

## Chapter 3 - Community and stakeholder involvement

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### 3.0 Community and stakeholder engagement

Community engagement has been an integral part of the route options development process. This chapter describes how the community and stakeholders have been involved in the route options development process. It details activities that have already taken place and summarises the key issues raised during the consultation activities.

Community and stakeholder input is considered in conjunction with all of the project’s specialist studies into social, economic, environmental and engineering factors. Appreciation of community priorities and concerns is further understood through investigation of the social and cultural environment in the study area. Specifically, **Chapter 5, Section 5.2.4** provides this background.

#### 3.1 Community engagement objectives

The RTA is committed to enabling opportunities for all stakeholders to be consulted, informed and involved in an open and transparent process across all project phases of the study.

The needs and interests of the community and other key stakeholders residing within or having an interest in the study area are diverse. It is therefore paramount that effective consultation activities are implemented to maximise community engagement and to capture views throughout all stages of project development, including the route options development process.

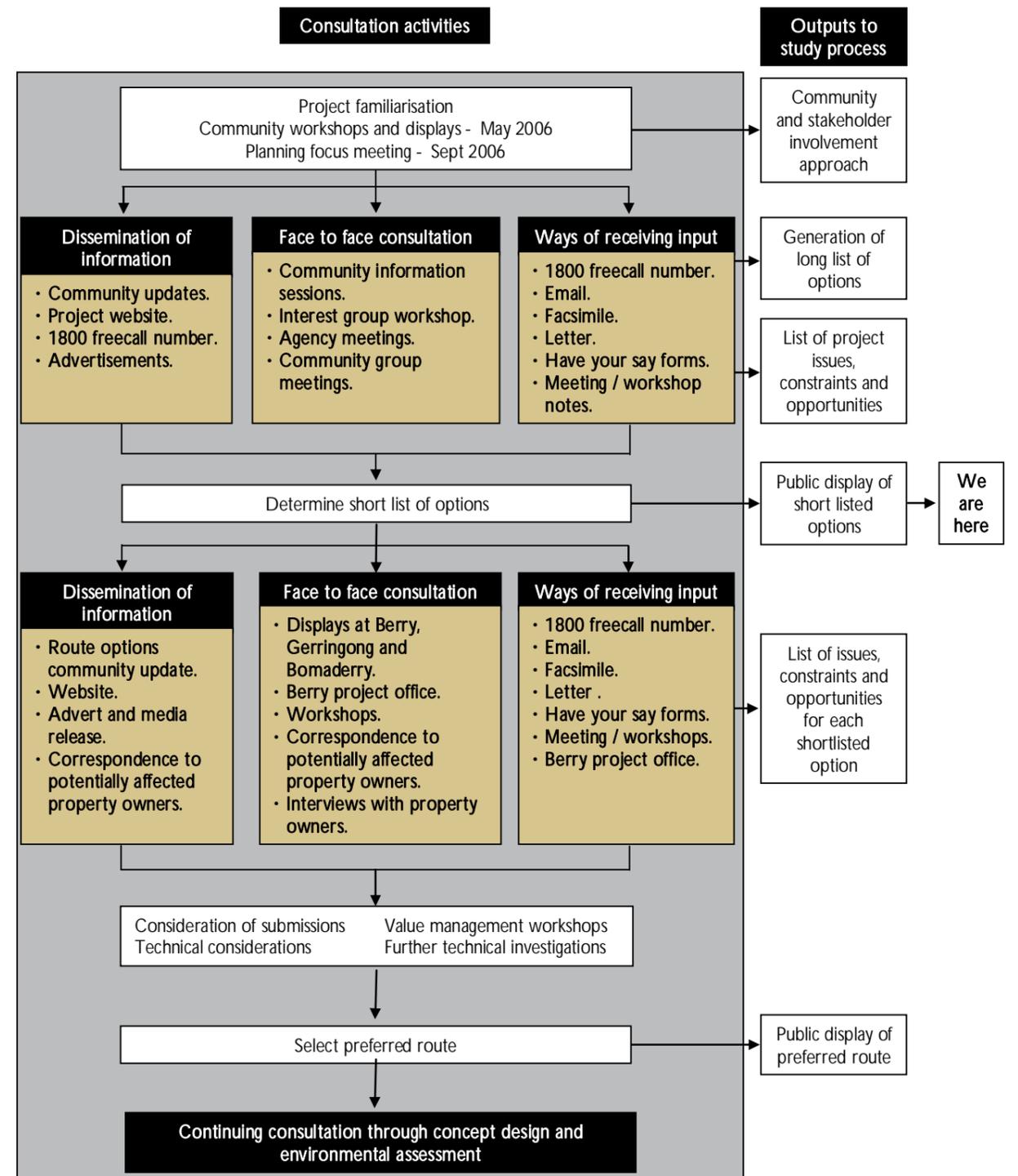
Community engagement objectives, for this project are to:

