

Chapter 3 Consultation

Community consultation has played an integral role in the development of the route options for the Proposal. The approach to community consultation is described in this chapter as well as the various consultation activities implemented during the preparation of the EIS. Issues raised by the community have been progressively addressed in the route development, route selection and environmental assessment phases.

3.1 Approach to consultation

The approach to community consultation for the Proposal was designed to actively involve local residents and other interested parties throughout the study process. The community consultation process was implemented generally in accordance with the sequence shown in Figure 3-1.

The main objectives of the community involvement strategy were:

- to inform the community of the purpose, timing and main steps in the route selection study and EIS preparation for the Proposal
- to actively involve the community in all aspects of the study
- to define the public (and government) perception of key issues prior to detailed study and analysis of route options
- to incorporate issues raised by the community into the evaluation of route options and EIS preparation
- to respond to community concerns and acknowledge submissions provided by special interest groups
- to liaise with the local Aboriginal community
- to advise the community of the main conclusions and recommendations arising from the route selection study and EIS preparation.

To assist in the achievement of these objectives, a range of consultation activities was implemented to foster two-way communication with the community living, working or visiting the study area and other interested parties. These activities have involved a 'team approach' by RTA officers and the Arup Study Team (see Appendix D).

3.2 Community consultation activities

3.2.1 Community Involvement Plan

A Community Involvement Plan (CIP) was initially prepared in August 2000 for this Proposal to govern and maximise opportunities for all potentially affected property owners or occupants and the wider community to comment on and become involved in the Proposal. After the announcement of the Preferred Option, a supplementary review of the CIP was carried out in April 2002.

