

Regional Manager's update

As you may be aware, the display of environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed Foxground and Berry bypass, Princes Highway upgrade was on public display late last year.

The NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure (DP&I) received more than 200 submissions from the community, local councils and government agencies, and is now considering this input. As part of this process, Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) is preparing a submissions report that provides a response to the issues raised, including any changes to the concept design.

I would like to thank those community members who provided feedback during the EA display. The staffed public display at RMS' project office in Berry was well attended with more than 1000 people visiting the office during the display period.

As part of the EA display, RMS produced a 3D interactive model and five videos of the concept design for the preferred route. This included an interactive map showing potential flooding and noise impacts which generated more than 8,000 visits to the project website. If you haven't seen these **videos** or **interactive map**, they are available on this website.

Within this process there continues to be robust conversations within the community. RMS recognises that there is still some division on the location of the Berry bypass, but it should be remembered that there have been rigorous community discussions from which the northern route option was further developed. RMS is now seeking planning approval for this northern route.

An extensive review of the suggested southern bypass route was carried out during 2012 by specialists in each of the key areas. They thoroughly investigated this design with a view to creating a 'like for like' comparison with the northern route. After almost four months this group found that the southern route would cost in excess of \$100 million more to build than the northern route. This analysis was then scrutinised by an independent review team (SMEC) who supported these findings.

During this process, information updates were published on a regular basis and can still be found in the **project background** section of this website. RMS staff held some 50 meetings with the community, these included five community question and answer sessions. RMS staff have been available to assist the community in their understanding of the project at the Berry project office each Friday, and they continue to do this.

On the basis of this cost comparison, the NSW Government decided not to continue with further environmental investigations for a southern route. The NSW Roads Minister, Duncan Gay, visited the region last week and was clear that this position remains unchanged. The Minister, like the Local Member Gareth Ward, urged the community to work toward achieving this important piece of infrastructure to benefit both the local community and those who travel on the Princes Highway. RMS staff will be focusing their efforts in this direction.

So where to from here?

Once finalised, the submissions report will be published. This report along with other information will be considered by the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, prior to his decision on the project. If approved, the DP&I will provide a set of conditions of approval to RMS. These conditions will guide the detailed design and construction of the project.

I would like to highlight that the process being followed for approval of this project is the same process that is followed for all major infrastructure projects of this size and complexity. It is a formal, structured, objective process that is managed by DP&I under the provisions of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

RMS remains committed to conducting open and transparent engagement with the community. As I have already stated, I believe the project team has demonstrated this behaviour and they will continue to do so. We will continue to keep the community informed about the project as it moves through the final stages of planning approval to detailed design and construction. I look forward to the next important stage in the project's development.

Brad Turner
RMS Southern Region Regional Manager

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