



Transport
Roads & Maritime
Services

HIGHWAY SERVICE CENTRES ALONG THE PACIFIC HIGHWAY

Policy Review

MAY 2014

CONTENTS

1. Introduction
 - 1.1. Purpose of this discussion paper
 - 1.2. Historical basis for current policy
 - 1.3. Current policy and its implementation
 - 1.4. Defining a highway service centre
 - 1.5. Roads and Maritime Services requirements for highway service centres
2. Upgrading the Pacific Highway
 - 2.1. The Pacific Highway upgrade program
 - 2.2. The need for highway service centres
3. Review of highway service centre policy
 - 3.1. Why a policy review is needed
 - 3.2. The current status of highway service centre development
 - 3.3. Proposed new policy
4. Implementation

References

Appendix A – Minister's Section 117 Direction 5.4 – Commercial and Retail Development along the Pacific Highway, North Coast.

Appendix B – Table of highway service centre sites.

Appendix C – Map of Pacific Highway showing proposed highway service centre sites.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of this discussion paper

The purpose of this discussion paper is to seek feedback from the community on the NSW Government's review of highway service centre sites along the Pacific Highway between the Queensland border and Hexham. The paper documents current policy and why it needs review. Proposals for changes to the policy are included. All proposed changes are minor and are consistent with the final design of the upgraded Pacific Highway.

1.2 Historical basis for current policy

The current policy emerged in 1995 when the then Department of Urban Affairs and Planning published the results of research into the very large number of commercial/retail enterprises that had direct access to the Pacific Highway in out of town situations (Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, July 1995). With the Highway upgrade program in its early stages, the department and the then Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA), now Roads and Maritime Services (Roads and Maritime), considered that policy was required to protect the upgraded highway's safety and efficiency, and the governments' considerable investment in it.

In 1998, the department published a discussion paper which included draft policy aimed at keeping retailing activity within settlements, where it is best placed to serve the community, but at the same time providing for strategically placed highway service centres.

The policy was finalised and implemented via Ministerial direction to councils in 1998. The policy, and direction, has since been reviewed several times to coincide with finalisation of highway design and to reflect the outcomes of further research, principally a report prepared by ARUP consultants, commissioned by Roads and Maritime Services.

1.3 Current policy and its implementation

The current policy is contained in a Ministerial Direction to councils, a copy of which can be viewed in Appendix A. Table 1 in Section 6 of the Direction identifies the locations where HSCs may be established, in summary: Chinderah, Ballina, Maclean, Woolgoolga, Kempsey, Port Macquarie (eastern side of Highway), Taree and Tomago. The Far North Coast and Mid North Coast regional strategies contain the same policy. Together, the Ministerial Direction and regional strategies provide the State's policy guidance to councils along the Pacific Highway in preparing their local plans.

The Mid North Coast Regional Strategy (p27) has an additional provision: "in the future, additional highway service centres could be located at Nambucca Heads (at the northern interchange) and Port Macquarie (on the western side of the Pacific Highway at the Oxley Highway interchange), subject to review of need by the Roads and Traffic Authority at a five year review of the Strategy". These two opportunities are part of the current review, in preparation for the scheduled review of the Mid North Coast Regional Strategy in 2014.

1.4 Defining a highway service centre

The definition used for a highway service centre is contained in the Government's Standard Instrument Local Environmental Plan:

A highway service centre means a building or place used to provide refreshments and vehicle services to highway users. It may include any one or more of the following:

- A restaurant or café
- Take away food and drink premises
- Service stations and facilities for emergency vehicle towing and repairs
- Parking for vehicles
- Rest areas and public amenities.

1.5 Additional requirements for highway service centres

Notwithstanding the definition in the standard Local Environmental Plan template, Roads and Maritime also requires, in addition to all of the above inclusions:

- That the centre is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- That all traffic arrangements are safe and efficient
- At least 25 heavy vehicle parking spaces (nominally to suit B-Doubles, with capacity to expand to cater for longer combinations in the future) be provided
- A number of parking spaces for recreation vehicles and coaches
- The provision of children's play areas and tourist information
- That use of toilets and other amenities be free of obligation to purchase goods or services
- Separate undercover fuel areas for heavy and light vehicles
- That no alcohol be sold on site.