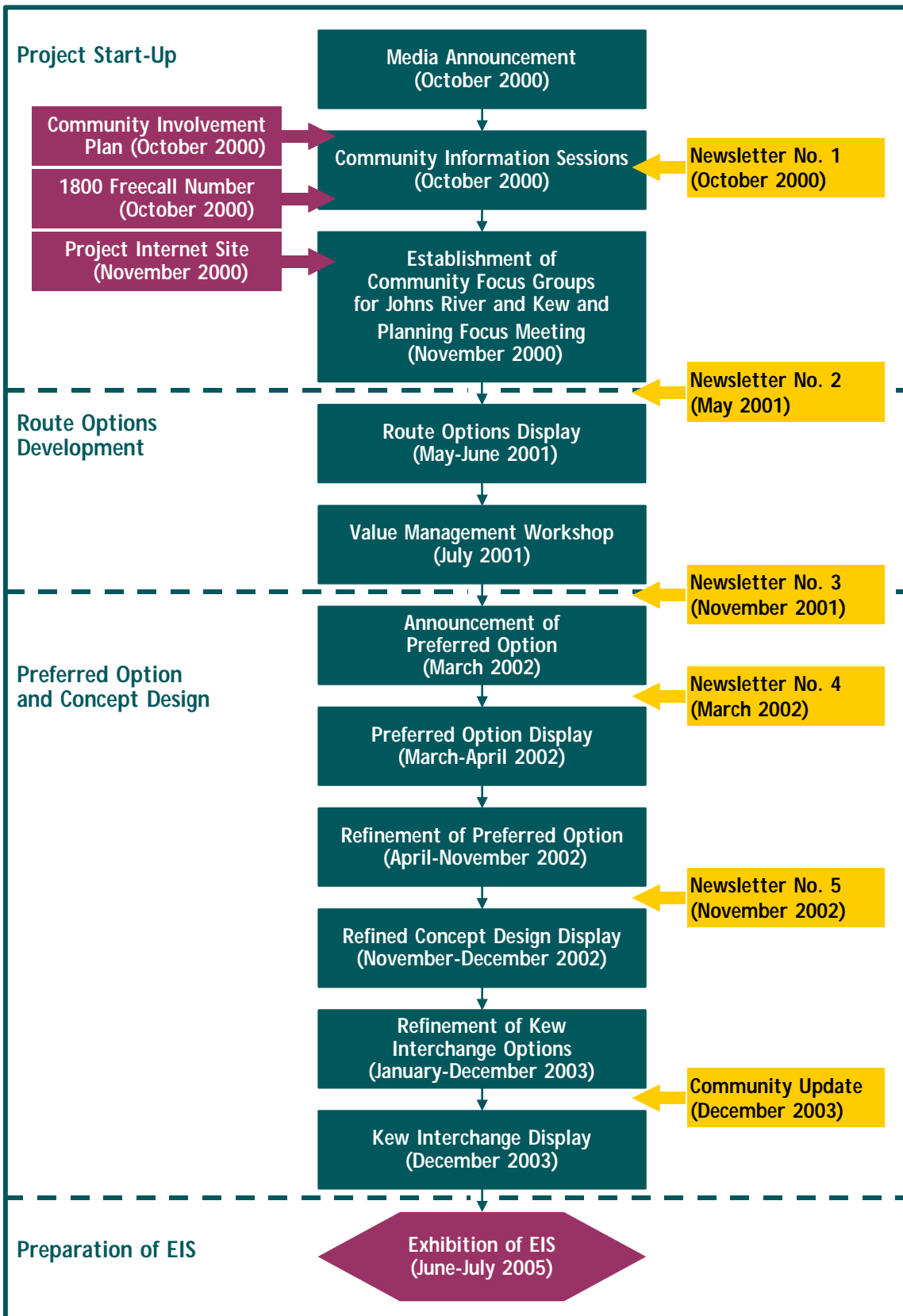


Figure 3-1 Steps in the community consultation process

3.2.2 Proposal inquiry line

A Proposal inquiry line (Freecall 1800 353 670) has been in operation since October 2000. A total of 90 calls were made to this 'hotline' up to the end of January 2005. All calls to the inquiry line were logged and personal response time of not more than one working day applied to the calls received. Increased use of the inquiry line generally coincided with release of a newsletter or Community Update (see Section 3.2.4) or the staging of a public exhibition (see Section 3.2.7). The main topics raised by callers to the inquiry line, in order of frequency, were:

- requests for information/newsletters
- individual or small group opinions on route options or related issues
- issues related to the Community Focus Groups
- comments about the length of time taken over the Route Selection Study.

3.2.3 Internet site

An internet site link was set up in November 2001 and has been progressively updated throughout the Proposal's development.

3.2.4 Project newsletters and community updates

Since the start of the Highway upgrade study, five project newsletters and one community update have been prepared and distributed to all households and businesses in the study area as well as to other interest groups.

The issue date and content of these newsletters is noted in Table 3-1. Each newsletter or community update provided contact details for both the Proposal inquiry line and the RTA's Project Manager.

A further community update will be issued in conjunction with display of this EIS.

3.2.5 Community and other meetings

Planning Focus Meeting

A Planning Focus Meeting was held at the start of the route development phase at the Hastings Council Chambers on 12 October 2000. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Study Team, Local Government (Greater Taree and Hastings Councils), and representatives from the following NSW government agencies:

- former Department of Land and Water Conservation (now DIPNR)
- former NSW NPWS and EPA (now DEC)
- former NSW Fisheries (now part of Department of Primary Industries (DPI))
- Transgrid
- NSW Rural Fire Service
- NSW State Forests
- NSW Waterways.

Invitations were extended to representatives of Planning NSW (now part of DIPNR), Environment Australia (now DEH), NSW Department of Agriculture, Rail Access Corporation (now RailCorp), National Roads & Motorists Association and the Australian Heritage Commission. No representatives of these bodies attended the meeting.

Table 3-1 Date and content of project newsletters

Title	Issue date	Main topics addressed
Newsletter No. 1	October 2000	Scope and timetable for the study Study team introduced Community involvement opportunities Advance notice of Community Information Session Freecall number, internet access details Explanation of study process
Newsletter No. 2	May 2001	Comments on upgrade options Next steps in the process Community involvement
Newsletter No. 3	November 2001	Proposal update Feedback on the Route Options Display Value Management Workshop Evaluation of Route Options Undertaking of ecological surveys Description of RTA Land Acquisition Policy What happens next?
Newsletter No. 4	March 2002	Details relating to the selection of the preferred option Announcement of the display of the preferred option Notice of community involvement and display locations and timings What happens next?
Newsletter No. 5	November 2002	Proposal update Announcement of the display of the Refined Concept Notice of community involvement and display locations and timings What happens next?
Community Update	December 2003	Proposal update Announcement of the Public Display for the interchange options at Kew Notice of community involvement and display locations and timings What happens next?

The main issues raised at the Planning Focus Meeting were:

- access protocol to private and State owned land
- design parameters regarding the 1:100 year flood levels north of Kew and the 1:20 year flood level to the south of Kew, and the unabated passage of flood waters within the study area
- bridge design, particularly the alignment of piers.

A subsequent meeting with relevant agencies was held at Hastings Council Chamber on 5 April 2002 to discuss issues that would assist the preparation of the Director-General's EIS requirements by DIPNR.