- Support and strengthen the current RTA community engagement process.
- Ensure an open, accountable and transparent community engagement process.
- Ensure all potentially affected property owners and interested stakeholders are provided with sufficient information about the project and the likely impacts so that they can provide informed input.
- Ensure appropriate and direct communication with property owners in relation to access to and investigations on, landholdings within the study area by study team members and/or the RTA representatives.
- Encourage community support and involvement in the project through innovative and effective communication methods.
- Provide a range of accessible opportunities for stakeholders, interested groups and the wider public to contribute to the project through issues identification, information provision, and options evaluation.
- Build an ongoing relationship between the RTA, its contractors, and stakeholders in order to gain long term support for the project and in particular the preferred route.

#### 3.2 Approach to consultation

The process for community engagement throughout the study is summarised in **Figure 3.1**.

Figure 3.1 Community engagement process



Community engagement activities for this project, as outlined in the following sub-sections, have been implemented in a coordinated manner by the study team. Key community engagement activities conducted during the project familiarisation and route options development phases have comprised:

- The distribution of community updates in March 2006, September 2006, January 2007, April 2007 and July 2007.
- Workshops and information stands in May 2006.
- Planning Focus Meeting with representatives from various agencies and stakeholder groups in September 2006.
- Property access letters for field investigations sent in January 2007.
- Community information sessions in February 2007.
- Interest group workshop in April 2007.
- Individual meetings with local councils, local Aboriginal representatives, Chamber of Commerce, and other local interest groups.
- Opening of the project office in Berry in July 2007.
- Specialist information sessions in August 2007.
- Establishment of a 1800 free call number.
- Establishment of a project email address.
- Establishment of a project web page.

These activities have provided the opportunity for the community and stakeholders to comment on the various issues in the study area and provide input for consideration in the development of route options. Importantly, these activities have raised the awareness of and interest in the project among members of the local community and communities surrounding the study area. Key issues raised so far are listed in the following sections.

### 3.3 Workshops and displays - May 2006

Three community information sessions were held on the following evenings:

- Wednesday, 3 May 2006 at School of Arts Hall, Berry.
- Thursday, 4 May 2006 at Gerringong Town Hall, Gerringong.
- Tuesday, 9 May 2006 at Bomaderry RSL, Bomaderry.

The sessions were attended by approximately 350 people from the local community. The purpose of the sessions was to:

- Inform the community of the process for examining options and then selecting a preferred route for the highway upgrade.
- Seek input from the community on their preferred methods of community engagement and information provision during this process.

The outcome of these workshops and displays was an understanding of the most appropriate consultation methods that should be used to interact with the community throughout the study.

These include:

- Workshops in which everyone can be actively involved.
- Issues mapping - so community members can see one another's ideas and issues.
- Receiving regular information, no long periods of silence.
- Field inspections, e.g. cultural knowledge walkovers.
- 3D models and displays.

### 3.4 Planning focus meeting

A planning focus meeting was held on Thursday, 29 September 2006 at the WIN Sports and Entertainment Centre, Wollongong. The meeting was attended by key government agencies, local councils, utility companies, emergency services and the four prospective tenderers for the study. **Table 3.1** presents key issues raised at the planning focus meeting and how they have been considered in the route options development process.

**Table 3.1 Key issues raised at the planning focus meeting**

Issue	Consideration in route option development
High value of the environment in the study area. Agricultural areas should be preserved. Natural vegetation, threatened species and air quality should be preserved.	The environmental studies have identified constraints in the study area. Options that traverse important constraints were viewed less favourably than others.
Easy access to towns (including Gerringong and Berry) should be maintained.	Appropriate access locations will be investigated during development of the preferred route.
Minimise construction impacts on utilities - particularly Eastern Gas Pipeline and Telstra Sydney-Melbourne East Coast Cable.	The location of major utilities has been taken into account during the route option development process.
The upgraded highway should cater for freight traffic.	The gradients, curvature and length of route options were taken into account during the short listing of options. Less efficient routes (e.g. longer and/or steeper routes) were viewed less favourably than others.
The upgraded highway should cater for emergency incident response.	Appropriate facilities for emergency vehicles will be investigated during development of the preferred option.
Flood prone areas require appropriate drainage design.	Route options traversing flood prone land were viewed less favourably than others during the short listing of options.

### 3.5 Property access letter for field investigations - January 2007

Letters were sent to all property owners in the study area in January 2007 to inform them of the initial field investigations and request permission to access their property if required.

### 3.6 Community information sessions - February 2007

Three community information sessions were held on the following evenings:

- Tuesday, 20 February 2007 at School of Arts Hall, Berry.
- Wednesday, 21 February 2007 at Gerringong Town Hall, Gerringong.
- Thursday, 22 February 2007 at Bomaderry Community Hall, Bomaderry.

