



Hon Tony Kelly MLC
Minister for Planning
Minister for Infrastructure
Minister for Lands
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Leader of the House in the Legislative Council

MEDIA RELEASE

29 January, 2010

Tintenbar to Ewingsdale Pacific Highway upgrade go-ahead

Approval has been granted for the \$780 million Tintenbar to Ewingsdale Pacific Highway upgrade project.

Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, said the upgrade which is supported by the NSW Government's Far North Coast Regional Strategy, will generate around 400 construction jobs.

"Seventeen kilometres of existing highway will be replaced by a new four-lane carriageway extending from Ross Lane near Tintenbar to the existing Ewingsdale interchange," the Minister said.

Minister for Transport and Roads, David Campbell, said this is the next stage in the delivery of a continuous four-lane divided highway from Hexham to the Queensland border, funded jointly by the NSW and Federal Governments.

Planning approvals are now in place for a continuous high standard four-lane highway between Ballina and the Queensland state border, with the Ballina bypass and the Banora Point upgrade currently under construction.

"Critical safety issues have been addressed, with around 44% of the Pacific Highway now upgraded to dual carriageway, with another 102 kilometres (15%) currently under construction or about to commence," Mr Campbell said.

The preferred route for the project was selected after an extensive community consultation process undertaken by the RTA.

Mr Kelly said functionality, safety, efficiency of the route, road traffic noise, ecology, heritage and the economy were all issues considered.

"Project approval is accompanied by 44 stringent conditions requiring high standards of environmental management," the Minister said.

They include:

- Monitoring traffic noise levels 12 months after road opening;
- Installation of noise barriers at key locations, use of low noise materials in the road surface and architectural treatments such as double-glazed windows for individual properties;
- Implementing programs to monitor any impact on surface and ground water;
- Preparing an offset package for the Hairy Joint Grass, a nationally-listed vulnerable species, in consultation with state and federal environment agencies; and
- Management of any impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage along the project corridor in consultation with the local Aboriginal communities.

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Mr Kelly said protection of the drinking water catchment is a key component of the approval, with an independent expert brought in to review the RTA's water quality assessment.

"The RTA has committed to carry out a range of measures to improve general water quality by re-establishing riparian vegetation along waterways near properties purchased along the route," the Minister said.

Today's announcement comes just two days after planning approval was granted for the upgrade of the Pacific Highway at Glenugie.

The 7km long upgrade starts at Franklins Road about 68kms north of Coffs Harbour and extends to Eight Mile Lane, 15kms south of Grafton.

Key features of the upgrade include:

- Significantly improving the alignment of the road;
- Upgrading the existing highway from one lane to two lanes each way;
- Reducing noise levels for residents living along the existing Pacific Highway at Glenugie; and
- Animal underpasses and glider crossings on the upgraded highway.

Mr Kelly said these projects will help deliver on a clear commitment by the Commonwealth and NSW Governments to upgrade the Pacific Highway and address key issues of motorist safety, freight transport efficiency and health of local water catchments.
