

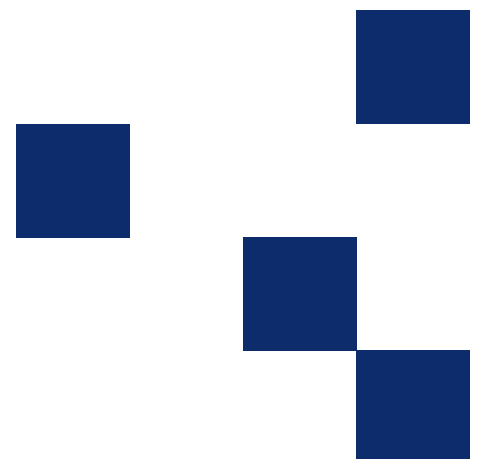


Transport
Roads & Maritime
Services

GERRINGONG UPGRADE

'Have your say' feedback report

NOVEMBER 2012



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1. Background

Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) is upgrading the Princes Highway between Mount Pleasant and Toolijooa Road. This work is funded by the NSW Government.

The \$310 million upgrade will provide 7.5 kilometres of upgraded highway and includes two new interchanges with access to Gerringong and Gerroa.

Planning of the Gerringong upgrade started in 2007 with the development of preliminary route options. In 2009, RMS announced a preferred option for the upgrade of the Princes Highway between Gerringong and Bomaderry. RMS began planning the work as three separate projects:

- Gerringong upgrade (Mount Pleasant to Toolijooa Road).
- Foxground and Berry bypass (Toolijooa Road to Schofields Lane).
- Berry to Bomaderry upgrade (Schofields Lane to Cambewarra Road).

A Review of Environmental Factors (REF) for the Gerringong upgrade was on display for community comment in mid 2010. Community comments were considered with further planning carried out, including investigation of access road arrangements. These access roads were presented to affected property owners in December 2011. Property owners were advised of the approved designs in January 2012.

Tenders for design and construction of the Gerringong upgrade were issued in mid 2011. Fulton Hogan was awarded the contract and started detailed design in January 2012. The project team has been working with key stakeholders since January 2012 in developing the detailed design.

2. 'Have your say' feedback report

This report summarises the outcomes of community consultation carried as part of the detailed design for the Gerringong upgrade. The project team invited the community to comment on particular areas of the detailed design, including the road alignment, urban design, landscaping, Fern Street closures, access to Gerringong Railway Station, shared path at Fern Street and gateway signage.

Community feedback was invited over a four week period between 25 May and 22 June 2012. This report reflects the community feedback received from the 'Have your say' forms as well as verbal comments captured during this period.

The project team have summarised 49 'Have your say' forms and approximately 30 pieces of verbal feedback received during the four week display period ending 22 June 2012. Comments received from the community have not been reported word for word, but summarised and collated into the areas outlined in the 'Have your say' form for reporting purposes.

You are welcome to contact the project team if you would like to discuss your specific feedback with us.

3. Community consultation

Community consultation on the detailed design started in January 2012. However, there was consultation with the community prior to this period which shaped the concept design.

In presenting the progress made on the detailed design to the community, the aim was to inform (provide information) and consult (obtain feedback). RMS provided opportunities for the community and other stakeholders to ask questions and seek clarifications on the detailed design.

While the display period provided a formal opportunity for feedback on the detailed design, community members are encouraged to continue providing feedback to the project team.

3.1 Other key stakeholder

Other key stakeholders that have been involved in the development of the detailed design since January 2012 are listed below. Feedback from these stakeholders is not included in this report.

- Kiama Municipal Council engineering department and Councillors.
- RailCorp.
- Utility companies including Jemena, Sydney Water, Telstra, Optus, Endeavour Energy.
- Department of Primary Industries including Fishing and Aquaculture.
- Environment Protection Authority.
- NSW Police, Lake Illawarra Area Command.
- NSW Fire Brigade.
- NSW Ambulance Service.
- State Emergency Services.

4. Community information and consultation activities

A summary of the information available and consultation activities during the four week display period are outlined below.