2. UPGRADING THE PACIFIC HIGHWAY

2.1 The Pacific Highway upgrade program

The Pacific Highway upgrade is one of the largest road infrastructure projects in NSW. Upgrading new sections and carrying out safety improvements to the existing highway have brought major improvements to road conditions. These improvements will support regional development and provide:

- Safer travel
- Reduced travel times with improved transport efficiency
- More consistent and reliable travel
- Improved amenity for local communities.

As of the end of 2013, around 375 kilometres of the final 657 kilometre four lane divided road from Hexham to the Queensland border was complete. A further 150 kilometre of upgrade is either under construction or planned to be within the next year. Much of the current divided road is to a standard suitable for 100-110km/h travel, with sections of lower speed environment through Coffs Harbour, Heatherbrae and Coolongolook to remain until after the full length highway upgrade is completed. Ultimately though, these urban areas will also be bypassed.

2.2 The need for highway service centres

Traditionally, the Pacific Highway has passed through many north coast towns and villages which have provided services such as fuel and food to travellers. As each centre is bypassed by the new highway, travellers need to either leave the highway to obtain services in the bypassed centres, or make use of highway service centres. Provision of highway service centres encourages drivers to “stop, revive, survive” and take breaks when they recognise the warning signs of fatigue, which contributes significantly to travel safety and efficiency. It is therefore very important that highway service centres are provided at conveniently spaced centres along the route.

The sites selected for highway service centres are all close to bypassed towns so the economic benefits can remain with those centres.

3. REVIEW OF HIGHWAY SERVICE CENTRE POLICY

3.1 Why a policy review is needed

Since 1998, the Government's policy on highway service centres along the Pacific Highway has been updated to reflect progress in the highway's design and more detailed investigation of the original sites. A number of further updates are now needed, particularly regarding Chinderah, Maclean, Woolgoolga, Nambucca Heads, Port Macquarie and Tomago.

3.2 The current status of highway service centre development

So far, highway service centres outside of towns have been developed at Chinderah (eastern side of highway) and Taree (western side of highway). There is also a service centre on the eastern side of the highway at Port Macquarie, though this centre does not meet all Roads and Maritime's requirements for a full highway service centre.

Planning is advanced for development of highway service centres at Ballina (eastern side of Highway) and Kempsey (both sides of Highway).

More detail about the highway service centre sites is provided in Appendix B.

3.3 Proposed new policy

A number of amendments to the current policy are proposed to reflect the latest available design and site information. In summary, the following changes are proposed to the current policy:

- Chinderah – northbound highway service centre is proposed to be located on the western side of the highway at the interchange with Tweed Valley Way instead of in the urban area of Chinderah.
- Maclean – highway service centre to be allowed at Maclean's southern interchange.
- Woolgoolga – highway service centre to be allowed at Woolgoolga's northern interchange at Arrawarra. Roads and Maritime has identified its rest area site on the eastern side of the new highway as a possible future highway service centre
- Nambucca Heads – highway service centre may be established at Nambucca Heads' northern interchange. Roads and Maritime has identified its proposed rest area site on the western side as a possible future highway service centre. It should be noted that a change to the current policy is not strictly required as the Nambucca Shire Local Environment Plan already allows such development at this location
- Port Macquarie – a highway service centre may be established on the western side of the Pacific Highway at the Pacific/Oxley highways interchange (in addition to the current eastern side highway service centre).

Further review is likely to be required about the proposed Tomago highway service centre site with the opening of the Hunter Expressway and the likelihood of a further highway service centre near its intersection with the F3 Freeway at Cooranbong. Should that highway service centre proceed, then Tomago may not be the best location for a highway service centre, albeit that the F3 to Raymond Terrace project would bypass a substantial range of fuel and food service outlets.

Taking into consideration the entire Pacific Highway journey from Sydney to Queensland, it is also acknowledged that twin highway service centres exist at Warnervale (Wyong), and that another highway service centre has been approved for development at Cooranbong and may be developed in

the future. More detail about the proposed policy changes, including the reasons change is needed, is provided in Appendix B.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

The revised policy on highway service centres will be implemented through the proposed Regional Growth Plans for the Lower Hunter and North Coast.

