# **Appendix B**

Community consultation report



# New England Highway upgrade between Belford and the Golden Highway

**Community Consultation Report** 

August 2015

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# **Executive summary**

This Community Consultation Report provides a summary of the community consultation carried out by Roads and Maritime Services in May and June 2015 to support the public display of the preferred option for the New England Highway upgrade between Belford and the Golden Highway.

Roads and Maritime is planning to upgrade the New England Highway between Belford and the Golden Highway to provide two travel lanes in each direction and a flyover for vehicles turning right from the Golden Highway towards Maitland and Newcastle.

The NSW Government has announced \$85 million under the Rebuilding NSW Plan for the upgrade to improve traffic flow, travel times and safety for motorists.

Comments on the preferred option closed on 22 June 2015 with 32 submissions received. The feedback was generally supportive of the proposal with key concerns relating to:

- Safety
- Project design
- Property access
- Timing for construction
- Proposed road corridor
- Environmental impacts
- Property acquisition
- Rest areas
- Noise impacts
- Construction.

We will consider these issues in finalising the concept design and environmental assessment.

### The decision

We will take the community and stakeholder preferences into consideration when finalising the New England Highway upgrade between Belford and the Golden Highway.

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# Introduction

### Background

Roads and Maritime Services is planning to upgrade the New England Highway between Belford and the Golden Highway to improve traffic flow, travel times and safety for motorists.

The proposal involves providing a divided road with two travel lanes in each direction between Belford and the Golden Highway and a flyover for vehicles turning right from the Golden Highway towards Maitland and Newcastle.

The NSW Government has announced \$85 million funding for the upgrade under the Rebuilding NSW Plan.

The proposed upgrade would:

- Increase capacity and connectivity of the New England Highway and Golden Highway for the efficient and reliable movement of freight
- Improve safety at the New England Highway and Golden Highway intersection by reducing the risk of crashes, particularly for motorists turning right from the Golden Highway
- Increase capacity at the New England Highway and Golden Highway intersection to cater for the predicted increase in traffic movements due to future growth in the Hunter
- Allow for access to existing and future adjoining land uses.

### The proposal

A preferred option for upgrading the New England Highway between Belford and the Golden Highway has been prepared. The proposal includes:

- Widening the New England Highway to provide a divided road with two travel lanes in each direction between Belford and the Golden Highway. This is the last section of the route between Newcastle and the Golden Highway intersection to be upgraded to a four lane divided road
- Replacing the existing right turn movement from the Golden Highway to the New England Highway with a right turn flyover
- Establishing a road corridor for future development of the New England Highway towards Singleton.

# **Consultation approach**

### **Consultation objectives**

Our consultation objectives were to:

- Inform the community and stakeholders of the proposal and possible impacts
- Seek feedback on the proposal and issues of concern from the community and stakeholders for consideration in developing the concept design and environmental assessment
- Build a database of interested and concerned community members with whom we can continue to engage with during the proposal's development.

#### Values

Our organisational values underpin our decisions and behaviours when working with customers, colleagues, stakeholders and partners. They include:

- 1. Customer focus We place the customer at the centre of everything we do
- 2. Collaboration We value each other and create better outcomes by working together
- 3. Solutions We deliver sustainable and innovative solutions to NSW's transport needs
- 4. Integrity We take responsibility and communicate openly
- 5. Safety We prioritise safety for our people and our customers.

We consulted with the community during May and June 2015 to update local residents, businesses, road users and the community on the preferred option for the upgrade and seek comment, feedback, ideas and suggestions for us to consider when developing the proposal.

# How consultation was carried out

Community members and stakeholders were encouraged to provide their feedback, leave comments and make submissions via mail, email or phone contact with the project team. Our key consultation tools are listed below.

Table 1				
Local media	• A media release announcing the public display and inviting comments from the community was issued on 20 May 2015 and another reminding the community to provide feedback was issued on 11 June 2015			
	• Copies of the media releases are available at <b>Appendix C</b> .			
Newspaper advertisements	Maitland Mercury on 29 May 2015			
	Singleton Argus on 29 May 2015			
	• A copy of the advertisement is available at <b>Appendix B</b> .			
Community update	Delivered to 1,800 residents in Whittingham, Belford, Lower Belford, Branxton and Branxton East			
	<ul> <li>Direct mailed to emergency services, key stakeholders, Singleton Council and the local MP</li> </ul>			
	• A copy of the community update is provided at <b>Appendix A</b>			
Webpage	Project web page updated 20 May 2015 with latest project information including community update			
	<ul> <li>The project URL is http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/hunter/new-england- highway/belford-golden-highway/index.html</li> </ul>			
Static display	Community updates were on display during the comment period at Singleton Motor Registry, Singleton Council and Branxton Post Office			
Stakeholder briefings	Singleton Council			
	Member for Upper Hunter			
	Directly affected property owners.			