The sessions were attended by approximately 280 people from the local community and interest groups. Key issues raised by the community are summarised in **Table 3.2**.

**Table 3.2 Key issues raised at the community information sessions, February 2007**

Issue	Consideration in route option development
Previous studies and information provided to the RTA by the community should be taken into account.	All previous studies and information provided by the community have been taken into account during the route options development process.
Property acquisition issues including the impact on property values and the impact on indirectly affected properties.	Impacts to property, in particular large lots and prime agricultural land, has been taken into account during the short listing of route options. Options that result in feasible severance of large lots and/or loss of agricultural land have been viewed less favourably than others.
Road safety issues in the following locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At Fern Street and Belinda Street.</li> <li>• Queen Street, Berry.</li> <li>• Near Tomlins Road / Broughton Creek / Foxground Road.</li> <li>• At Meroo Road.</li> </ul>	The options have been designed to meet road design standards. The intersections / interchanges will also be designed to specific standards and access will be controlled to improve the safety of the upgraded highway compared with the existing route.
Truck rest areas and breakdown bays should be provided as part of the project.	Appropriate locations for these facilities will be investigated further during development of the preferred option.
The efficiency of freight movement is an important consideration.	The gradients, curvature and length of route options were taken into account during the short listing of options. Less efficient routes (e.g. longer and/or steeper routes) were viewed less favourably than others.
More than one access to and from Gerringong is important.	Appropriate access locations will be investigated during development of the preferred option.
More than one access to and from Berry is important.	Appropriate access locations will be investigated during development of the preferred option.
Safe access to properties on the highway should be provided.	The upgraded highway will be a controlled access road. Access to properties will be investigated during development of the preferred option.
Endangered ecological communities and remnant vegetation should be preserved.	The flora and fauna studies have identified constraints in the study area. Routes through areas of high ecological value were viewed less favourably.

**Table 3.2 Key issues raised at the community information sessions cont'd.**

Issue	Consideration in route option development
Visual and noise impacts should be minimised.	The proximity of dwellings and/or community facilities to each route option and the potential noise and visual impacts were taken into account. Options that passed close to a large number of dwellings were viewed less favourably than others in terms of noise impacts.
Heritage buildings and sites should be preserved (both European and non-European sites).	Heritage studies have identified constraints in the study area. Options that pass close to or impact areas of heritage significance were viewed less favourably.
Flash flooding occurs in various locations in the study area.	Options that traverse flood prone land were viewed less favourably than others.
Prime agricultural land should be maintained as far as possible and severance of land should be minimised.	Options that impact on prime agricultural land or result in severance of large lots were viewed less favourably than others.
The existing highway could become a service road and tourist route to cater for boutique businesses.	Options which involve construction of a new route would provide opportunities for the existing highway to become a service road and tourist route.
North Street corridor could lead to severance of areas of Berry.	Severance of Berry has been taken into account in assessing route options.
The most appropriate section of the highway should be upgraded first (e.g. upgrade the Berry section first).	Construction staging options will be investigated during development of the preferred option.
The timescales for the project are too slow, the road is unsafe and there is uncertainty in the property market. Process and certainty is a concern and resolution of the preferred route is sought as early as possible.	Investigations to select the preferred must be thorough to provide the best outcome for all parties. Therefore, a robust process of short listing options and then identification of a preferred option is being followed.

### 3.7 Interest groups

An interest group workshop was held on Thursday, 19 April 2007 at the School of Arts Hall, Berry. 35 interest groups were invited to the workshop. Representatives of the following interest groups attended the workshop:

- Rural Fire Service.
- Kiama Bicycle User Group.
- Gerringong Chamber of Commerce.
- Berry Chamber of Commerce.
- Bomaderry Chamber of Commerce.
- Greens Candidate for Kiama.
- South East Australian Transport Strategy (SEATS) Inc.
- Toolijooa and Harley Hill Protection Group.

The key issues raised during the workshop are outlined in **Table 3.3**.

**Table 3.3 Key issues raised at the interest group workshop, April 2007**

Issues	Consideration in route option development
A bypass of Berry is generally supported. Removing through traffic will improve amenity and increase the attractiveness of the town, particularly for tourism.	All short listed options bypass Berry.
Access / egress points from the highway should be some distance from Berry (not too close).	Appropriate access locations will be investigated during development of the preferred route.
The location and number of access / egress points to Gerringong is important to maintain business for the town. Gerringong is predominantly a tourist destination which relies on passing trade.	Appropriate access locations will be investigated during development of the preferred route.
The highway design must accommodate emergency vehicles (including access / egress to the highway, sufficient road widths and openings in the central median).	All route options will provide appropriate facilities for emergency vehicles. The design of these facilities will be developed during the concept design stage.
Appropriate bicycle facilities should be provided on and across the highway.	All route options will provide appropriate bicycle facilities. The design of these will be developed during the concept design stage.
Severance and land take of viable dairy farms.	Route options that impact on prime agricultural land were viewed less favourably than others.