4.1 Project information line and email

Throughout the consultation period the toll free project information line and email address was available for community members to request information and provide feedback. An email with information about the staffed displays was sent to Gerringong to Bomaderry upgrade registered stakeholders.

4.2 Project website

The project website www.rms.nsw.gov.au/gu was updated to include the community update, 'Have your say' form, display posters and information about the staffed displays.

4.3 Advertisements

Advertisements for the displays were published in the South Coast Register on 18 April 2012 and Illawarra Mercury 21 April 2012.

4.4 Community update

The May 2012 community update and attached 'Have your say' form was letterbox dropped to 1620 residents in Gerringong and Gerroa. Around 220 copies were mailed to PO boxes in

Gerringong and additional copies provided for the PO boxes at Gerringong Post Office. A further 50 updates were delivered to Kiama Municipal Council and 100 to local businesses.

4.5 Static displays

Static displays including an AO poster of the road alignment were available at Gerringong Newsagency and the Berry project office. A4 posters were also on display at Gerringong Town Hall, Gerringong Library, Gerringong Cafe, Jocks Bakery, Mas Homewares, Gerringong Pharmacy, Caltex and Gerroa Post Office.

4.6 Staffed displays

Staffed displays were held at the Gerringong Town Hall on the 25 and 26 May 2012 from 10am to 4pm. Members of the project team, and the Gerringong upgrade Community Advocate were available to talk to the community and answer questions. Material available at the displays included copies of the May 2012 community update, 'Have your say' forms and project posters, images, plans and drawings.

Forty-six invitations were sent to local community groups, schools, businesses and the local member for Kiama. Sixty-one people registered for Friday 25 May 2012 with about 20 additional people attending. Seventy-four people registered for Saturday 26 May 2012 with a few people not signing the registration sheet.

5 Issues and responses

The following section outlines the eight areas invited for comment and the feedback received from 49 'Have your say' forms and around 30 pieces of verbal feedback during the four week display period ending 22 June 2012.

Comments received from the community have not been reported word for word, but summarised and collated into the areas outlined in the 'Have your say' form for reporting purposes. Some 'Have your say' forms provided multiple comments on each category.

5.1 Road alignment

Question

The highway will be widened to create two lanes in both directions. Do you have any comments on the detailed design alignment?

Comments received

In total 16 submissions commented on the detailed design alignment. Five supported the road alignment. One submission requested the alignment be west of the railway tracks and one requested a dedicated lane for traffic merging onto the new highway.

Four submissions highlighted the importance of safe access into and out of properties and side lanes on the upgraded highway and requested maintaining access during construction.

Two submissions raised concerns about flooding impacts as a result of the upgraded highway and requested the project team inform the community about impacts and mitigations.

Two submissions requested a cycle lane on the upgraded highway and provision for cyclists during construction.

Responses

The request for the road alignment to stay west of the railway tracks has been noted as this is what is in the design. The proposed on-ramps have been designed to allow vehicles to safely achieve highway speed.

Following comments and submissions on the Review of Environmental Factors (REF), RMS improved the safety of direct property access. A three metre wide shoulder for 100 metres on the approach to each access will be provided. Specific signposting will identify property accesses. The project team will negotiate and clarify access with each directly affected property owner. During construction, property accesses will be maintained at most times. However, temporary disruptions may occur due to construction directly outside property entries. The project team will discuss access impacts with directly affected property owners in advance.

The road has been designed to provide immunity for a one in 100 year flood event. The upgraded highway may increase flood levels by 300 millimeters at the project boundary, but time of inundation will be generally reduced. The project team will contact individual property owners to discuss flood mitigation and drainage plans.

Cycle access during construction will be limited to current cycleways already in place. A Pedestrian Cycle Strategy has been developed and is available at the community display centre. The strategy includes a 2.5 metre wide road shoulder along the main alignment of the highway, and on and off ramps at interchanges. Shoulder widths on local roads range from 2 metres to 0.5 meter depending on usage.

5.2 Urban design

Question

A revised treatment has been developed for the embankment just north of Crooked River (the Gerringong curves). The original tender design retains the existing shotcrete batters (walls) with a new retaining wall at the base. We are now proposing landscaped embankments to replace both the shotcrete batters and the retaining wall. Do you have any other comments?

