

## Nowra Bridge Project

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### **Purpose of this document**

This consultation report provides a summary of the community feedback received during community consultation activities carried out in late 2013 for the Nowra Bridge project.

It is a representation of the questions, concerns and considerations raised by members of the community and stakeholders through individual meetings, the project telephone information line, project email and at four community information sessions held in November and December 2013. It also provides the current information from Roads and Maritime Services in response to the feedback collected.

The feedback captured during this time will help identify and develop options, identify and mitigate potential project impacts and develop the communication and consultation approach for the future. Along with other specialist studies, it will be used as part of a 'value management' process. Value management is part of the development process used by Roads and Maritime Services to bring together technical experts and key project stakeholders to make recommendations and/or develop a 'way forward' for large infrastructure projects. For the Nowra Bridge project, workshop participants will help the project team identify priorities and criteria so that the different locations for a potential new crossing can be assessed and a preferred location can be recommended.

### **Community events**

A letter introducing the project and detailing four community information sessions was sent to residents and businesses within the Nowra Bridge project area in early November 2013. Details of the events were also advertised in the local media, on the project website and by a project email to registered stakeholders. Feedback forms were received from community members and feedback was recorded and collected by the project team during the events.

The following table summarises the feedback captured from the community information sessions, the project telephone line, email and from individual meetings. Roads and Maritime comments on the community feedback are also provided based on current information. The project team will continue to report on community feedback and issues throughout the project's development.

Community feedback	Roads and Maritime Services comments
<p><b>Location</b></p> <p>A number of comments were received regarding the potential location of a new crossing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The existing Princes Highway experiences a lot of congestion at the location of the existing crossing. A replacement bridge in the same area is the best solution</li> <li>• The project needs to take into account the future urban development of Nowra and provide a solution which is both adequate and functional for future generations.</li> </ul> <p>Recommendations were also submitted for a bypass of Nowra:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An eastern bypass of Nowra</li> <li>• A western / Northern bypass to convey local traffic between North Nowra, the university/TAFE, HMAS Albatross and industrial areas. A western bypass would act as more of a collector road than a bypass and would also improve holiday traffic flow through the town</li> <li>• A far eastern scenic coastal route joining Shoalhaven Heads through to Huskisson by bridges.</li> </ul>	<p>Roads and Maritime is in the process of carrying out a study to determine the best location for a potential new river crossing that will address the current maintenance issues on the existing southbound bridge.</p> <p>The study will consider a number of options within three transport corridors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The council proposed bypass corridor to the west of Nowra-Bomaderry</li> <li>2. The area around the South Coast rail line</li> <li>3. The existing Princes Highway corridor</li> </ol> <p>To determine the best location the study will consider a number of specialist reports including investigations into environmental impacts, urban design considerations, road safety, design and constructability constraints, asset condition assessments and traffic modelling. Community feedback will also be an important consideration.</p> <p>The <i>Nowra-Bomaderry Structure Plan</i> (prepared by Shoalhaven City Council) provides a planning framework for the next 30 years and will also be considered as part of the initial investigations and throughout the development process. Any new river crossing will need to be compatible with this plan and allow for future growth and development.</p> <p>While there are no current Roads and Maritime plans to provide a bypass of Nowra-Bomaderry, it is important that the Nowra Bridge project considers the longer term implications of a future bypass as a potential option. Similarly, it is important that Roads and Maritime work with NSW Trains to consider opportunities for a future rail crossing over the Shoalhaven River.</p> <p>The study will be completed around the middle of 2014.</p>