Community Information Sessions

Two Community Information Sessions were held soon after the announcement of the commencement of the Proposal. These were held at the Johns River Community Hall on 11 November 2000 and the Camden Haven Golf Club, Kew on 12 November 2000.

The purposes of the sessions were:

- to introduce key members of the RTA and Study team
- to inform the community of the purpose, scope and timing of the study
- to seek initial comments on major issues.

These sessions were attended by approximately 50 people at Johns River and 75 people at Kew, together with 10 people from the RTA and the Study Team. The outcomes of the sessions were:

- agreement to the establishment of Community Focus Groups
- development of relationships with relevant interest groups.

3.2.6 Community Focus Groups

The establishment of Community Focus Groups (CFGs) for both the Johns River and Kew communities, as announced at the Community Information Sessions, had the objective of facilitating input from the local communities on issues relevant to Proposal development and dissemination of information on the progress of the Proposal to the community.

The CFGs comprised people selected to represent the range of local community members who had an interest in the Proposal. The Johns River CFG had seven members and the Kew CFG had sixteen members. Between December 2000 and March 2002, six separate meetings of each CFG were held. After the announcement of the preferred option, five combined meetings were held (with the agreement of all CFG members) between March 2002 and December 2003.

Seven members from the CFGs participated in the Value Management Workshop held on 24 and 25 July 2001 (see Section 3.7).

3.2.7 Public displays

Prior to exhibition of the EIS for public comment, there have been four information displays at different stages of Proposal development:

- route options
- preferred option
- refined concept
- Kew interchange options.

These displays are discussed below.

Route options display

The route options identified for the Proposal were displayed in Johns River and Kew over three weeks between 12 May and 1 June 2001.

In Johns River, the display was at the general store on the Pacific Highway and in Kew it was at the Kew Visitor Information Centre. Supplementary displays were at Laurieton Library and the Motor Registries at Port Macquarie, Taree and Wauchope. The display presented large-scale plans (overlain on recent aerial photographs) of each of the six draft upgrade options (see Chapter 5), together with a description of the key features of each option and a summary of the main advantages and disadvantages of each option. Visitors to the displays were provided with a summary of the exhibited information.

Approximately 200 people visited the displays and they were mostly drawn from the local Johns River, Kew, Kendall, Laurieton and Herons Creek areas. Attendees were invited to submit comments on the exhibited options. Representatives of the RTA and the Study Team attended both main displays on two occasions to answer questions and to discuss issues associated with particular options. The staffed displays at Johns River were held in the Community Hall and included a Saturday that coincided with the well-attended Johns River Community Market (held in and around the Hall).

A total of 107 submissions was received. Of these, 70% were from the immediate project area (i.e. Kendall, Laurieton, Johns River, Kew and Herons Creek) and a further 20% were from localities in the surrounding region, generally from the Taree to Port Macquarie area.

A total of 411 issues was raised with many submissions raising multiple issues in relation to one or more aspects of the Proposal. In short, social and business effects (21%) were the most commonly raised issues, followed by noise and vibration (13%), and land and property acquisition (10%). Table 3–2 summarises the issues raised in the submissions.

Table 3–2 Route options display - issues raised in submissions and source of submissions

Main issues		Submission source location	
Social and business effects	21%	Kendall	22%
Noise and vibration	13%	Taree-Port Macquarie area	20%
Land and property acquisition	10%	Laurieton	19%
Safety	8%	Johns River	12%
Planning and land use	8%	Kew	11%
Property or local access	8%	Herons Creek	6%
Engineering design	7%	Other	10%
Visual impacts and urban design	5%		

Preferred option display

The preferred option for the Proposal was displayed at Johns River and Kew and other local and regional locations between 25 March 2002 and 26 April 2002. Newsletter No. 4 was distributed to the community and other interest groups in March 2002 providing information on the preferred option, inviting comment and detailing the display locations and times.

Refined concept display

The refined concept display was held between 27 November 2002 and 13 December 2002. The display presented plans and illustrations of the refined concept design, the proposed overpass at Stewarts River Road and details of the proposed carriageways, intersections, earthworks and arrangements for local access.

Kew interchange display

Concept designs for an interchange at Ocean Drive (Option 1) and interchanges north and south of Kew (Option 2) were publicly displayed between 2 and 19 December 2003. Detail included proposed road boundaries, locations for noise mitigation measures, as well as artist's impressions.