Comments received

In total 19 submissions commented on the proposed landscaped embankments to replace shotcrete batters and retaining wall. Fourteen comments supported landscaping the embankment with one submission requested no trees be planted.

One submission requested the landscaped embankments be maintained after the highway is upgraded.

One submission asked about pedestrian access from Belinda Street to Willowvale Road.

One submission raised concerns about flooding impacts from the landscaped embankments.

Responses

Landscaped embankments will replace both the shotcrete batters and retaining wall. The existing shotcrete wall just north of Crooked River has been removed from the design. Efforts have also been made to minimise wall structures in other locations along the highway. Trees will be planted to fit in with the surrounding landscape. However, trees will be planted sparsely in response to feedback from residents.

Fulton Hogan will maintain the embankments for one year after completion. Landscape embankments within the road reserve will then be maintained by RMS to current standards. Council is responsible for maintaining embankments around local roads.

The new design does not provide a pedestrian footpath between Belinda Street and Willowvale Road. However, a pedestrian footpath will be constructed at the Belinda Street interchange to access the railway station.

Landscaped embankments and surrounding drainage culverts are designed to provide immunity for a one in 100 year flood event. Property drainage plans have been designed to improve or maintain existing flood patterns.

5.3 Closure of Fern Street

Question

During the project planning phase it was proposed that Fern Street would have to be closed for 1 year, so the railway crossing could be removed and an overbridge constructed. This option is no longer being considered, however it will be necessary to have some temporary closures of Fern Street during construction. We have considered the additional traffic volumes associated with holiday peak periods and the need to avoid these times. We are proposing to provide a temporary side track and we are currently conducting environmental, traffic safety and underground utility relocation assessments to plan for this. Even with the use of a side track, there will still be periods when it will be necessary to have some full closures of Fern Street. We are seeking your preferences in terms of the times and duration of these road closures, keeping in mind that shorter periods of road closure will result in longer construction timeframes for that particular component of the work. Please tick the option/s you prefer:

Night time closure (approximately 8pm to 6am)

Daytime closure (approximately 10am to 3pm)

24-48 hour closures (infrequent, with notice provided)

Comments received

In total 46 submissions commented on the management of road closures at the highway intersection with Fern Street. Twenty submissions indicated a preference for night time closure. Fourteen submissions indicated a preference for 24-48 hour closures and nine preferring day time closures. Five submissions indicated the importance of keeping Fern Street open to minimise impacts on local businesses.

Written and verbal feedback suggested safety improvements to the right turn from Belinda Street onto the highway and maintaining the right turn from Fern Street onto the highway. Two submissions requested maintaining the right turns during construction. Verbal concerns were raised about the timing, traffic and safety impacts on Belinda Street during the Fern Street closures. Both written and verbal feedback raised concerns about traffic management and safe speeds along Belinda and Fern streets.

Written and verbal feedback indicated the importance of notice and signage to alert people of traffic changes, road closures and reduced speed limits.

Responses

Taking into consideration impacts and community preferences, a balance between day and night work is planned at Fern Street. Fern Street will only be closed on selected nights, including around 20 night shifts over 18 months (generally between 7pm and 5am). During the day Fern Street will be closed for two to three hours outside of peak times with alternating traffic flow. There may be an increase in traffic during the day due to these short closures. Weekend closures are not planned at this time.

During construction of the Fern Street railway overbridge traffic flow will be maintained. The right turn from Fern Street will be maintained during construction and after completion of the interchange. Closure of Fern Street for night work will be managed with traffic plans, to ensure safe entry and exit from Belinda Street. There will be no changes to the current exit into and exit out of Belinda Street until work on the interchange starts. All traffic changes will be audited and monitored to assess impacts.

The project team have taken into consideration community feedback and reassessed traffic staging to keep either Fern Street or Belinda Street open to traffic at all times. A traffic management plan has been designed to deal with any traffic increases and detours as a result of closures. Traffic will be detoured to Gerringong through Belinda Street, Rowlins Road, Bridges Road to Fern Street.