As an interim measure, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure may update the current direction to councils which defines the policy for commercial and retail development along the Pacific Highway (Minister for Planning, 2009).

Roads and Maritime will also implement the revised policy when it provides advice on development applications that have impact on the Pacific Highway.

Councils will use the policy to encourage development of highway service centres in the strategically identified sites through their local plans.

REFERENCES

Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (1995): North Coast Population and Development Monitor No.17.

Department of Urban Affairs and Planning & Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW (1998): Planning Policy on Commercial/Retail Development Along the Pacific Highway from the Queensland Border to Hexham.

Department of Planning (2006): Far North Coast Regional Strategy.

Department of Planning (2009): Mid North Coast Regional Strategy.

Minister for Planning (2009): Section 117 Direction 5.4 – Commercial and Retail Development along the Pacific Highway, North Coast [a planning direction to Pacific Highway-fronting councils].

APPENDIX A

Minister's Section 117 Direction 5.4 – Commercial and Retail Development along the Pacific Highway, North Coast.

Objectives

- (1) The objectives for managing commercial and retail development along the Pacific Highway are:
 - (a) To protect the Pacific Highway's function, that is to operate as the North Coast's primary inter- and intra-regional road traffic route
 - (b) To prevent inappropriate development fronting the highway
 - (c) To protect public expenditure invested in the Pacific Highway
 - (d) To protect and improve highway safety and highway efficiency
 - (e) To provide for the food, vehicle service and rest needs of travellers on the highway, and
 - (f) To reinforce the role of retail and commercial development in town centres, where they can best serve the populations of the towns.

Where this Direction applies

- (2) This Direction applies to those council areas on the North Coast that the Pacific Highway traverses, being those council areas between Port Stephens Shire Council and Tweed Shire Council, inclusive.

When this Direction applies

- (3) This Direction applies when a relevant planning authority prepares a planning proposal for land in the vicinity of the existing and/or proposed alignment of the Pacific Highway.

What a relevant planning authority must do if this Direction applies

- (4) A planning proposal that applies to land located on "within town" segments of the Pacific Highway must provide that:
 - (a) New commercial or retail development must be concentrated within distinct centres rather than spread along the highway
 - (b) Development with frontage to the Pacific Highway must consider impact the development has on the safety and efficiency of the highway
 - (c) For the purposes of this paragraph, "within town" means areas which, prior to the draft local environmental plan, have an urban zone (eg: "village", "residential", "tourist", "commercial", "industrial", etc) and where the Pacific Highway speed limit is less than 80km/hour.
- (5) A planning proposal that applies to land located on "out-of-town" segments of the Pacific Highway must provide that:
 - (a) New commercial or retail development must not be established near the Pacific Highway if this proximity would be inconsistent with the objectives of this Direction
 - (b) Development with frontage to the Pacific Highway must consider impact the development has on the safety and efficiency of the highway
 - (c) For the purposes of this paragraph, "out-of-town" means areas which, prior to the draft local environmental plan, do not have an urban zone (eg: "village", "residential", "tourist", "commercial", "industrial", etc) or are in areas where the Pacific Highway speed limit is 80km/hour or greater.

- (6) Notwithstanding the requirements of paragraphs (4) and (5), the establishment of highway service centres may be permitted at the localities listed in Table 1, provided that the Roads and Traffic Authority is satisfied that the highway service centre(s) can be safely and efficiently integrated into the Highway interchange(s) at those localities. For the purposes of this paragraph, a highway service centre has the same meaning as is contained in the Standard Instrument (Local Environmental Plans) Order 2006.

Table 1: Highway service centres that can proceed

Town	Locality
Chinderah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinderah Bay Road interchange (southbound) • Western side of highway in urban zone (northbound).
Ballina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teven Road interchange.
Maclean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern interchange near the Clarence River or southern interchange near Ferry Park, but not both.
Woolgoolga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern interchange at Arrawarra or southern interchange south of Woolgoolga, but not both.
Kempsey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Kempsey interchange.
Port Macquarie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxley Highway interchange, east of the Pacific Highway.
Taree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old Bar Road interchange.
Tomago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the vicinity of Tomago Road / Southern Heatherbrae.