3.3 Survey of businesses in Kew and Johns River

Surveys of businesses in Johns River and Kew were conducted during the preparation of the EIS - the first survey was conducted in 2001 during the Options Development phase and the second in June 2002 after the announcement of the preferred option. The purposes of the surveys were:

- to consult directly with local traders on their attitudes to the Proposal
- to obtain data as a basis for defining the local business profile for the study area
- to provide a basis for assessing the impact of the Proposal on the local business communities.

The key findings of these surveys are presented in Chapter 17.

3.4 Consultation with property owners

On request or in relation to technical investigations, meetings and/or telephone discussions have been held with individual landowners. In the case of landowners whose land may have been directly affected by one or more of the upgrade options, the discussions generally covered a range of issues relating to the existing or future use of the land or the physical characteristics of the land.

After the announcement of the preferred option, meetings were held with all potentially directly affected property owners to discuss relevant issues including the RTA's Property Acquisition Process. These meetings were attended by RTA and Study Team representatives, (including an RTA officer experienced in the property acquisition process).

3.5 Survey of highway users

Surveys of highway users travelling through Johns River and Kew were conducted in May and June 2002. The principal objective of these surveys was to gain a better understanding of why travellers choose to stop at either of these two townships. Interviews were conducted with non-local highway users as follows:

- Johns River – 25 interviews held on 31 May and 1 June 2002
- Kew – 122 interviews held on 31 May, 1 June and 19 June 2002.

The results of these surveys are presented in Chapter 17.

3.6 Consultation with government agencies

Initial letter requests were sent to relevant statutory agencies seeking advice on the requirements for the preparation of the EIS. These initial requests followed the Planning Focus Meeting and were also supplemented by a number of direct discussions (telephone and face-to-face).

Table 3–3 presents a summary of the issues raised by relevant agencies.

Consultation with government agencies that own or manage land within the study area and/or have infrastructure or other responsibilities within the study area occurred progressively through the route development study, concept design, and EIS preparation. In particular, details of existing services that may be affected by the preferred option were sought from the relevant utility providers (see Chapter 6).

Table 3-3 Issues raised by government agencies

Government agency	Issue raised	Relevant section of this EIS
State Government		
Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (formerly Planning NSW and DLWC)	<p>Issues to be addressed in the EIS include erosion and sediment control, groundwater, flooding, riparian zones and clearing of native vegetation, acid sulfate soils, fuel dumps, Crown Land and relevant statutory approvals.</p> <p>The EIS should be prepared in accordance with the requirements of <i>EIS Guideline Roads & Related Facilities - Specific Requirements for an EIS</i> (NSW DIPNR 1996)..</p> <p>Specific issues requiring careful consideration include impacts on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water quality associated with bridge construction over the Stewarts River and Camden Haven River, potential disturbance of acid sulfate soils and construction adjacent to SEPP 14 wetlands and Watson Taylors Lake • construction and operation noise • contaminated land, particularly at a former service station site located adjacent to Herons Creek Public School • land use <p>Proposal at waterway crossings should be environmentally (fish) friendly.</p>	Various
Department of Environment & Conservation (former EPA and NPWS)	<p>Assessment should be in accordance with provisions under <i>EIS Guideline Roads & Related Facilities - Specific Requirements for an EIS</i> (NSW DIPNR 1996).</p> <p>Specific issues to be addressed in the EIS should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local air quality • noise and vibration • soil and water management • waste management <p>Water quality monitoring should include several runs to allow for seasonal variations.</p> <p>Concern regarding impacts from Proposal on Kew/Kendall Treatment Works currently under construction for adjacent effluent reuse areas.</p> <p>Pylons in creek beds to be avoided if possible.</p> <p>Road corridors should be wide enough to provide adequate room for all requirements including stockpiles, water quality ponds, compounds etc.</p>	Various
Department of Primary Industries (former NSW Fisheries)	<p>The EIS should document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the range of aquatic flora and fauna species, habitat types including fish habitat and areas of conservation significance potentially affected by the Proposal • potential occurrence of threatened species listed under the FM Act 1994 	Chapter 11