A signage request to slow down road users on Belinda Street has been referred to Kiama Council for consideration. During construction, signage will indicate changes in speed limits. The community will be informed of changed traffic conditions in advance. All changes to traffic conditions will be clearly sign posted. Notifications will also be letterboxed dropped and uploaded on the project website.

5.4 Proposed landscaping

Questions

A range of shrubs and trees has been proposed for landscaping of various locations and treatments. There is a detailed list of the species on the website and in the community display material. Are there specific trees or shrubs that you would prefer be used?

Are there specific trees or shrubs that you feel are not appropriate?

Draft images of the various proposed landscape treatments and extent of plantings are provided at the display and on the project website. The images reflect the landscape strategy adopted for the corridor. Please review the locations of the main plantings and provide any comments you may have.

Comments received

Seven submissions regarded Swamp Oaks (*Casuarina Glauca*), Conifers, deciduous trees and Gum Trees as not appropriate. Written and verbal feedback also indicated Norfolk Island Pines (*Araucaria Heterophylla*) are not preferred due to height, maintenance and potential spreading.

There was mixed written and verbal feedback about Swamp Oaks and deciduous trees with another seven requests preferring these plants.

Two submissions requested preserving the Moreton Bay Figs (*Ficus macrophylla*).

Two submissions suggested keeping the vegetation consistent with what is already there. Sixteen submissions made reference to the use of local native vegetation, while four indicated exotic vegetation should also be considered. Suggestions for alternative plants included Grevilleas, Wattles, Bottle Brush, Coral trees and Palm trees.

Four submissions suggested using less and smaller vegetation in high wind areas to reduce the hazard of falling branches.

In total eight submissions commented on the location of plantings. Location and density of plantings were seen as beneficial for noise mitigation and blocking morning sun for northbound road users. Written and verbal feedback suggested landscaping acts as screening at Fern Street bridge and Toolijooa Road to reduce visual impacts and for minimising operational impacts.

One submission requested engaging a landscaping specialist.

Verbal concerns were raised about ongoing vegetation maintenance and spread of noxious weeds.

Response

As a result of community feedback Norfolk Island Pines have been removed from the landscape design. At the Belinda Street interchange, Illawara Flame Trees (*Brachychiton acerifolius*) will suitably highlight the southern town entrance.

The Swamp Oaks along Fern Street, originally planted by the local Lions Club will be reinstated.

Moreton Bay Fig trees identified in the project will be preserved in accordance with the REF.

The landscape design utilises both endemic and native plants that compliment the rural and town edge characters along the road corridor, including Grevillea, Bottlebush, Coastal Rosemary, Lilly Pilly, Melaleuca and Cabbage Tree Palm. Views to the coast and pastoral areas will be maintained. Exotic plantings will be used to compliment heritage buildings.

Comments about using less and smaller vegetation in high wind areas have been noted.

Comments indicated the location and density of plants were seen as beneficial for noise mitigation and blocking morning sun for northbound road users. Screen planting is proposed along the highway alignment. However, it will not provide noise mitigation and block the morning sun.

Planting of *Casuarina Glauca* (Swamp Oak) on either side of the bridge is proposed however clear zones for railway will limit extent of this screening. Advanced trees will be used to reduce visual impacts in this area. The proposed noise wall will be screened with plantings of native shrubs and grasses along the highway frontage, and shrubs grass, and trees to the railway and residential side.

The project team includes a qualified landscape architect, to ensure the landscape design includes appropriate species and locations, maintains key views and the design fits with the existing character of the area. The landscape architect also ensures the design meets requirements for ongoing maintenance.

Fulton Hogan will maintain the landscape for one year following completion of the project. Landscape within the highway corridor will then be maintained by RMS to current standards. Council is responsible for maintenance of local roads.

5.5 Updating access to Gerringong Railway Station

Question

The railway car park area will be upgraded as part of this project improving access to the station for the local community. Works will include provision of a bus turn-a-round facility and

additional parking spaces. What features of upgrading access to the railway station are important to you?