In addition to the interest group workshop, members of the project team have met with the following interest groups individually:

- Toolijooa and Harley Hill Protection Group.
- Kiama and Shoalhaven Bicycle User Groups.
- Dairy Farmers Co-op.
- Rotary.
- Probus.
- Gerringong Chamber of Commerce.
- Berry Chamber of Commerce.

The key issues raised by the individual interest groups are outlined in **Table 3.4**.

**Table 3.4 Key issues raised by individual interest groups**

Issues	Consideration in route option development
Views, noise, aesthetics, fog, flooding and flora and fauna concerns in the Toolijooa Valley and Harley Hill area.	Visual and noise impacts as well as flooding and flora and fauna issues were taken into account during the short listing of route options.
Concerns appropriate bicycle facilities should be provided on and across the highway by the bicycle user groups.	All route options would provide appropriate bicycle facilities. The design of these will be developed during the concept design stage.
Dairy farmers concerns that dairy farming involves high establishment and running costs due to specialist equipment. The value of dairy farm land differs depending on the location and topography of the land.	Route options that traverse agricultural land or would result in severance of large lots were viewed less favourably than others.

**Table 3.4 Key issues raised by individual interest groups cont'd.**

Issues	Consideration in route option development
Local businesses in Gerringong expressed that access / egress is important. Two full access points are preferable to maintain business interests, allow easy access to residential areas and for appropriate emergency access.	Appropriate access locations will be investigated during development of the preferred route.

### 3.8 Local council meetings

A number of meetings have been held with representatives of local councils. These meetings have assisted the study team in better understanding the various requirements and key issues that need to be considered in this project.

**Table 3.5 Key issues raised by local councils**

Kiama Council	
Retention of agricultural land in the study area and in particular dairy farming areas is important.	Route options that traverse agricultural land or would result in severance of large lots were viewed less favourably than others during the short listing of route options.
Important to maintain access to Gerringong from highway.	Appropriate access locations will be investigated during the development of the preferred route.
Shoalhaven Council	
Flooding occurs particularly around Berry.	Route options that traverse flood prone land were viewed less favourably than others.
Access to the highway should be restricted.	Appropriate controlled access locations will be investigated during the development of the preferred route.
Bus stops are a safety issue.	All route options will provide appropriate facilities for buses. The design of these (if required) will be developed during the concept design stage.

### 3.9 Aboriginal Focus Group meetings

The following Aboriginal Focus Group meetings have been held:

- Illawarra Aboriginal Focus Group Meeting #1, 16 February 2007.
- Nowra / Jerrinja Aboriginal Focus Group Meeting #2, 8 March 2007.
- Illawarra Aboriginal Focus Group Meeting #3, 20 April 2007.
- Aboriginal Focus Group Meeting #4, 18 May 2007.
- Aboriginal Focus Group Meeting #5, 7 August 2007.

The meetings have been attended by representatives from various Aboriginal groups with the objective of forming one Aboriginal Focus Group for the project. Proposed members of the Aboriginal Focus Group include the following:

- Yuin.
- Wandandia.
- Wodi Wodi.
- Walkers.
- Bells.
- Amatto.
- Timerey.
- Stewarts.
- Campbells.
- Donovans.
- Butlers.
- Lulands.
- Ardlers.
- Simms.
- Dixons.
- Jerrinja Elders.
- Jerrinja Local Aboriginal Land Council.
- Shoalhaven Elders.
- Nowra Local Aboriginal Land Council.
- Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council.
- Gundungara Elders.
- Korewal Elouera Jerrungarah.

A Terms of Reference has been established by the Aboriginal Focus Group that provides the RTA with a process for consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders, embraces traditional laws and customs and outlines the purpose, aims and role of the Aboriginal Focus Group and its members for the project.

The key issues raised at the Aboriginal Focus Group meetings held to date are summarised in **Table 3.6**.

**Table 3.6 Key issues raised by Aboriginal Focus Groups**

Issues	Consideration in route option development
Employment opportunities for young Aboriginal people. Employment for site monitors during investigations (e.g. geotechnical works).	Employment opportunities will be limited during the planning and development phase. Most opportunities will be during the construction phase, which is still several years away.
Establishment of Aboriginal Focus Group.	Members of the Aboriginal Focus Group have prepared a Terms of Reference that embrace the traditional laws and customs and outline the purpose, aims and role of the Aboriginal Focus Group and its members for the project.
Provision of cultural knowledge.	Cultural knowledge providers have been identified through the Aboriginal Focus Group and are currently working with the study team archaeologists to provide the Aboriginal cultural knowledge for the study area.
Genealogy and the provision of cultural knowledge by the appropriate traditional owners of the land within the study area.	Cultural knowledge holders interviews have been conducted with individuals identified by the Aboriginal Focus Group.