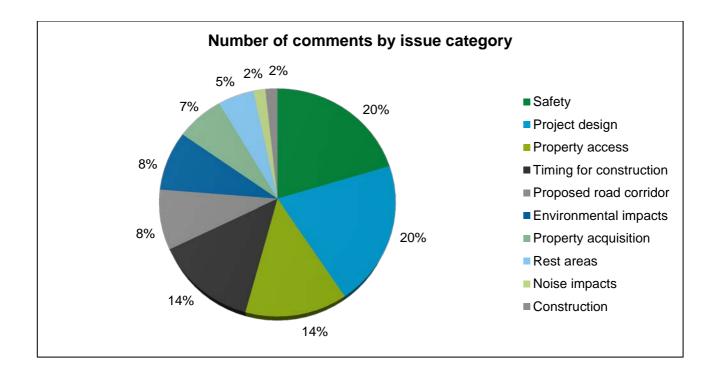
# **Consultation summary**

#### **Overview**

Comments on the preferred option closed on 22 June 2015, with 32 submissions received about a range of issues from individual community members, including potentially affected property owners and businesses in the project area.

The feedback received was generally supportive of the proposal with key concerns relating to safety, project design, property access and timing for construction.

It is important to note we follow issues based decision making. This means that although preferences on options are noted, we examine the issues raised throughout the consultation period using the fact based assessment process to assist in finalising the concept design and preparing the review of environmental factors.



#### Table 2

Issue category	Number of comments	Issues raised	Roads and Maritime response
Safety	12	Safety solutions are needed to address the very dangerous existing section of the New England	In June 2015 a safety review was completed at the southbound merge lane on the New England Highway south of the Golden Highway intersection, near Belford.
	Highway, including changing the southbound merge line markings, installing wire rope safety barriers and signage and reducing the speed limit.	Safety improvements have been carried out to relocate the southbound merge north of the crest on the New England Highway to improve visibility of the merge and slow moving traffic which occurs at this location during peak times.	
		reducing the speed	A reduced 80km/h speed limit has been installed along with queue warning signage to improve safety at the new merge location. Line marking improvements were carried out to provide a wider median and increased clearance between opposing traffic near the merge.
		The proposed exit road from the abattoir is very close to the crest on the Golden Highway, which would make it difficult to see vehicles travelling west along the highway.	The project is currently in the early planning and design phase. Provisions for current and future access, including safety and visibility for motorists will be considered in greater detail during the concept design phase, which is expected to be displayed for community comment in late 2016.

Issue category	Number of comments	Issues raised	Roads and Maritime response
		The dual carriageway will make exiting and entering the roads along the Belford straight, including the Bell Road intersection, more difficult and dangerous.	Community concerns have been noted regarding the existing New England Highway and Bell Road intersection. However, as the Belford section of dual carriageway including the Bell Road intersection is not part of the current proposal and outside the project boundary, these concerns have been passed onto our Network Safety Management team for consideration.
		Consideration should be given to the existing intersections on the New England Highway from Bell Road to Standen Drive at Belford. These intersections have differing merging lane configurations and directional signage, which can be very confusing and dangerous for road users.	Community concerns have been noted regarding the existing Belford section of dual carriageway on the New England Highway, including the various intersection arrangements. However, as the Belford section of dual carriageway is not part of the current proposal and outside of the project boundary, these concerns have been passed onto our Network Safety Management team for consideration.
		The decision to retain the right turn from the New England Highway and the left turn from the Golden Highway is not the safest option for motorists.	Many design options were investigated during the strategic design phase of the project, resulting in the preferred option outlined in the May 2015 community update. The right turn movement from the Golden Highway onto the New England Highway has been the cause of the majority of
			crashes at the intersection. Safety is a major consideration in road designs and this is why the right turn movement out of the Golden Highway is proposed to be upgraded to a flyover.
			Due to the current and predicted low usage of the right turn from the New England Highway onto the Golden Highway the current arrangement will be retained.
Project design	12	Full support for the proposed design.	We thank community members for their support and interest in the New England Highway upgrade project between Belford and the Golden Highway.
			More information about the project and the expected delivery timing is available