Government agency	Issue raised	Relevant section of this EIS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extent and area of acid sulfate and potential acid sulfate soils • number and type of waterway crossings • potential impacts on hydrology and flooding • any existing blockages to fish passage and connectivity of fish habitats • relevant licences and permits that may need to be obtained under the FM Act 1994 	
State Forests	<p>Enquired into the process that would be followed for access to private and State owned property.</p> <p>Raised the concern that public works are constantly eroding the land base held by State Forests and that compensation for loss of forest areas under the jurisdiction of State Forests has been undervalued in the past.</p>	Chapter 16
	<p>Advised that forest product appears to be undervalued in the valuation process.</p>	Chapter 17
NSW Waterways	<p>A potential hazard to navigation may result where the piers of multiple bridges across a waterway are not aligned.</p>	Chapter 6
	<p>Raised the issue that two old piers and demolished bridge structure should be removed from the Camden Haven River.</p>	Chapters 6 and 11
Local Government		
Hastings Council	<p>Ensure safe pedestrian crossings in the vicinity of Kendall High School</p>	Chapters 6, 16
	<p>Provision for Council's plans for a regional cycleway route along the highway north of Kew to be considered in the Proposal design.</p>	Chapter 6
	<p>Proposal to ensure the safe passage of floodwaters across the Camden Haven River floodplain, and no net increase in flood levels and costs.</p>	Chapters 6, 9
	<p>Visual impacts of the Proposal along the western fringes of Watson Taylor Lake to be addressed.</p>	Chapter 13
Greater Taree City Council	<p>Identification of the contact point for media within the Study Team was requested.</p>	
	<p>Enquired whether a database of questions and answers would be kept in order to maintain consistency when enquiries are received from the public.</p>	
	<p>The Proposal design for the passage of floodwaters should include efforts to avoid withholding floodwaters on agricultural land for extended periods.</p>	Chapter 9
	<p>Enquired as to the success of fauna underpasses.</p>	Chapter 10
	<p>The use of updated tenure maps for the Proposal was raised.</p>	

3.7 Value Management Study

A Value Management Workshop was held at Port Macquarie on 23 and 24 July 2001 and was attended by 35 participants representing the following groups:

- RTA - 7
- Arup - 5
- Specialists - 5 (Biosis Research, Navin Officer, EDAW, ERM)
- Greater Taree City Council - 2
- Hastings Council - 1
- NSW Police - 1
- Community - 7
- RailCorp (RIC) - 1
- DEC (EPA and NPWS) - 2
- DIPNR (DLWC) - 1
- DPI (NSW Fisheries) - 1
- Taree-Purfleet LALC - 1
- Biripi LALC - 1

This workshop focussed principally on the issue of route selection and the main conclusions of the workshop were:

- retention of Kew as a highway service town
- a bypass of Kew required convenient and easy access to and from the town centre
- further investigate proposed amendments for Options J-A1, J-B1, K-A1, K-A2, K-E1, K-E2 and K-F1
- conduct Native Title and Land Rights searches for each of the feasible route options
- ongoing consultation with Councils, community and agencies such as RailCorp to be maintained, particularly during the design development process
- Options J-C, K-B, K-C and K-D do not meet Proposal objectives.

3.8 Key issues raised in the consultation process

During the upgrade study, there has been considerable community interest, particularly from residents of Johns River and Kew as well as rural landholders.

From the community responses, a number of key issues can be identified in relation to the Proposal. Table 3-4 indicates the relevant section of the EIS where the issues raised are addressed.

Table 3–4 Community issues and their consideration in the study process

Issue	How considered in the study process	Relevant section of the EIS
Impact of proposed bypass on viability of businesses in Johns River and Kew	Development of upgrade options and interchange arrangements that facilitate continued and easy access to the town centres of Johns River and Kew. Installation of high profile advisory signage to raise awareness for highway users of services and facilities available at Johns River and Kew.	Chapter 17
Changes to/reductions in access to and from properties abutting the highway	Inclusion in options, where possible, of direct property access and grade-separated vehicular and pedestrian access	Chapter 6
Loss of land through acquisition and effect on land use	Development of options that require minimum landtake and avoid environmentally sensitive areas, where practicable. Land acquisitions would be undertaken in accordance with the <i>Land Acquisition Policy Statement (RTA 1999a)</i> .	Chapters 5, 6, 16, Appendix B
Changes in the noise environment of residential and rural properties	Development of an option that provides optimum conditions for vehicle operation and thus lower noise emissions. Provision of suitable noise attenuation measures to reduce noise impacts associated with highway traffic.	Chapters 6, 19
Effect on approved but not fully developed large lot subdivisions at Kew and Johns River	Development of options that limit impacts associated with land acquisition.	Chapters 6, 16, 17
Changes in residential amenity resulting from bypasses of Johns River and Kew	Development of options that limit impacts on residential amenity.	Chapters 6, 13, 19
Impact of dust 'fall-out' from construction activities on the water quality of rainwater tanks at Johns River residences	Application of dust suppression measures during road construction. Maintenance of rainwater tanks involving regular cleaning of tanks.	Chapter 12