### 3.10 Specialist information sessions - August 2007

Two specialist information sessions were held on Saturday 11 August 2007 at the Berry Showground Agricultural Pavilion. The constraints maps developed from the specialist studies findings were displayed and community members were able to provide feedback on the constraints maps. Approximately 55 people attended these sessions.

### 3.11 Community submissions

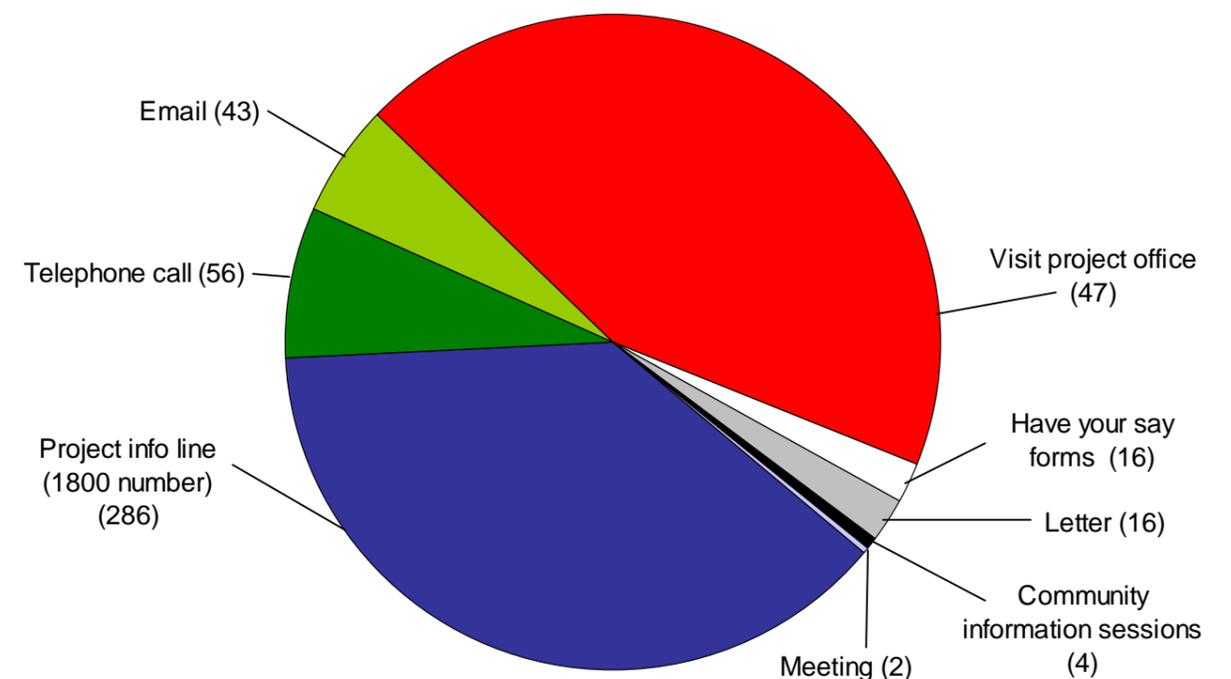
All community submissions through the following methods have been collated on an issues database, sorted by issue and then considered in the route options development phase. Submissions included verbal and written statements, photographs and other information. Submission collection methods include:

- Project information line (1800 freecall number).
- Project email.
- Have your say forms.
- Letters / faxes.

#### 3.11.1 Type of contact

Since January 2007, 423 contact events have been made using one of the above methods, registered up to 31 October 2007. Since opening on 19 July 2007 approximately 330 individuals have visited the project office. **Figure 3.2** shows the proportion of different methods of contact.