If you currently use the station, how do you access it? (eg. Walking, bike, bus, drive or get dropped off/collected or other means)

Comments received

A total of 30 submissions commented on upgrading access to Gerringong Railway Station. Nine submissions indicate additional parking spaces and bike bays were important.

Seven submissions requested increased lighting and eight submissions requested improved safety and signage. Four submissions indicated the need for disabled access. Other suggestions included integration with adjacent historical buildings, a ticket machine, separate footpath access and pedestrian crossing, solar powered lighting and six requests for landscaping.

Six respondents reported walking to the station. Twenty-one respondents reported walking or being dropped off and eight reported driving.

Response

The interchange is being designed to provide a pick up and drop off point for buses, including a bus turn-a-round facility. The upgrade will increase the pavement area by around 420 m² and the number of car spaces from five to 18. Disabled parking spaces will also be provided in the new design. Current bike lockers will be relocated with no additional bike bays planned. Traffic volumes at the station are expected to remain similar to current use, unless there is an increase in rail services.

Current lighting will be relocated to surround the new car park, rather than installing new solar powered lighting. There will be less tall vegetation around the car park, providing better visibility from Belinda Street. New signage will be in place to direct traffic to car parking areas.

The interchange has been designed in consultation with Railcorp requirements, and has not been designed specifically to integrate with surrounding historical buildings. Requests for a ticket machine have been passed on to Railcorp.

The current concrete footpath that connects Belinda Street to the station will be extended around the car park to provide continuous path access. There will be no change in current pedestrian access entering the station. The request for a pedestrian crossing has been referred to Kiama Municipal Council.

5.6 Shared path at Fern Street

Question

There is a shared path (for pedestrian and bicycle users) along Fern Street. This may need to be altered during the construction phase. Please note that formal bicycle access will be provided as part of the upgrade. Do you currently use this shared path?

Yes Daily? Weekly? Monthly? Occasional?

No

Comments received

A total of 27 submissions reported using the shared path at Fern Street. Three submissions indicated daily use, 14 indicated weekly use, four indicated monthly use, eight indicated occasional use and 16 submissions indicated no use.

Response

Submissions received indicated the path is being used by the 27 respondents. However, due to the need for extensive construction in the area a section of the shared path (north of Sandy Wha Road) at Fern Street is proposed for closure until late 2013. The shared path will be reinstated in the vicinity of the existing path after construction in this area is complete. The new path will be constructed in consultation with Kiama Municipal Council.

5.7 Gateway signage

Question

The existing Gerringong gateway signs (constructed as stone walls) will be need to be relocated as part of the new highway alignment. What is important to you about these gateway signs?

Comments received

Thirty-eight submissions commented on gateway signage. Twenty-one comments were on the importance of the stone walls and their connection with the Bicentenary project and the wider Kiama community.

Sixteen submissions commented on the importance of gateway signage for directing visitors to Gerringong, including sign visibility and location. Five of these submissions were in favour of the gateway signage being in the same location, with one requesting the signage is moved to somewhere decorative. Three submissions requested the style of the signage reflect the town and not standard RMS signage.

Maintenance of signage and vegetation was mentioned in five submissions and the type and height of vegetation was mentioned in three. Two submissions specifically requested agapanthus not be used around the signage.

Responses

The existing gateway entry signs will be reused and relocated. The new locations for the gateway signage have been established taking into consideration community feedback and in consultation with Kiama Municipal Council. The signs will be located before the Fern Street bridge and on the north west corner at Belinda Street.

The plants identified in the landscaping plan should not reduce the visibility of signage. Maintenance on the gateway signs will be carried out by Kiama Municipal Council. As a result of feedback Agapanthus will not be used around the gateway signage.

5.8 Other

Question

Further comments.

Comments received

Twenty submissions raised other comments. These comments have been collated with verbal feedback outside of the above categories from the 'Have you say' form.

Four submissions supported the project and three submissions supported the consultation process carried out including the opportunities to ask questions. However, verbal feedback indicated some people did not receive the community update and do not have access to a computer.