Community feedback	Roads and Maritime Services comments
<b>Design</b>	
<p>Design suggestions for a new bridge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a new double decker bridge with the top deck linking to Illaroo Road and the bottom deck replacing the existing southbound bridge</li> <li>• Construct a new three or four lane bridge downstream of the existing bridges</li> <li>• The new bridge should have additional and wider lanes</li> <li>• A designated lane for emergency vehicles / breakdowns should be included</li> <li>• Additional foreshore facilities for caravans and traveller rest areas should be provided as part of the project.</li> </ul>	<p>Once a preferred location is identified, Roads and Maritime will develop concept designs for a potential new river crossing. The design phase will consider issues such as the number of lanes and providing any break down lanes, against agreed project objectives. The width of lanes will be appropriately selected based on current road design guidelines.</p> <p>The 'look' of the bridge will be an important consideration, given the iconic nature of the Shoalhaven River and the surrounding precinct in Nowra.</p> <p>Preliminary urban design work is being carried out as part of the Nowra Bridge project. This work will look at opportunities to improve social access and use of the Shoalhaven River foreshore. Roads and Maritime will also work closely with Shoalhaven Council to identify opportunities to complement the foreshore planning.</p>
<p>Suggestions for the existing southbound bridge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The existing southbound bridge should be removed / demolished and replaced with a new bridge</li> <li>• A new bridge should be built with the existing southbound bridge remaining as a cycleway, pedestrian bridge and /or marketplace</li> <li>• Given its heritage significance, costs associated with demolition and potential for providing an overall traffic solution, options for keeping and reusing the existing southbound bridge should be considered</li> <li>• If the existing southbound bridge is kept, public access to pier /water level for public recreation from the iron truss bridge should be provided. Safety will need to be carefully considered for this access especially if the new bridge is built immediately downstream of the existing southbound bridge</li> <li>• The project should look at an option for the existing southbound bridge to be converted to accommodate rail traffic</li> <li>• The project should look at an option for the existing southbound bridge to be used for emergency traffic overflow.</li> </ul>	<p>A decision on the future plans for the existing southbound bridge has not been made. Roads and Maritime will consider the costs associated with keeping or demolishing the existing southbound bridge, as well as the opportunities for using the bridge for other purposes. Roads and Maritime has been talking with community and special interest groups about the heritage aspects of the southbound bridge, and will continue to do so as the project progresses.</p> <p>If the southbound bridge is retained, Roads and Maritime's view is to see it used for some purpose rather than be closed to the public. The design of any new bridge in this location would also need to consider how to ensure community access can be maintained to the old bridge.</p>

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<p>Design suggestions for a new bridge to include a rail component:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new bridge should accommodate both road and rail traffic</li> <li>• The project should include options for a future extension to the rail line and the construction of a train station in Nowra</li> <li>• A new bridge should provide three road traffic lanes and a train line</li> <li>• Peak oil, climate change and a dependence on cars emphasise the importance of focusing on a rail versus road option for the project</li> <li>• A railway bridge should be a separate proposal at a later date.</li> </ul>	<p>Roads and Maritime has been advised there are no plans at this stage to extend the rail line across the Shoalhaven River into Nowra, however growth in the region may see the need for this extension in the future. Roads and Maritime are working closely with NSW Trains to assess whether there is value in providing spare capacity on a new bridge that could be used in future by the South Coast rail line.</p>
<p>General design suggestions for the surrounding road network:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project should consider a tunnel as an alternative to a new bridge</li> <li>• A cycleway / dedicated cycle paths should be included as part of the project</li> <li>• The project should include a combined Bolong Road / Illaroo Road interchange including on and off ramps</li> <li>• The project should include a flyover from the highway to take northbound traffic onto Bolong Road</li> <li>• The project should consider a loop link road which avoids the Illaroo Road intersection</li> <li>• The existing traffic lights located at the northern end of the bridges in Bomaderry should be removed and replaced with a roundabout. A right hand turn should also be included at the southern end of the bridge in Nowra to assist with traffic distribution</li> <li>• The project should incorporate options to provide on/off ramps for the junction at Bridge Road.</li> <li>• Access for Bridge Road should be maintained as a major entrance to the Nowra CBD town centre and hospital</li> <li>• The project should protect the integrity of the road network, including retaining or preferably improving access to the Princes Highway to / from local roads.</li> </ul>	<p>The Nowra Bridge project will consider a range of design options to address the maintenance issues related to the existing southbound bridge. Roads and Maritime recognises that the project may also provide an opportunity to provide other improvements for the community such as reducing traffic congestion, improving road safety, and providing opportunities to enhance the public foreshore.</p> <p>The depth of the Shoalhaven River at this location means a tunnel is not a cost effective or practical solution and is not being considered.</p> <p>Roads and Maritime recognises the desire for improved pedestrian accessibility to the foreshore and safer conditions for cyclists in the area around the bridges. Roads and Maritime will ensure that all road users including pedestrians and cyclists are considered as part of the Nowra Bridge project.</p> <p>Roads and Maritime recognises that traffic congestion around the current bridges is a high priority issue for much of the local community. Suggestions around providing interchanges, flyovers, roundabouts and link loop roads would require large scale construction on the existing road network and adjacent properties. Extensive consultation is required before any options could be developed and Roads and Maritime may need to consider these issues separately to the new crossing.</p>

