MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 3 July 2014

FINAL STAGE OF PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE APPROVED

The Pacific Highway upgrade has reached a major milestone today, with the NSW Government announcing today that planning approval had been given for the final section of the highway to be duplicated.

Acting NSW Premier Andrew Stoner, Minister for Planning Pru Goward and Roads Minister Duncan Gay announced that NSW planning approval had been given for the Woolgoolga to Ballina Pacific Highway upgrade. This approval will allow the next stages of early work to start while the Australian Government Department of the Environment considers the overall project.

Mr Stoner said this was the last link of highway to be upgraded to dual carriageway between Hexham and the Queensland border, comprising the duplication of 155 kilometres of road between Woolgoolga and Ballina on the NSW North Coast.

"The NSW Government is working with the Australian Government and getting on with the job of delivering the Pacific Highway upgrade," Mr Stoner said.

"This is one of Australia’s busiest roads, carrying up to 12,000 vehicles per day in this section alone, and is the final link in the provision of the modern, upgraded road linking Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane following completion of the Hume Highway last year.

"Since the Pacific Highway upgrade program started, fatalities on the highway have more than halved – from 42 in 1996 to 20 in 2013, but there is still more work to do.

"The new alignment will take trucks out of town centres and villages like South Grafton, Ulmarra, Woodburn, Broadwater and Wardell and put them safely on to a dual carriageway.

"The Australian and NSW Governments have committed to completing the upgrade of the Pacific Highway to a dual carriageway by the end of this decade," he said.

The Woolgoolga to Ballina upgrade will be delivered under an innovative model used in the London Olympics, tailored to meet the specific needs of this major project.

Under this new model, a major provider with design, construction and management expertise will be engaged to oversee the project in collaboration with Roads and Maritime's Pacific Highway Office, managing multiple contracts for professional services, supply, and building of the actual work.

The delivery partner will be expected to provide economies of scale and improved efficiencies over the 155km of highway upgrade.

Mr Stoner said the upgrade would improve the economic competitiveness of the North Coast.

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“The upgrade is estimated to inject $5.3 billion into the State’s economy and providing a peak of about 2,500 direct jobs and 6,500 indirect jobs in the broader community,” Mr Stoner said.

Ms Goward said that an extended consultation period had been held during the exhibition of the environmental impact statement to ensure that the communities had an opportunity to comment on the route and concept design of the upgraded highway.

“The route has been selected with care and a great deal of consultation to maximise the economic benefits and safety improvements and minimise impacts,” Ms Goward said.

“I have ensured that effective measures are in place to address community concerns about the environmental and social impacts of the highway upgrade.”

The new dual carriageway will feature:

- More than 200 crossings for threatened fauna, including Koalas and Coastal Emus, including widened median crossings and land bridges over the highway
- 10 grade-separated interchanges to separate local and through traffic
- 40 bridges over waterways and floodplains, including major crossings of the Clarence and Richmond Rivers
- Five driver rest areas with toilets and picnic amenities.
- 55 underpasses and overpasses for local road and property access across the new highway.

The project begins about six kilometres north of Woolgoolga and ends about six kilometres south of Ballina.

Roads Minister Duncan Gay said tenders for the first 26km section between Woolgoolga and Glenugie and soft soil stabilisation work will be called in coming weeks, utility relocation and other early work is due to start in August and major building on the overall upgrade is expected to start in early 2015.

“About 58 per cent or 381 kilometres of the full length of the highway between Hexham and the Queensland border is now dual carriageway with another 80 kilometres currently under construction,” Mr Gay said.

“The entire project is expected to be completed by 2020,” he said.

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