Five submissions commented on the effectiveness of noise walls. A suggestion was made to extending the noise wall further north to include Werri Lagoon residents and south beyond

Belinda Street. Concerns were raised about the noise walls resulting in increased noise as a result of railway noise reverberating against it and affecting the Gerringong residents east of the railway. Written and verbal concerns were also raised about noise mitigation during construction.

A verbal concern was raised about construction impacts on duck breeding at Union Creek between September and February.

Verbal feedback suggested maintaining a sense of the past by naming new bridge structures and preserving memorials along the old alignment was important.

A verbal concern was raised about having a shoulder to safely pull over in case of accidents or breakdowns. It was not clear whether this concern was in relation to construction or the final design.

A verbal concern was raised about protecting and reinstating the Swamp Oak trees along the new highway alignment.

One submission requested redesigning Rose Valley interchange to provide better access for cars travelling north from Fern Street.

Responses

The project team have investigated concerns that some members of the community did not receive a community update.

Some residents were not delivered the community update and action has been taken to ensure these residents are included in future deliveries.

The project team has noted not everyone has access to a computer and will plan future consultation activities accordingly.

A range of communications activities will continue during construction. These include:

- A toll free project information line: 1800 506 976.
- Project website www.rms.nsw.gov.au/gu.
- Community display centre 446 Princes Highway, Gerringong.
- Berry project office shop 3/113 Queen Street, Berry.
- A static display window in the Gerringong Newsagency.
- Staffed displays.
- Community Advocate
- Community information sessions and/or workshops.
- Targeted focus groups.
- Face to face meetings with directly affected properties owners.
- Emails to stakeholder registered on the project database.
- Householder letters and individually address letters.
- Community updates.
- Advertisements and local media coverage.
- Electronic message signs (VMS).

A noise wall has been identified as per the REF requirements. The wall has been identified to mitigate noise effects to the Gerringong township and to meet the criteria of noise levels below the 55dB night and 60dB daytime levels. These levels are as per RMS standards and guidelines. As a result of additional feedback the height of the noise wall is currently being reassessed by the project team. The project team anticipate there will be minimal impact to

noise levels in the Werri Lagoon area during construction. The majority of work in this area will be carried out during the day and affected residents will be notified of work in advance.

Concerns about the duck breeding at Union Creek will be considered during construction. Environmental controls and fencing will be in place to ensure the protection of local fauna and flora during construction.

The project team will consult with the Gerringong Historical Society, Aboriginal Focus Group representatives and Kiama Municipal Council about opportunities for naming new road structures and naming preferences. The project team may need to relocate roadside tributes during construction. In this event every reasonable effort will be made to contact those concerned and consider their views on how best to relocate the tribute.

Vehicle breakdown bays have been included in the final design to provide motorists with a safe place to pull over in emergencies. This is in line with the recently released Transport for NSW Breakdown Safety Strategy.

As a result of community feedback Swamp Oaks will be reinstated along Fern Street with samplings from the original trees.

The proposed design for the Rose Valley Road interchange is consistent with the design approved in the project REF which was subject to extensive community consultation and approvals. The interchange provides for motorists to safely enter or leave Rose Valley Road in both the north and south directions. The interchange also allows for northbound vehicles departing Gerringong to enter the Princes Highway.

6. Conclusion, next steps and further information

The feedback received during the four week display period ending 22 June 2012 has been taken into consideration in finalising the detailed design. Changes being made to the design will be presented to the community in the November 2012 community update. These changes include:

- Replacing some concrete retaining walls with landscaped embankments including at Gerringong curves.
- Removing Norfolk Pines from the landscaping plan.
- Reinstating the Swamp Oaks along Fern Street with saplings from original trees.
- Minimising impacts on traffic flow during construction of the Fern Street railway overbridge.
- Relocating current gateway signage.
- Refining the noise wall design to reduce visual impacts on adjacent landowners.

The project team will continue to engage with the community during construction of the Gerringong upgrade. The project team has a formal process for receiving and quickly and effectively dealing with enquiries and complaints.

For more information including project contacts and community consultation material, please visit the RMS project website at www.rms.nsw.gov.au/gu.