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	Roads and Maritime also recognises that local road connections to and from the Princes Highway are important in this area and will continue to work closely with Shoalhaven City Council.
<b>Environment</b>	
The construction of a new bridge would have impact on local amenity, including air quality, noise, vibration and dust. Specifically, the retirement village and caravan park were mentioned in regard to noise impacts.	An environmental impact assessment will be carried out on the preferred concept design before the project can proceed. This assessment would also outline mitigation measures for noise, dust and vibration during and after construction and would include air quality and noise monitoring.
Any design for a bypass of Nowra would need to consider environmental issues including the location of endangered species of orchid in the Shoalhaven area.	Roads and Maritime is carrying out broad environmental assessments to help determine the best location for any new river crossing and to guide investigations for the project in later stages. More detailed environmental investigations will happen once more is known about the location and a preferred concept design is ready to be developed.
The existing southbound bridge is an iconic feature of the Nowra region and has local and heritage value.	The existing southbound bridge is listed on Roads and Maritime's Section 170 heritage register which requires Roads and Maritime to consult extensively with the appropriate heritage authorities prior to making any decision on the future of the bridge. A decision on the future of the existing southbound bridge has not been made. Roads and Maritime will consider the viability of maintaining the existing southbound bridge, and in what capacity. The community will be consulted as part of the decision making process.
A new bridge should be named the "Murring Bridge" in recognition of the Murring Aboriginal nation of people covering the area from the Mallagoota Inlet to the Shoalhaven River.	Roads and Maritime has noted this suggestion for future planning stages. More information on the naming of roads and / or how to make a formal suggestion can be found on the Geographical Names Board of NSW website: <a href="http://www.gnb.nsw.gov.au">www.gnb.nsw.gov.au</a>

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<p><b>Traffic</b></p> <p>Comments received about traffic, current congestion, traffic flow and the need for upgrades at intersections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic volume figures indicate that a new bridge can be justified for local traffic flow alone</li> <li>• A new bridge on its own will not ease the extensive traffic flow. The project should include a new interchange at Bolong Road / Illaroo Road which includes on and off ramps</li> <li>• A key objective of any new river crossing should be to manage future traffic congestion, particularly peak traffic volumes during holiday periods.</li> <li>• Improving traffic conditions around the current Nowra bridges is critical to longer term growth and development particularly in regard to the <i>Nowra – Bomaderry Structure Plan</i> and the <i>Nowra CBD Strategy</i>.</li> </ul>	<p>Traffic volumes across the Shoalhaven River bridges are amongst the highest volumes experienced on the NSW south coast with almost 50,000 vehicles crossing the river on an average day. During peak hour periods, about 3,000 vehicles use the bridges in the morning, and about 3,500 vehicles use the bridges in the afternoon. Traffic conditions often deteriorate further during holiday periods when the Princes Highway becomes a popular tourist route for the Shoalhaven and surrounding areas on the NSW south coast. At this stage the primary objective of the Nowra Bridge project is to address maintenance concerns with the southbound bridge, however Roads and Maritime recognises that the project may also provide an opportunity to improve traffic conditions in the area. Roads and Maritime is working closely with Shoalhaven City Council to update existing traffic data and complete new modelling that will help to quantify any traffic issues that could be addressed as part of the Nowra Bridge project. Roads and Maritime is also working closely with Shoalhaven City Council to make sure that integrated planning occurs in regard to the <i>Nowra – Bomaderry Structure Plan</i> and the <i>Nowra CBD Strategy</i>. Any new structure will need to be compatible with these plans and allow for future growth and development.</p>
<p>The project needs to address road safety issues including traffic incidents and accidents on both bridges and at the Moss Street intersection.</p>	<p>Any options identified for a new river crossing will aim to improve safety, accessibility and efficiency for all road users. A road safety audit was recently completed for the existing river crossings, and crash data has been reviewed to identify any road safety trends that may need to be considered in future design stages.</p>

