masterplan and commence a Town Centre rejuvenation program with the business community which includes the town approaches.

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