Issue category	Number of comments	Issues raised	Roads and Maritime response
			on the Roads and Maritime website. The project web page is the best way to check on progress and obtain the latest updates regarding the project.
		Suggestion for an additional flyover for the right turn from the New England Highway to the Golden Highway.	Grade separation of the right turn from the New England Highway to the Golden Highway is not warranted due to the low volume of traffic predicted to complete this movement.
		Calls for at grade solutions at the intersection, such as a roundabout or traffic lights.	At grade solutions have been considered, but were ultimately rejected due to the high speed environment and high traffic volumes at the intersection between the New England and Golden highways.
			At grade solutions would also have poor economic viability compared with the preferred option.
		Suggestion to use fencing and median solutions to improve	Feedback on improving the intersection on the basis of safety, engineering feasibility and cost will be considered.
		the intersection.	These options will be further investigated in the concept design and environmental assessment phase, which is expected to be displayed for community comment in late 2016.
		Concerns the proposed lane configurations at the	We will consider feedback for lane configurations on the basis of safety, engineering feasibility and cost.
		intersection will create more confusion.	These options will be further investigated in the concept design and environmental assessment phase, which is expected to be displayed for community comment in late 2016.
		The new intersection design should include two westbound lanes on the Golden Highway to allow southbound vehicles turning right onto the Golden Highway from the New England Highway and northbound vehicles turning left onto the Golden Highway to enter simultaneously.	We will consider feedback about the intersection design on the basis of safety, engineering feasibility and cost. These options will be further investigated in the concept design and environmental assessment phase, which is expected to be displayed for community comment in late 2016.

Issue category	Number of comments	Issues raised	Roads and Maritime response
		Suggestion to realign the left turn from the New England Highway onto the Golden Highway. This would make the movement easier for all vehicles, especially heavy vehicles that need to slow down considerably and could conceivably drift into traffic queuing at the end of the Golden Highway.	Feedback about the intersection design will be considered during the concept design and environmental assessment phase, which is expected to be displayed for community comment in late 2016.
Property access	8	Concerns about the possible impact the project will have on accessing properties in the project area in a safe and convenient manner.	Provisions for current and future property access will be considered in greater detail during the concept design phase, which is expected to be displayed for community comment in late 2016.
		Suggestions for changes to the access and exit roads proposed for Abattoir Access Road.	Provisions for current and future access will be considered in greater detail during the concept design phase, which is expected to be displayed for community comment in late 2016.
			More detailed information has been requested from the property/business owner about the number and size of vehicles entering and exiting Abattoir Access Road. This information will assist in further consultation with the potentially affected property/business owner as the concept design progresses.
		The proposal for a dual carriageway will result in one property on the New England Highway losing the right turn movement from its driveway, therefore only allowing a left turn in and out which will cause problems for large trucks entering the property.	Provisions for current and future access will be considered in greater detail during the concept design phase and we will consult as necessary with potentially affected property owners.

Issue category	Number of comments	Issues raised	Roads and Maritime response
Timing for construction	8	The proposed upgrade is fully supported and Roads and Maritime is encouraged to start construction as soon as possible.	We thank community members who provided support and interest in the New England Highway upgrade project between Belford and the Golden Highway.
			The project is currently in the early planning and design phase and there are a number of steps to be completed before the project will be ready to go out for construction.
			More information about the project and the expected delivery timing is available on the Roads and Maritime website. The project web page is the best way to check on progress and obtain the latest updates regarding the project.
		Concerns the design is too complex and will take too long to construct.	Many design options were investigated and modelled during the strategic design phase. However, these were ultimately rejected due to poor traffic performance and economic viability compared with the preferred option.
Proposed road corridor	5	Concerns the proposed reserved road corridor as shown on the project map suggests the Golden Highway route option for the Singleton Bypass has been excluded without community consultation.	Community concerns have been noted regarding the proposed establishment of a road corridor for future development of the New England Highway towards Singleton.
			All bypass options currently under consideration for the Singleton Bypass will have a long-term requirement for four lanes between the Golden Highway and Singleton based on future traffic projections. Community concerns have been passed on to the Singleton Bypass project team for consideration.
			More information about the Singleton Bypass project is available on the Roads and Maritime website.
Environmental impacts	5	Concerns about erosion due to water runoff from the existing highway, and the potential that it could worsen with the construction of a dual carriageway.	Hydrology and hydraulic investigations will be carried out as part of the concept design and environmental assessment phase to consider drainage and erosion impacts.
			The environmental assessment is expected to be displayed for community comment in late 2016.
		Consideration needs to be given to drainage for nearby properties.	Hydrology and hydraulic investigations will be carried out as part of the concept design and environmental assessment phase to consider drainage and erosion impacts.