**Figure 3.2 Methods of contacting the project team since January 2007<sup>5</sup>**

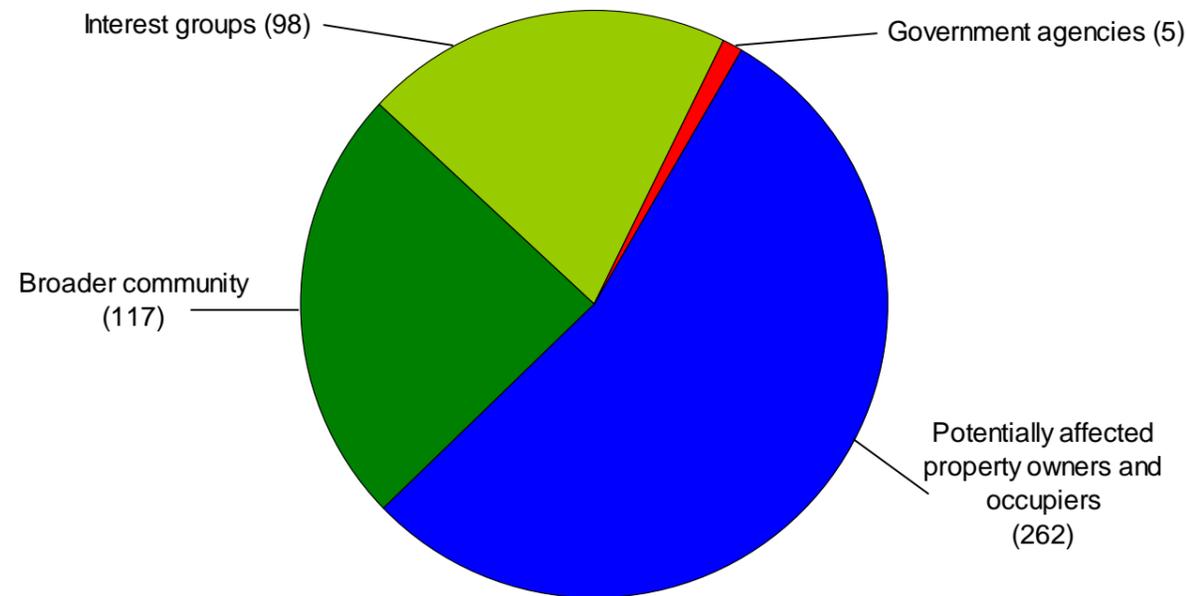


<sup>5</sup> Feedback information provided through the project office has occurred over a period of less than three months.

### 3.11.2 Type of stakeholders

Stakeholders who have contacted the project team have been grouped into four specific groups as shown in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3 Stakeholder type



As shown in the above figure, potentially affected property owners and occupiers form the largest proportion of stakeholders who have contacted the project team.

### 3.11.3 Summary of issues raised

Each contact with the project team has been assigned to one or more issues. Of these, the two most common reasons for contacting the project team were:

- Completion of the property access agreement forms over the telephone for the field investigations (140 events).
- Queries about the consultation process, study process and timeframes for the project (139 events).

Figure 3.4 excludes the general type of issues, listed above as these relate to the study process and not selection of the route options. Other general queries were raised as follows:

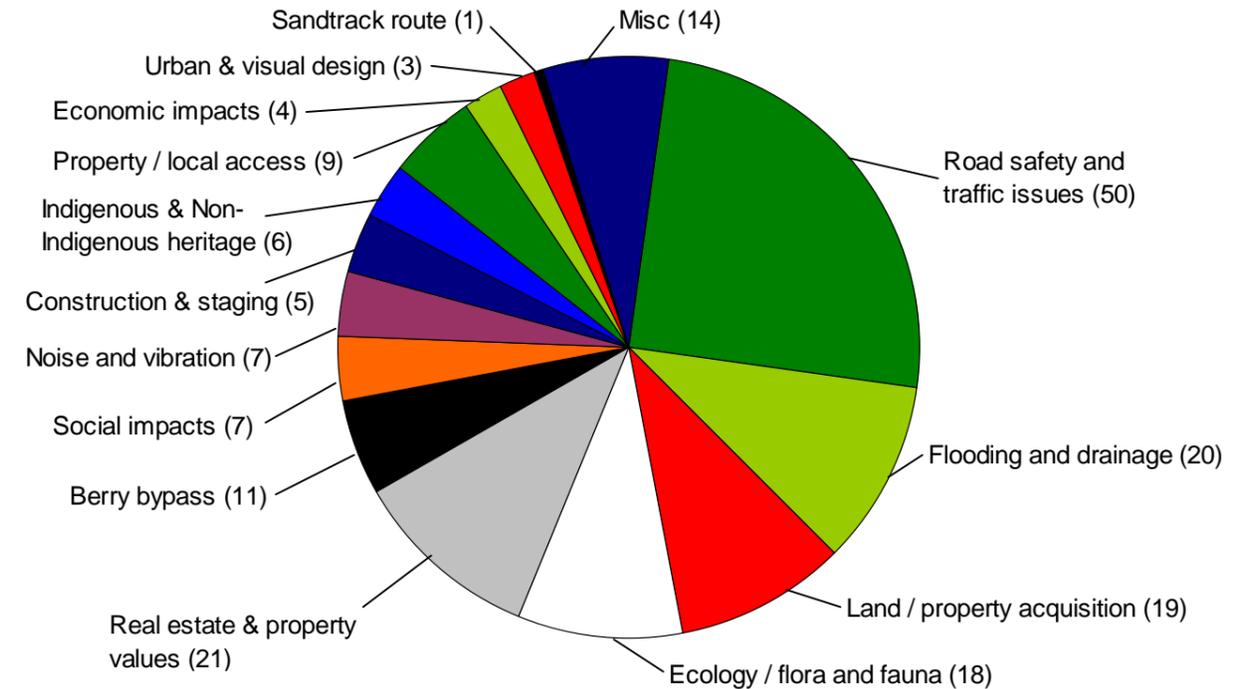
- General interest (21 events).
- Queries about field investigations (16 events).
- Information provided by the community e.g. photographs, documents etc. (11 events).
- Requests by the public for further information (10 events).

