



Australian Government

BUILDING OUR FUTURE



Coffs Harbour bypass

Project update – Environmental Impact Statement

September 2019



You are invited to make a submission on the Coffs Harbour bypass Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Australian and NSW governments are funding the 14 kilometre Coffs Harbour bypass project. The bypass will boost the regional economy and improve connectivity, road transport efficiency and safety for local and interstate motorists.

Once complete, the bypass will remove thousands of vehicles from the centre of town, making Coffs Harbour an even better place to live, work and visit.

In response to community feedback, we have investigated refinements to the concept design. The changes lower the height of the bypass and incorporate three tunnels at Roberts Hill, Shephards Lane and Gatelys Road.



Improving safety



Building 3 tunnels



Up to 12 traffic lights bypassed



Artist impression of Shephards Lane tunnel



Key benefits

The Coffs Harbour bypass will save motorists 11 minutes of travel time, bypass up to 12 sets of traffic lights and improve the amenity of the Coffs Harbour CBD by removing thousands of vehicles.

The project is a priority for the Australian and NSW governments as the Pacific Highway is a major contributor to Australia's economy. The bypass will be a key link in this vital piece of the nation's infrastructure, connecting Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

The project's objectives of improving road freight efficiency for heavy vehicles, road safety and easing congestion all support the NSW Government's Future Transport 2056 Strategy.

The Coffs Harbour bypass project has been developed to complement the Pacific Highway upgrade program and meet the Australian and NSW governments' strategic planning for regional NSW.

The project will provide safer road conditions, reduce travel times for all road users, improve transport efficiency, ease congestion, and support economic development.



Motorists will save about
11 minutes
in travel time



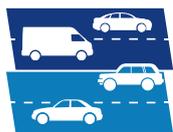
Bypass
up to 12 sets
of traffic lights



Remove about
12,000 vehicles
per day
from CBD



Build
3 tunnels



Ease congestion
and deliver better,
more reliable trips



Improve safety
on the existing highway



Create roughly
12,000
direct and indirect jobs

Key benefits of the refined design are:

- ✓ Improve the visual outlook for local residents by lowering the height of the new highway between Shephards Lane and Gatelys Road and reducing the height of the bridge over the North Coast Railway
- ✓ Reduce road traffic noise by including lower noise pavement along the entire alignment. Reducing the road height and the steepness of the road also help reduce noise
- ✓ Reduce impacts to areas of Aboriginal heritage by retaining the ridgelines at Roberts Hill, Shephards Lane and Gatelys Road
- ✓ Reduce impacts to plants and wildlife
- ✓ Improve freight efficiency by reducing the steepness of the road
- ✓ Reduced impacts to properties and agriculture.



Design refinements

The design of the Coffs Harbour bypass project has been updated since the project was displayed to the community in 2018. The EIS has been prepared on this refined design. The EIS exhibition is an opportunity for the community to make comment on the project, potential environmental impacts and proposed mitigation measures for the proposed bypass.

The EIS is available on the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) website.

Key changes to the previously displayed design include:

- ✓ Building three tunnels at Roberts Hill (about 190 metres long), Shephards Lane (about 360 metres long) and Gatelys Road (about 450 metres long)
- ✓ Lowering the height of the road up to 18 metres and an average of eight metres across the length of the project
- ✓ Reducing the maximum road gradient to 3.5%
- ✓ Lowering the bridge over the North Coast Railway by 12 metres
- ✓ Adding nearly 14 kilometres of lower noise pavement

Further refinements to the design may occur following the EIS exhibition and during the detailed design.

Tunnels

Tunnels have been incorporated into the refined design in response to community feedback received during the display of the preferred concept design in 2018. The key benefits of these tunnels include lowering the grade line of the main carriageway, reducing impacts to agricultural properties and farmland, reducing the amount of land required to be purchased for the project, reducing impacts to areas of Aboriginal significance, and enabling the project to blend in better to the surrounding landscape.