Issue category	Number of comments	Issues raised	Roads and Maritime response
			The environmental assessment is expected to be displayed for community comment in late 2016.
		Kangaroos are a major problem along the first 10km of the Golden Highway, mainly because of the large numbers within the Army Range Land. The upgrade needs to consider keeping our wildlife off the roads.	Community concerns have been noted regarding the number of crashes involving kangaroos along the Golden Highway, near the Army Range Land. However, as this section of Golden Highway is not part of the current proposal and outside of the project boundary, these concerns have been passed onto our Network Safety Management team for consideration. It is further noted that Roads and Maritime has no jurisdiction regarding Defence Force land.
			A flora and fauna study will be completed as part of the environmental assessment phase to consider impacts to local wildlife.
			Mitigation activities will be considered if required to minimise the impact to local wildlife and improve safety for motorists within the project area.
Property acquisition	4	Property owners have requested to meet with Roads and Maritime to discuss potential property acquisition.	We will work closely with potentially affected property owners on identified property impacts.
			We have directly contacted the potentially affected property owners to discuss the specific impact on each property.
			We will continue working closely with these property owners as the project progresses and more detail is known during the planning process.
Rest areas	3	Concerns that the right turn flyover will	The existing rest area is unable to be retained in the current proposal.
		impact on the Whittingham rest area.	New and redeveloped rest areas are designed to meet the needs of both heavy vehicle drivers and ordinary motorists. This includes high quality toilets, shade shelters, rubbish bins, tables and chairs.
			Rest areas have been recently built at Rixs Creek Road north of Singleton and on the Hunter Expressway at both Branxton and Buchanan. The new rest areas have been designed and positioned to provide for the needs along this route.
Noise impacts	1	A property owner enquired about whether the proposal would	The next phase of the project is the concept design and environmental assessment. During this phase noise impact assessments will be carried out to

Issue category	Number of comments	Issues raised	Roads and Maritime response
		include noise reduction measures and whether consideration had been given to the installation of noise barriers along the New England Highway to reduce noise impacts on surrounding properties.	determine if noise treatments are warranted. Properties that would be potentially impacted by traffic noise would be identified and specific individual noise treatments if warranted for properties would be discussed with relevant property owners. The concept design and environmental assessment is expected to commence in late 2015 and will be displayed for community comment in late 2016.
Construction	1	A local heavy vehicle business expressed interest in discussing the construction requirements of the project.	The project is currently in the early planning phase and there are a number of steps to be completed before the project will be ready to go out for construction. More information about the project and the expected delivery timing is available on the Roads and Maritime website. The project webpage is the best way for to check on progress and obtain the latest updates regarding the project.

### **Recommendations**

Based on community feedback received during the community comment period, respondents were generally supportive of the proposal to upgrade the New England Highway between Belford and the Golden Highway.

The majority of feedback received related to safety, project design, property access and timing for construction. We will consider these key issues in the concept design and environmental assessment.

We will work closely with potentially affected property owners and stakeholders in relation to potential impacts during the planning for this project. We will do this by:

- Informing the community and stakeholders of consultation outcomes and the next steps for the proposal via publication of this report.
- Continuing to carry out participation and communication activities as the proposal progresses.

This includes consultation with potentially affected stakeholders in relation to potential construction impacts such as noise.

- Ensuring community and stakeholder comments and suggestions are considered in the ongoing development of the proposal.
- Displaying the concept design and environmental assessment for community and stakeholder comment and preparing a submissions report showing how comments and concerns have been considered in the final concept design.

## **Next steps**

We have considered all submissions and will ensure our project team is aware of concerns raised by the community. We will ensure that issues highlighted by stakeholders and the community are appropriately addressed throughout the concept design and environmental assessment phase.