Figure 3.4 shows the proportion of times that specific issues have been raised

The five most common issues related to route option selection shown in Figure 3.4 are:

- Road safety and traffic issues.
- Real estate and property values.
- Flooding and drainage issues.
- Property acquisition concerns.
- Ecology, flora and fauna.

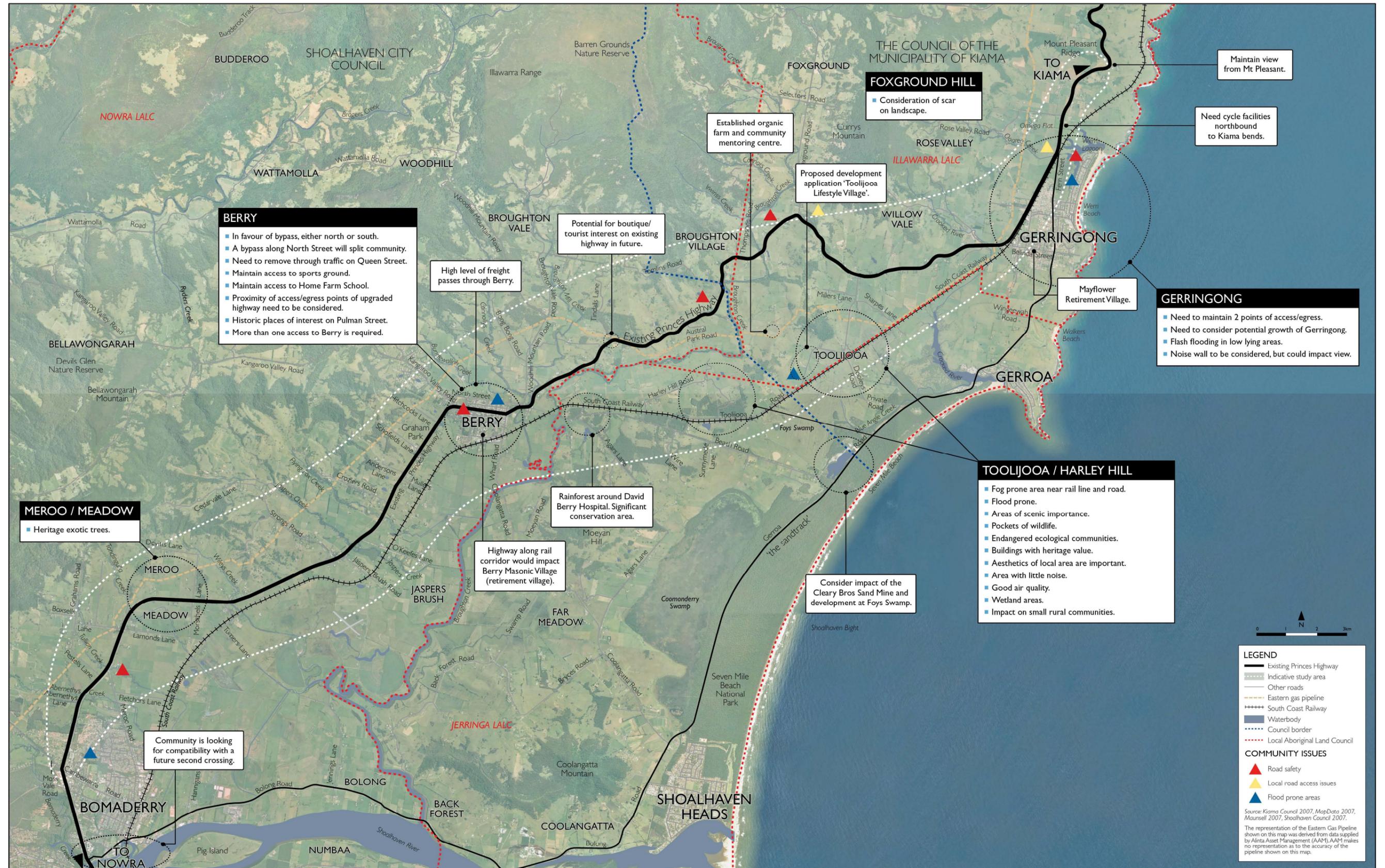
Figure 3.4 Issues raised by stakeholders since January 2007



All of these issues have been considered in the route options development phase.