Reducing road height

Including tunnels in the design has enabled the height of the new highway to be lowered between Shephards Lane and Gatelys Road. The benefits of lowering the alignment include:

- ✓ Improving the visual outlook by blending it into the natural landscape
- ✓ Reducing impacts to farmland
- ✓ Reducing impacts to areas of Aboriginal significance
- ✓ Reducing impacts on biodiversity.

Lower noise pavement

By installing lower noise pavement along the length of the alignment we will reduce road traffic noise for nearby residents and properties.

Reducing the steepness of the road

Similar to reducing the overall height of the road, lowering the maximum road gradient makes the motorway less intrusive and reduces earthwork. It also improves road user costs (in particular for the freight industry) and reduces engine noise and the need for engine brakes.

Bridge over the North Coast Railway

By lowering the height of the bridge over the North Coast Railway by 12 metres we have improved visual amenity in the local area. Lowering the bridge height also helps to lower the road gradient.

Dangerous goods

Under current standards, no vehicles carrying dangerous goods are permitted through tunnels. Discussions with relevant authorities are ongoing to determine what classes of dangerous goods may be able to be carried on the bypass in future. The carriage of dangerous goods in road tunnels is the subject of national policy development through Austroads. Transport for NSW and Roads and Maritime are directly involved in this process and projects which involve the construction of road tunnels, such as the Coffs Harbour bypass, are being considered in the policy development process.

Cost

The Australian and NSW governments are committed to delivering the bypass on an 80:20 funding split.

The refined design is estimated to cost around \$1.8 billion. The current project budget is sufficient for the bypass to proceed to project approval and early work stages.

Operation and maintenance costs for the previous concept design were expected to cost about \$2.5 million per year. The operation and maintenance costs for the new design are estimated at \$8.5 million per year.



Our community

Consultation

The refinements to the design have been made as a direct result of consultation carried out with the community during the display of the preferred concept design in 2018. During that consultation the community was clear in their preference for tunnels. Roads and Maritime has listened and delivered what many asked for. This continues a long history of consultation as part of this project, which began in 2001 when the Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy was announced. Roads and Maritime values consulting and engaging with the community because we know it leads to better outcomes for stakeholders. We want your feedback on the EIS and will listen to what you have to say.

Display office

The Coffs Harbour bypass project display office was opened on 19 November 2018. Staffed by the project team, the office enables interested stakeholders to ask questions about the project and view project information.

Located at 11a Park Avenue Coffs Harbour, the display office will be open Monday to Friday during the EIS exhibition.

Community consultative committee

A Community Consultative Committee (CCC) has been established for the Coffs Harbour bypass project. The purpose of the CCC is to provide a forum for discussion between the project and representatives of the Coffs Harbour community, stakeholder groups and the local council on issues directly relating to the Coffs Harbour bypass project. The first meeting was held in April and further meetings will be held as the project develops.

Alternative route options considered

Between 2001 and 2004, many possible route options for a bypass of Coffs Harbour were investigated. These included an upgrade of the existing highway and options further west of Coffs Harbour, including Coffs Harbour City Council's preferred corridor, the Coastal Ridge Way, and far western options.

As the Great Dividing Range meets the sea at Coffs Harbour, there are significant topographical challenges with building a highway further west. Not only would it cost more to build, a highway further west would attract less traffic than one closer to the coast. When considering less traffic would use a western bypass, the fact it would cost significantly more and have substantial environmental and Aboriginal impacts, the preferred route was identified as the most suitable option.

Artist impression of Roberts Hill tunnel





How to make a submission

You can make a submission on the EIS to DPIE either online or by posting a letter.



To make a submission online, create a user account on DPIE's Major Projects website at www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects.

To create a user account, click the "Sign In" icon in the top right of the homepage or under the "Services" tab and then click the "Have Your Say" link.

When you are logged in, find the project you want to have your say on, and click the 'Make a Submission' icon.

Anyone can make a submission about the project within the exhibition period, which runs from Wednesday, 11 September until midnight on Sunday, 27 October.

Before making your submission, please read DPIE's Privacy Statement at www.planning.nsw.gov.au/privacy or telephone **1300 305 695** for a copy. DPIE will publish your submission on its website in accordance with its Privacy Statement.