During the next phase of the project we will:

- Consider the issues raised in this report to prepare the concept design and environmental assessment
- Engage with the community through the Roads and Maritime website, project updates and keep the community and stakeholders informed of planning progress
- Consult with nearby residents, particularly in relation to property impacts
- Display the environmental assessment for comment prior to finalising the concept design and obtaining project approval.

We will continue to keep the community informed of the project progress.

# Appendix A – Community Update May 2015

# **Community** Update



**MAY 2015** 



# New England Highway upgrade between Belford and the Golden Highway

Roads and Maritime Services is planning to upgrade the New England Highway between Belford and the Golden Highway to improve traffic flow, travel times and safety for motorists. This community update contains information on the proposed option and next steps for the project.

The proposal involves providing a divided road with two travel lanes in each direction between Belford and the Golden Highway and a flyover for vehicles turning right from the Golden Highway towards Maitland and Newcastle.

Stakeholders and the community are invited to comment on the proposal by **22 June 2015**. Feedback will be considered by Roads and Maritime when carrying out the concept design and environmental assessment.

# Background

The New England Highway is part of the inland route of the Sydney to Brisbane National Land Transport Network and the primary route connecting the Upper Hunter with Maitland and Newcastle. The Golden Highway connects the New England Highway at Whittingham with Dubbo.

These road corridors are designated B-Double routes and are used extensively by heavy vehicles servicing coal mining, grain production and other industries in the Hunter Valley and the Central West to access the port of Newcastle.

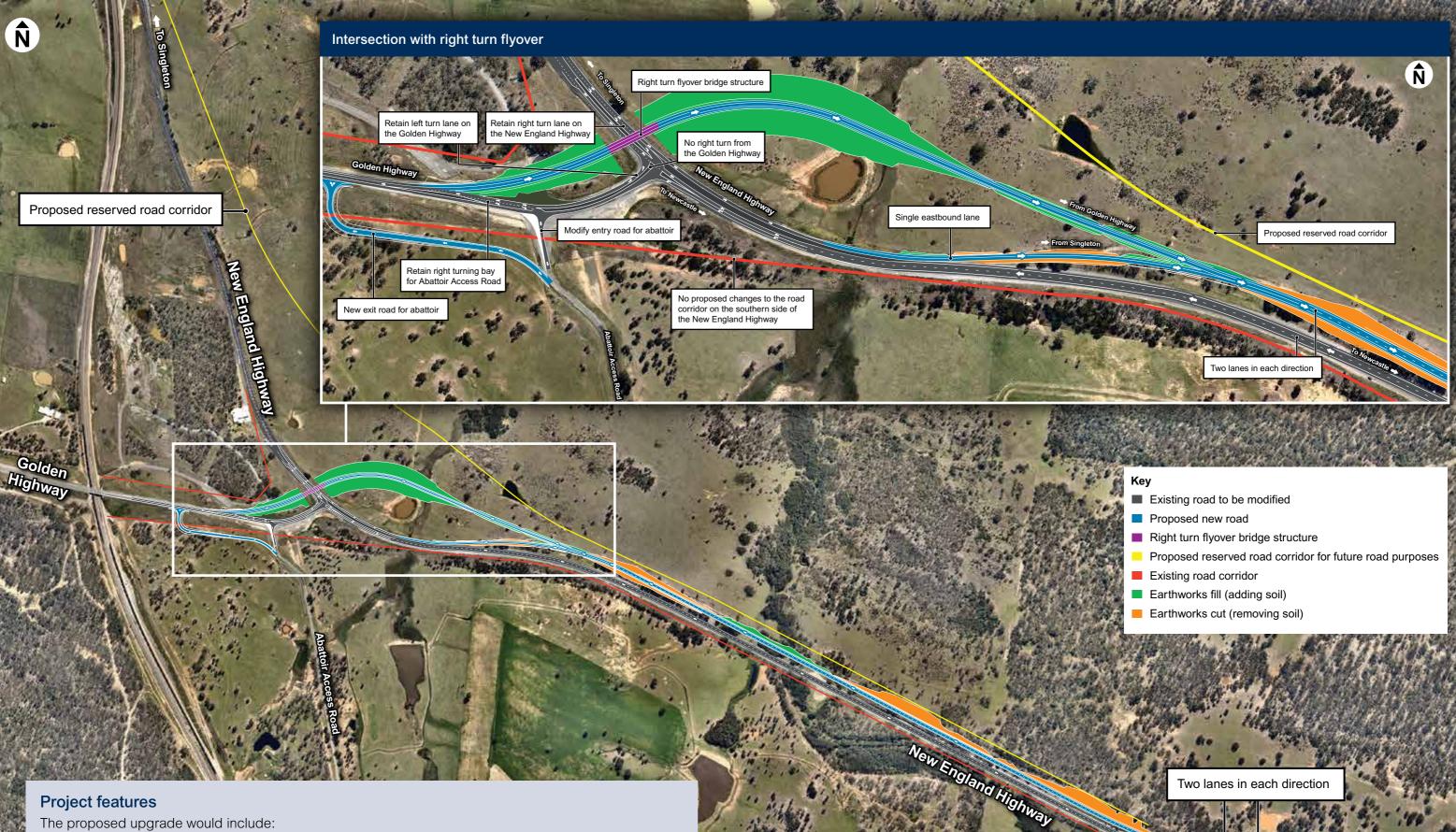
The New England Highway is a critical connection between the urban and employment centres of Maitland and Singleton, which are planned future growth areas for the Hunter region. Around 22,000 vehicles travel along the New England Highway between Belford and the Golden Highway each day. This section of the New England Highway is currently two lanes westbound and one lane eastbound and has a history of crashes, particularly near the Golden Highway intersection.