Community issues are summarised in Figure 3.5.

Figure 3.5 Summary of community issues

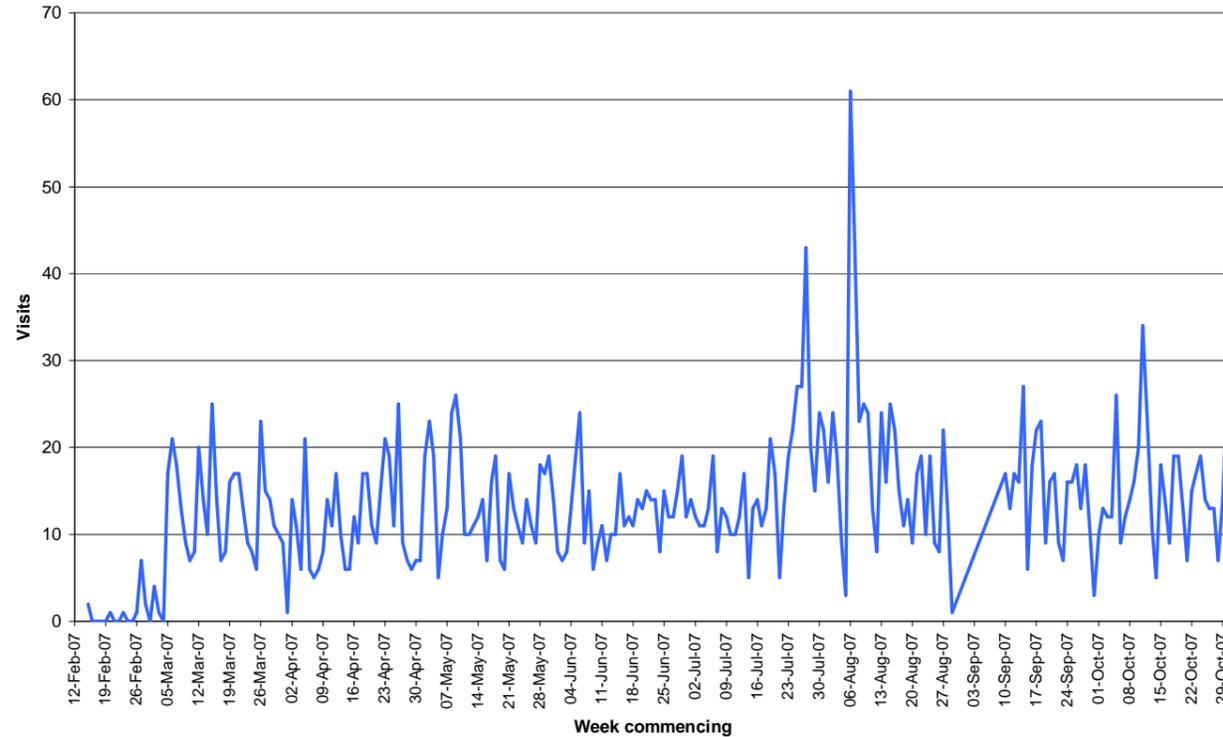


### 3.12 Project website

A project website has been established. Its primary function is to provide updated information on the project as it becomes available. This includes the posting of notes of community meetings. The project website will continue to be progressively updated throughout all stages of the project.

Since 12 February 2007, there have been approximately 3,300 visits to the website with an average of 13 visits per day. The number of visits each day since February 2007 is shown in **Figure 3.6**.

**Figure 3.6** Visits to the project website since February 2007



### 3.13 Next steps

Community updates will be distributed quarterly to maintain open and regular communication with the community. Updates will provide information about project progress and raise community awareness of opportunities to participate in each stage of the project. These future consultation activities are outlined below.

#### 3.13.1 Public display of short listed options

The public display of the short listed feasible options and invitation for comment is an important part of the consultation process. A community update has been distributed showing the short list of options and providing details of the display locations, staffed information days, workshops and how to make a submission.

During the display period all members of the community, interest groups and government authorities are invited to view the route options and to make a submission on any aspect of the proposals.

Following display of the options, submissions will be reviewed and these will be considered in the preferred route selection process.

#### 3.13.2 Value management studies

A Value Management Workshop will be held to assist in determining which route option will be taken forward as the preferred route. This will include a review of access to Berry. Community input from the route options display period will be considered in the Value Management Workshop. A second independent Value Management Workshop will be conducted to address access to Gerringong.

#### 3.13.3 Preferred route

A further display will publicise the announcement of the preferred route after community, environmental and engineering aspects have been considered. The preferred route will be displayed for comment providing all stakeholders with the opportunity to comment on the assessment and evaluation process.

#### 3.13.4 Environmental assessment

Consultation activities will continue building on the activities carried out during the route option development phase through the concept design and preparation of an environmental assessment.