If you cannot lodge your submission online, you can write to:



Attention: Director – Transport Assessments

Planning and Assessment
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

If you want DPIE to delete your personal information before publication, please make this clear at the top of your letter. If you post or hand deliver your submission, it needs to be received by DPIE before the close of the exhibition period and include the following:

- Your name and address (at the top of the letter only)
- The name of the application and the application number (Coffs Harbour bypass; SSI_7666)
- A statement on whether you support or object to the proposal
- The reasons why you support or object to the proposal
- A declaration of any reportable political donations made in the previous two years.

To find out what is reportable, and for a disclosure form, go to www.planning.nsw.gov.au/DonationsandGiftDisclosure or telephone **1300 305 695** for a copy. Note the disclosure requirements apply however a submission is made.

For more information on making a submission about this project, please call DPIE on **1300 305 695**.

Project approval

At the end of the EIS display, a report responding to submissions is prepared and submitted to DPIE. The Minister for Planning then determines if the project is approved.

If the Minister approves the project, it will be constructed and operated in accordance with the mitigation measures described in the EIS and the Minister's Conditions of Approval.

The plans proposed in the EIS may evolve, depending on several factors, including community feedback, and the construction methodologies developed by the contractors once appointed.

Staffed displays

Members of the project team will be available to discuss the EIS at the following times:

Community drop-in sessions

- **Tuesday, 17 September** – Pacific Bay Resort conference room – 4pm to 7pm
- **Thursday, 26 September** – Coffs Harbour Showgrounds – 4pm to 7pm
- **Tuesday, 1 October** – Narranga Public School – 4pm to 7pm
- **Saturday, 12 October** – Pacific Bay Resort conference room – 9am to 12pm
- **Wednesday, 16 October** – Coffs Harbour Golf Club – 4pm to 7pm

Pop-up displays

- **Saturday, 21 September** – Bunnings Warehouse Coffs Harbour – 10am to 2pm
- **Tuesday, 24 September** – Park Beach Plaza – 10am to 2pm
- **Wednesday, 2 October** – Coffs Central – 10am to 2pm
- **Thursday, 10 October** – Park Beach Plaza – 4pm to 7pm
- **Thursday, 17 October** – Toormina Gardens – 10am to 2pm
- **Tuesday, 22 October** – Moonee Market – 10am to 2pm



Visit our new interactive web portal to find out more about the EIS
pacifichighway.nsw.gov.au/coffsharbourbypass

Roberts Hill tunnel
(about 190 metres long)



Artist impression

Shepherds Lane tunnel
(about 360 metres long)



Artist impression

Gatelys Road tunnel
(about 450 metres long)



Artist impression



Coffs Harbour bypass

Ongoing design refinements

This EIS seeks approval for the project features and their function as shown in this project update. The concept design may continue to be refined as a result of the EIS exhibition and during further development of the detailed design. Any refinement would be guided by the key principles developed during the concept design and EIS preparation. We will continue to consult with the community about any potential design refinements during subsequent phases of the project.

While the overall design, including the tunnels will not change, there may be further design refinements to further minimise environmental and community impacts.

Potential areas include:

- Interchange designs
- Access roads
- Other connections with the local road network
- Bridge design.

If changes are made to the project as a result of these design refinements, a Preferred Infrastructure Report will be prepared in accordance with Department of Planning, Industry and Environment requirements. This report, which will be made available to the public, will form part of project approval.



Englands Road interchange



Artist impression

Coramba Road interchange



Artist impression

Korora Hill interchange



Artist impression



Noise and vibration

As part of the EIS, the potential noise and vibration impacts during construction and operation of the project have been assessed in accordance with relevant NSW noise and vibration guidelines.

For the first time ever an audio-visual tool will be available to help the community better understand what various levels of road traffic noise sounds like. Visit the project display office or a community drop-in session to use this innovative tool.

Noise level comparison

People's perception of noise is subjective and strongly influenced by their surrounding environment. Generally, a change of less than 3dB is difficult for most people to detect. A 10dB change is an approximate doubling or halving of noise.