The NSW Government has announced \$85 million funding for the upgrade under the Rebuilding NSW Plan.

# **Project benefits**

The proposed upgrade would:

- Increase capacity and connectivity of the New England Highway and Golden Highway for the efficient and reliable movement of freight
- Improve safety at the New England Highway and Golden Highway intersection by reducing the risk of crashes, particularly for motorists turning right from the Golden Highway
- Increase capacity at the New England Highway and Golden Highway intersection to cater for the predicted increase in traffic movements due to future growth in the Hunter
- Allow for access to existing and future adjoining land uses.



# **Project features**

The proposed upgrade would include:

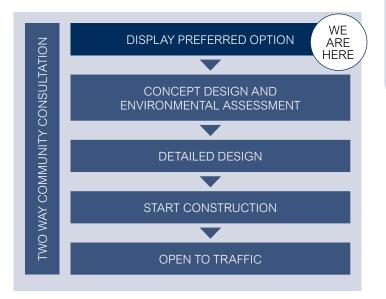
- Widening the New England Highway to provide a divided road with two travel lanes in each direction between Belford and the Golden Highway. This is the last section of the route between Newcastle and the Golden Highway intersection to be upgraded to a four lane divided road
- Replacing the existing right turn movement from the Golden Highway to the New England Highway with a right turn flyover
- Establishing a road corridor for future development of the New England Highway towards Singleton. •

# Involving the community and stakeholders

Roads and Maritime is working with the community and stakeholders during the planning process to identify issues and minimise potential impacts of the proposed upgrade. Stakeholders and the community are invited to comment on the proposal by **22 June 2015**.

# Next steps

The next step will be to progress the concept design and environmental assessment, which are expected to be displayed for community comment in late 2016.



# Please send us your feedback by:

Phoning:	Jason Laverty, Project
	Development Manager
	on 02 4924 0368
	(during business hours)
Emailing:	Jason.Laverty@rms.nsw.gov.au
Writing to:	Jason Laverty,
	Project Development Manager
	Roads and Maritime Services
	Locked Bag 2030
	Newcastle NSW 2300
Comments a	re invited by <b>22 June 2015</b> .
Information is	also available on the

Information is also available on the Roads and Maritime website at www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roadprojects

This document contains important information about road projects in your area. If you require the services of an interpreter, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask them to call the project team on 1300 660 275. The interpreter

will then assist you with translation.



#### **Roads and Maritime Services**

Privacy: Roads and Maritime Services ("RMS") is subject to the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 ("PPIP Act") which requires that we comply with the Information Privacy Principles set out in the PPIP Act.

All information in correspondence is collected for the sole purpose of assisting in the assessment of this proposal. The information received, including names and addresses of respondents, may be published in subsequent documents unless a clear indication is given in the correspondence that all or part of that information is not to be published. Otherwise RMS will only disclose your personal information, without your consent, if authorised by the law. Your personal information will be held by Roads and Maritime Services at 59 Darby Street, Newcastle NSW 2300. You have the right to access and correct the information if you believe that it is incorrect.