Consistency

- (7) A planning proposal may be inconsistent with the terms of this Direction only if the relevant planning authority can satisfy the Director-General of the Department of Planning (or an officer of the Department nominated by the Director-General) that the provisions of the planning proposal that are inconsistent are of minor significance.

Direction 5.4 – issued 29 November 2009

APPENDIX B

Table of highway service centre (HSC) sites

HSC locality	Current planning framework	Current development status	Proposed policy changes
Chinderah	HSC permitted at the Chinderah Bay Road interchange for southbound traffic. A second HSC permitted for northbound traffic on the western side of the highway in the urban zone.	A southbound HSC is developed and operational on the eastern side of the highway. Investigations indicate that the proposed site for a northbound HSC on the western side of the highway is not practicable: inadequate space and proximity to residential development. A planning proposal to review the Tweed Local Environmental Plan to allow a HSC south of Chinderah is under way.	Northbound HSC to be located on the western side of the highway at the interchange with Tweed Valley Way, instead of in the urban area of Chinderah.
Ballina	HSC permitted either or both sides of the highway at the Teven Road intersection.	A HSC has been approved on the eastern side of the highway, most suited to southbound traffic. It has not yet been constructed.	No change to current policy.
Maclean	HSC permitted either or both sides of the highway at either the northern interchange near the Clarence River or southern interchange near Ferry Park, but not both.	The design of the new highway's bridge over the Clarence River has now being determined. The design would make access to a HSC at the northern interchange problematic.	Any HSC to be located at Maclean's southern interchange.
Woolgoolga	HSC permitted either or both sides of the Highway at either the northern interchange at Arrawarra or southern interchange south of Woolgoolga, but not both.	Roads and Maritime has carried out a public consultation process to determine if the northern or southern interchange would be favoured. Roads and Maritime determined that the HSC will be at the northern interchange. There is only one suitable site, which is in public ownership. Roads and Maritime has designed the new interchange to include a rest area and space for a future HSC.	HSC able to be located at Woolgoolga's northern interchange at Arrawarra. These can be situated on either or both the eastern and western sides of the new Highway.

HSC locality	Current planning framework	Current development status	Proposed policy changes
Nambucca Heads	Current policy does not permit a HSC at Nambucca Heads. However the Mid North Coast Regional Strategy provides that a HSC could be located at the northern interchange, subject to a review of need by the Roads and Maritime at a five year review of the Strategy (noting the current LEP provisions already allow HSC development at this location).	Roads and Maritime has designed the new interchange to include a rest area and space for a future HSC.	HSCs able to be established on either or both sides of the highway at the Nambucca Heads interchange.
Kempsey	HSC permitted either or both sides of the highway at the South Kempsey interchange.	A development application has been approved for a HSC on the eastern side of the highway. A HSC is permissible with consent on the western side of the highway.	No change to current policy.
Port Macquarie	The current service centre on the eastern side of the highway at the Oxley Highway interchange may be augmented so that it meets Roads and Maritime requirements for a full HSC. Current policy does not permit a HSC on the western side of the Pacific/Oxley highways interchange, however the Mid North Coast Regional Strategy provides that a HSC could be located there, subject to a review of need by the Roads and Maritime at a five year review of the Strategy.	A service centre exists on the eastern side of the Highway at the Oxley Highway interchange, however this is not considered to be a proper HSC as it does not provide all the services required by Roads and Maritime.	A HSC may be established on the western side of the Pacific Highway at the Pacific/Oxley highways interchange (in addition to the current eastern side HSC provision).
Taree	HSC permitted either or both sides of the highway at the southern (Old Bar Road) interchange.	A northbound HSC is developed and operational on the western side of the highway.	No change to current policy.

HSC locality	Current planning framework	Current development status	Proposed policy changes
Tomago	HSC permitted either or both sides of the highway in the vicinity of Tomago Road/Southern Heatherbrae.	There is no current proposal for the highway upgrade that would lead to requirement for HSC facilities. Further review of this site is also required in response to possible new HSC on the F3 freeway in the vicinity of the Hunter Expressway connection.	No change to current policy at this stage, but further review undertaken in consideration of any new services on the F3 freeway.

APPENDIX C

Map of Pacific Highway showing proposed highway service centre sites