As well as the standard guidelines for noise, which are indicated on the graph, the project seeks to limit the increase of traffic noise to less than 12dB in areas where the current background traffic noise levels are less than 30dB.*

A lower noise pavement will be used for the entire length of the Coffs Harbour bypass. This surface will reduce tyre noise by up to 5dB compared to a concrete surface.

Standard guidelines for noise are:

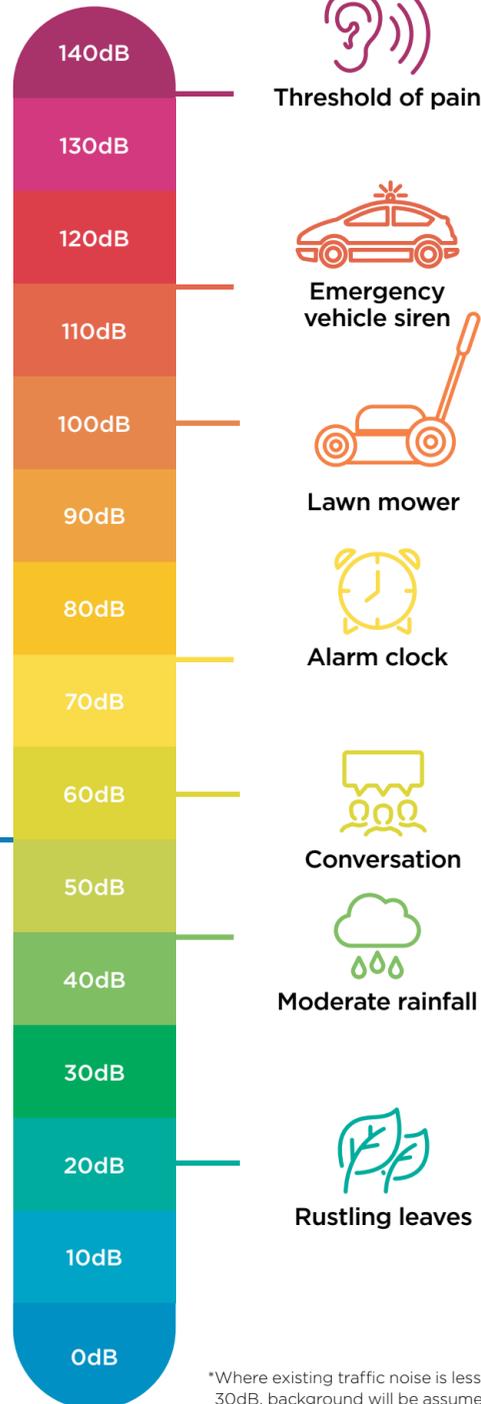
50 decibels at night
 55 decibels during the day
for new **freeways or main roads**

55 decibels at night
 60 decibels during the day
for upgrades of **existing roads**

Road traffic noise will reduce for a significant number of properties along the existing Pacific Highway due to less vehicles travelling through the built up areas of Coffs Harbour.

The noise report identifies nearly 500 properties will exceed the project's noise goals and may be eligible for at house noise mitigation. These properties are identified in the EIS's noise and vibration assessment. Mitigations may include architectural treatments such as window glazing or air conditioning. Eligible property owners will be contacted by the project team to discuss possible mitigations prior to start of construction.

Another noise report will be produced during detailed design, which will confirm operational noise mitigation measures. A post construction operational noise report will also be prepared. This report will check actual road traffic noise levels against those predicted in the EIS.



*Where existing traffic noise is less than 30dB, background will be assumed to be 30dB.



Air quality

Operational air quality impacts for the Coffs Harbour bypass have been assessed as part of the EIS.

An air quality modelling assessment was carried out to measure impacts on air quality during construction and operation of the Coffs Harbour bypass. Air pollutants including carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter are generated by a number of sources, including:

- Meteorological conditions
- Traffic volumes and speeds
- Vehicle emission rates
- Receptor locations
- Design of the bypass.

Air quality modelling for the proposed bypass showed emission rates to be significantly below thresholds set by the NSW Environment Protection Authority.