Appendix B – Newspaper Advertisement



The new state of business

# **New England Highway upgrade** Between Belford and the Golden Highway

Roads and Maritime Services is planning to upgrade the New England Highway between Belford and the Golden Highway to improve safety, traffic flow and travel times.

The proposal involves providing a divided road with two travel lanes in each direction between Belford and the Golden Highway and a flyover for vehicles turning right from the Golden Highway towards Maitland and Newcastle.

We invite you to provide feedback on the proposal by **Monday 22 June 2015**. Your feedback will be considered when carrying out the concept design and environmental impact assessment.

The proposed option and community update is available to view at rms.nsw.gov.au or at the Singleton Motor Registry, Singleton Shire Council and Branxton Post Office.

For more information please contact Jason Laverty on (02) 4924 0368, email: Jason.Laverty@rms.nsw.gov.au or visit rms.nsw.gov.au

# Appendix C – Media releases

# Media Release Michael Johnsen MP

Member for Upper Hunter

20 May, 2015



# COMMUNITY INVITED TO COMMENT ON NEW ENGLAND HIGHWAY UPGRADE BETWEEN BELFORD AND GOLDEN HIGHWAY

Michael Johnsen MP, Member for Upper Hunter encourages the community to comment on a proposed New England Highway upgrade between Belford and the Golden Highway.

Mr. Johnsen said the NSW Government had committed \$85 million as part of the Rebuilding NSW Plan to improve traffic flow, travel times and safety on this section of the highway.

"We will aim to improve safety by providing a flyover for motorists turning right from the Golden Highway towards Maitland and Newcastle," Mr. Johnsen said.

"More than 22,000 vehicles use this section of highway daily and since July 2009, there have been 23 crashes at the New England and Golden Highway intersection resulting in one fatality and 11 injuries.

"The proposed upgrade involves widening the New England Highway to provide two lanes in each direction between Belford and the Golden Highway.

"This is the last section between Newcastle and the Golden Highway to be upgraded to provide two lanes in each direction," Mr. Johnsen said.

Mr. Johnsen said the New England Highway was an integral part of the inland route of the Sydney to Brisbane National Land Transport Network and the primary route connecting the Upper Hunter with Maitland and Newcastle.

"Both the Golden and New England highways are used extensively by heavy vehicles accessing the port of Newcastle for coal mining, grain production and other industries in the Hunter Valley and Central West.

"Not only would the upgrade improve road safety but also increase freight transport efficiency," Mr. Johnsen said.

The community is invited to have a say on the proposal by 22 June 2015. Feedback will be used to inform the concept design and environmental assessment.

The proposal can be viewed online at <u>www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roadprojects</u>; at the Singleton Motor Registry, Singleton Council or the Branxton Post Office from Monday 25 May.

..ends..

Member for Upper Hunter



11 June, 2015

# REMINDER TO HAVE YOUR SAY ON NEW ENGLAND HIGHWAY UPGRADE

Michael Johnsen MP, Member for Upper Hunter is reminding community members to provide feedback on the proposed upgrade of the New England Highway between Belford and the Golden Highway with comments due by Monday 22 June.

Mr. Johnsen said the NSW Government committed \$85 million under the Rebuilding NSW Plan to improve traffic flow, travel times and road user safety along this section of the highway.

"The proposed design aims to improve travel times and connectivity for the 22,000 vehicles accessing this section of the New England and Golden highways daily," Mr. Johnsen said.

"The upgrade would provide a flyover for motorists turning right from the Golden Highway to travel to Maitland and Newcastle.

"The proposal also involves widening the New England Highway to provide a four lane divided highway between Belford and the Golden Highway.

"The proposed upgrade is the last section of the route between Newcastle and the Golden Highway to be upgraded to two lanes in each direction," Mr. Johnsen said.

Community members are invited to have a say on the proposal by Monday 22 June by email to <u>Jason.Laverty@rms.nsw.gov.au</u>, by phone on (02) 4924 0368 or mail to Locked Bag 2030 Newcastle NSW 2300.

The feedback will be used to inform the detailed concept design and environmental assessment.

View the proposal online at <u>www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roadproject</u>s or for a hard copy of the proposal visit the Singleton Motor Registry, Singleton Council or the Branxton Post Office.

..ends...



Customer feedback Roads and Maritime Locked Bag 2030, Newcastle NSW 2300

August 2015 RMS 15.435 ISBN: 978-1-925357-74-5