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<b>Maintenance</b>	
<p>Comments regarding the maintenance of the existing southbound bridge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The existing southbound bridge is no longer practical and should be replaced with a new bridge</li> <li>• The existing southbound bridge is in danger of collapse either through misuse, lack of expensive maintenance funding or wreckage from an over height truck</li> <li>• If the cost of maintaining the iron truss bridge is too high it should be removed and replaced with a new bridge</li> <li>• The alleged wool piles around the bridge foundations on the iron truss bridge should be investigated</li> <li>• The risk of the existing southbound bridge being washed down stream during a flood event needs to be considered if a new river crossing is to be built immediately downstream</li> <li>• Roads and Maritime should be responsible for ongoing maintenance of the existing bridge, should the bridge be retained.</li> </ul>	<p>The existing southbound bridge is more than 130 years old and requires regular maintenance to ensure continued safe operation for the travelling public.</p> <p>Particular maintenance issues which have been identified in a recent asset condition assessment include some corrosion of the wrought iron, cast iron and steel components; some adjustments of bridge bearings and patching repair work on the bridge deck. At water level, there are some piers that may need to be repaired.</p> <p>Work to maintain the bridge is becoming increasingly difficult due to the large traffic volumes crossing the river during peak hours. Any closure during this time causes major delays on the network and projects requiring road closures need to be carried out at night. Reduced night work shift hours mean simple projects can take weeks or months to complete or, in the case of large projects with extensive set up and pack up times, cannot be carried out at all. Maintaining the southbound bridge under the current traffic conditions is the primary issue for the Nowra Bridge project to address.</p> <p>A decision on the future of the existing southbound bridge has not been made. Ongoing maintenance costs for the appropriate maintenance authority will need to be considered.</p>
<b>Construction</b>	
<p>Comments received about construction and constructability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A temporary “Bailey” bridge should be constructed to carry traffic across the river either during maintenance of the existing bridge or construction of a new bridge</li> <li>• Additional lanes could be added onto the side of the northbound bridge for use during the maintenance of the existing bridge or construction of a new bridge.</li> </ul>	<p>Any new infrastructure would need to be built without removing any of the existing traffic capacity crossing the river. If the Nowra Bridge project proposes a new crossing near the two existing bridges, it would need to be designed so that both of the existing bridges could remain in use during construction.</p> <p>Roads and Maritime has investigated the use of temporary “Bailey” bridges on other projects, such as the maintenance of the Hampden Bridge in Kangaroo Valley. Roads and Maritime will consider these sorts of temporary options to assist the constructability of any new river crossing.</p>
<b>Property</b>	
<p>Comments received about impacts on property:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some residents expressed concern over potential property</li> </ul>	<p>The Nowra Bridge project still needs to identify a preferred location for any new crossing. Potential impacts on property will be</p>

