

# We dig it!

## Why the treatment of acidic soils matters on Woolgoolga to Ballina

As part of the Pacific Highway upgrade the project team has been working in collaboration with our industry partners and regulatory stakeholders in the treatment of organic acidic topsoil to encourage a crucial culture of environmental responsibility. To minimise our environmental impact on the Woolgoolga to Ballina project, approximately 14,000 cubic metres of acidic soil at Harwood has been treated in situ resulting in reduced truck movements on the Pacific Highway, reduced carbon emissions, increased productivity and improved rehabilitation outcomes.

This innovative three month trial treating soil in situ was first proposed as the treated soil would eventually be required very close to where it was first uncovered. Soil is reused for landscaping and revegetation, usually towards the end of the project. In the past, uncovered acidic soil would be transported to an approved treatment area only to be hauled back to the original site for re-use. Allowing the material to be treated in situ has removed the need to haul the soil, creating significant environmental benefits. These benefits included:

- 2000 less heavy vehicle movements required over a 12 kilometre stretch of the existing Pacific Highway
- carbon emissions saving of over 57,000kg CO<sub>2</sub>
- fuel saving of over 20,000 litres of diesel, equivalent to a direct cost saving of around \$30,000.

As the trial demonstrated substantial environmental, sustainability and financial benefits, it has been recommended that further in situ treatment of other acidic soil be used at other parts of the upgrade on the Woolgoolga to Ballina project.



Treatment of acidic soil involved application of a lime guard layer before installation of high strength geo-fabric

For more detailed information visit the project website at [www.rms.nsw.gov.au/pacific](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/pacific) and environment news at [www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/pacific-highway/environment/news.html](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/pacific-highway/environment/news.html) or call the Pacific Highway office on 1800 653 092