Tunnels

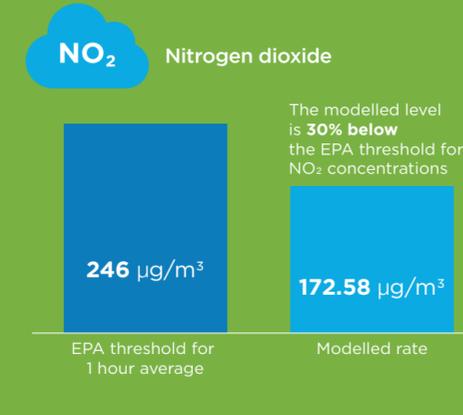
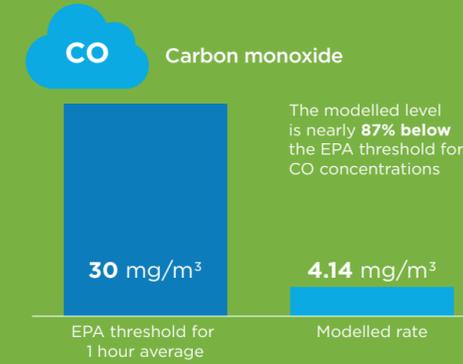
The tunnels will have ventilation systems in place that will meet the strict in-tunnel air criteria that would be prescribed in the Conditions of Approval if the project is approved.

The tunnels aren't long enough to require ventilation stacks. Ventilation of the tunnels would occur through the natural air flow caused by vehicles moving in and out of the tunnels.



Artist impression of Coramba Road interchange

The results found:



Air quality along the existing Pacific Highway will also improve due to the reduced number of cars and trucks travelling through Coffs Harbour.



Aboriginal heritage

The project's construction footprint and surrounding region are important to, and are used by, Aboriginal people. Aboriginal peoples' use of the region is well-documented in historical accounts and continues today among the contemporary Aboriginal community. The project team has been working closely with Aboriginal stakeholders to identify, manage and mitigate potential impacts to Aboriginal heritage.

Roads and Maritime follows a three-stage process of consultation and investigation to assess known or potential impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage. The process includes:

- Assessing if the project could impact Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Surveying the project area
- Preparing a Cultural Heritage Assessment Report.

At all stages local Aboriginal stakeholders and a suitably qualified archaeologist have been engaged to assist the project team. The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage report and Aboriginal Cultural Values Assessment report are included in the EIS.

As part of the EIS the team assessed an area encompassing about 318 hectares along the eastern edge of the escarpment from the Pacific Highway at Boambee in the south to Korora in the north.

In total, 24 Aboriginal archaeological sites within the construction footprint were investigated in collaboration with Aboriginal stakeholders. All of the sites were assessed as having low to moderate archaeological significance.

In addition, consultation with local Aboriginal Knowledge Holders identified five areas of cultural significance - Roberts Hill Pathway, Gungali Storyline and Pathway, Sealy Point Pathways, East Boambee Camp and West Korora Living Place.

Through engagement with Aboriginal Knowledge Holders, the EIS has captured their vast knowledge about the cultural significance of the wider landscape. This knowledge has informed management measures which have been developed in consultation with the Registered Aboriginal Parties. This aims to help in the recording, recognition and preservation of the cultural values and significance of the impacted landscape.



Flooding and hydrology

The proposed bypass is located across three main catchments - Pine Brush, Coffs and Newports creeks.

As part of the EIS, flood models have been completed to assess the potential project impacts on flooding and hydrology.

The proposed bypass incorporates numerous bridges and culverts along the entire length of the project. These help to move water safely away from the road. These mitigation measures not only increase the amount of water that can be stored in a flood event but also improve creek flows so water can get away more quickly during a flood.

These mitigation measures have been included so that the project has minimal impacts on existing hydrology.



The project will be built above the 1 in 100 year flood level



Flora and fauna (plants and animals)

We recognise highway projects can impact threatened species and native wildlife.

We propose to implement a wide range of design and management measures to minimise impacts during and after the building of the bypass. These include pre-clearing surveys, a two-stage clearing process to reduce animal impacts and relocating threatened plants.