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<p>acquisition if a new bridge is to be constructed alongside the existing bridge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pig (Burruga) Island has been sold and there have been some suggestions that Roads and Maritime should buy it back before it is developed.</li> </ul>	<p>considered as part of the decision making process. Roads and Maritime is not planning to acquire any property until after the preferred location has been selected and a concept design has been developed. During this process, Roads and Maritime will work closely with anyone who feels they may be affected by the Nowra Bridge project.</p> <p>Any property owner that wishes to speak to Roads and Maritime about the Nowra Bridge project is encouraged to contact the project team on 1800 331 713 (free call) or email</p> <p>NowraBridgeProject@rms.nsw.gov.au</p> <p>More information on property acquisition is available on the Roads and Maritime website:  <a href="http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roadprojects/community_environment/land_acquisition.html">www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roadprojects/community_environment/land_acquisition.html</a></p>
Other comments	
<p>Nowra local road network issues need to be addressed including the width of residential roads.</p>	<p>The width of residential roads in Nowra is beyond the scope of the Nowra Bridge project; however Roads and Maritime works closely with Shoalhaven City Council on many issues and this feedback will be discussed.</p>
<p>The project needs to consider the heavy reliance on car use in the area as a result of a poor public transport network.</p>	<p>The primary objective of the Nowra bridge project is to address maintenance issues on the existing bridge. As part of this project, Roads and Maritime is working with Transport for NSW and Shoalhaven City Council on a solution that will cater for differing transport needs of the community. This includes options that consider integration with a future extension of the South Coast Rail line across the Shoalhaven River.</p>
<p>Future community information sessions should be more widely advertised.</p>	<p>Roads and Maritime aims to ensure that the entire community is aware of progress of the road projects, including extensively advertising community sessions when they occur. The November / December community drop-in sessions in 2013 were advertised by a number of channels including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A letter to all residents, businesses and post office boxes in the Nowra/Bomaderry areas (postcodes 2540 and 2541).</li> </ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emails to stakeholders registered on the project database.</li> <li>• Advertisements in local papers in the two weeks leading up to the sessions.</li> <li>• Venue dates and times published on the Roads and Maritime project website.</li> </ul> <p>Roads and Maritime considers the community to be an essential part of the Nowra Bridge project. Community members interested in being kept up to date by email can register for project updates by sending an email to <a href="mailto:nowrabridgeproject@rms.nsw.gov.au">nowrabridgeproject@rms.nsw.gov.au</a></p>
<p>The Nowra Bridge project should be prioritised ahead of the Foxground and Berry bypass and Berry to Bomaderry upgrade projects.</p>	<p>The Foxground and Berry bypass project is fully funded and is due to commence construction in the near future. Construction timing for the Berry to Bomaderry upgrade project has not yet been determined. Decisions around which of the road projects in the area will be constructed first are based on state-wide priorities and readiness to proceed. In the meantime it is appropriate that Roads and Maritime proceed to develop a preferred option for the Nowra Bridge project.</p>
<p>Roads and Maritime should consider placing a toll on the bridge crossing to reduce congestion.</p>	<p>At this stage a toll is not being considered as an option for the Nowra Bridge project.</p>
<p>There should be council briefings throughout key stages of the project's development.</p>	<p>Roads and Maritime consider Shoalhaven City Council to be an important stakeholder in this important project for Nowra, and will continue to work closely with council.</p>
<p>The project should recognise and ensure consistency with the <i>Nowra CBD Transport Strategy</i> and <i>Nowra CBD (East) Road Network Strategy</i>, adopted by Council and Roads and Maritime in 2007.</p>	<p>Roads and Maritime will continue to work with Council to ensure that integrated planning occurs.</p>
<p>The possibility of a fault line along the Shoalhaven riverbed should be investigated.</p>	<p>At this stage, preliminary geotechnical investigations have concentrated on review of the data collected during construction of the northbound bridge. Over water geotechnical investigations are likely to start once a preferred location for any new river crossing is identified. Any geotechnical issues identified as a result of future investigations will need to be considered during the design stage.</p>