During the route selection stage for the proposed bypass, the preferred alignment was selected in part because of its reduced impacts on biodiversity compared to other options.

Animal structures on the project

Glider poles

About 9 kilometres of fauna fencing



16 fauna crossings

Two threatened plant species and 14 vulnerable animal species were detected in the project area. Proposed mitigations for some of these species include:



Southern swamp orchid and Rusty plum - these will be protected by carrying out pre-clearing surveys, establishing exclusion zones, replanting at-risk plants and implementing revegetation buffer zones to protect habitats.



Koala - fauna exclusion fencing, fauna underpass structures and the retaining of the ridgelines at Roberts Hill, Shephards Lane and Gatelys Road to aid movement across habitats will reduce impacts to koalas.



Giant barred frog - measures to facilitate safe movement, including combined fauna and drainage underpasses and waterway bridges incorporating fauna underpasses, plus other measures such as water quality monitoring and fauna exclusion fencing will help protect Giant barred frog populations.



Biodiversity

Roads and Maritime takes its environmental responsibilities seriously and looks to avoid, minimise and mitigate the impacts of infrastructure on the environment as much as possible.

Sometimes, impacts cannot be avoided or mitigated. When this happens, we offset these impacts by protecting areas with similar plants and animals that the project affects.

For the Coffs Harbour bypass project, we need to protect areas containing lowland rainforest, wet sclerophyll and paperbark swamp forests, as well as areas supporting koalas, Giant barred frogs and the threatened Rusty plum tree.

We have identified properties in the Coffs Harbour region, Kalang Valley and near Woolli which provide these habitats. The habitats on these properties will now be protected forever - three will enter into Biodiversity Stewardship Agreements while the fourth will be added to the Yuraygir National Park.

Agricultural impacts

There are 24 farms in the project's construction footprint. They all grow one or more crops, including bananas, blueberries, cucumbers, avocados and custard apples.

The agriculture assessment looked at impacts the project might have on local farms, including dust, microclimate, Panama disease, irrigation water and total land acquisition.

Specific management measures are proposed to reduce these impacts, including:

-  Engaging specialist agricultural consultants to work with farmers
-  Replacing or relocating impacted water sources and structures (such as packing sheds)
-  Real time dust monitoring
-  Establishing a local weather station to help provide real time weather information
-  Developing a Panama Disease Control Management Plan

All of these measures will be discussed with affected property owners and implemented before construction starts.

Microclimate impacts have been assessed as having negligible impacts on agricultural properties.



The Coffs Harbour bypass project impacts about

46 hectares

of native flora and fauna.



We will protect roughly

300 hectares

in-perpetuity through biodiversity offsets.



We have identified about

400 hectares

of habitat across four different sites and are assessing their suitability for the offsets program.



Giant barred frog

Working with the community

Display locations

EIS information is also available from the following locations:

- Project display office – 11a Park Avenue, Coffs Harbour
- Roads and Maritime Services – 76 Victoria Street, Grafton
- Coffs Harbour City Council chambers – 2 Castle Street, Coffs Harbour
- Coffs Harbour electorate office – 9 Park Avenue, Coffs Harbour
- Harry Bailey Memorial Library – cnr Coffs and Duke Streets, Coffs Harbour
- Toormina Library – Minorie Drive, Toormina
- Department of Planning, Industry and Environment – 320 Pitt Street, Sydney
- Nature Conservation Council – 14/338 Pitt Street, Sydney

Contact us

If you have any questions or would like more information on the Coffs Harbour bypass please contact our project team:

- ☎ 1800 550 621 (toll free)
- @ coffsharbourbypass@rms.nsw.gov.au
- 🖱 pacifichighway.nsw.gov.au/coffsharbourbypass
- ✉ PO Box 546, Grafton NSW 2460
- 📍 Visit us at 11a Park Avenue, Coffs Harbour

What happens next ?



Visit our new interactive web portal to find out more about the EIS
pacifichighway.nsw.gov.au/coffsharbourbypass

If you need help understanding this information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on **131 450** and ask them to call us on **1800 550 621**.



September 2019

RMS 19.1355

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