

EcoNetwork Port Stephens

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Nelson Bay Road Upgrade: Williamtown to Bobs Farm Duplication – Route options

EcoNetwork Port Stephens

EcoNetwork Port Stephens represents the interests of around 70,000 people residing in Port Stephens LGA. Our vision is to develop ecologically sustainable communities existing in harmony with the natural environment. Our members include individuals and over 30 groups, affiliates and associates, within the Port Stephens area.

Introduction

EcoNetwork Port Stephens supports the submission of the [Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents Association](#) (TRRA). We agree with TRRA regarding insufficient information presented in many circumstances to enable informed community decision-making. EcoNetwork supports and will not reiterate the valid points TRRA raises. We will focus on the current ecological situation and future potential.

Ecological impact

We agree with TRRA that there is limited information provided about biodiversity, flooding and drainage, and landscape character impacts, and no information at all on the implications of climate change, including the predicted rise in sea level and potential impact of sand-dune migration likely to be exacerbated by more frequent and more intense storms.

We also note that no difference is flagged between the options in the ‘Flooding and drainage’ row and agree with TRRA that the community should have more information about the flooding/drainage implications of the different options *before* a route is selected.

Similarly, only limited information is provided on the biodiversity impacts. As indicated in the comparison table, Options 1 & 2 impact coastal wetlands while Option 3 avoids coastal wetlands. Furthermore the comparison table indicates “*All options avoid work within National Parks and*

State Conservation Areas, however, they are likely to have some impact on threatened species and ecological communities. “

Fragmentation and alienation of land in all options provided is of concern. Protected area estate, particularly as thin coastal strips, cannot survive as islands. Whether protected or public land, the value, quality and longevity for flora and fauna is dependent on the quality of surrounding lands. Fragmentation of coastal wetlands or alienation of coastal dunes and their associated forested hind dune from the hinterland, albeit farmland, is not desirable.

The project proponents, TNSW, should be presenting the likely impacts on threatened species and ecological communities, even if by link from the project web page. These should be a major consideration in decision-making for the preferred option, particularly if there is any differential impact on the habitat of any threatened species such as koalas, coastal emus, white-bellied sea-eagles, frogs and so forth.

Historically farmland was cleared, though now attitudes to wildlife enhancement through programs such as [Land for Wildlife](#) and Landcare, cultural norms are changing with recognition that farms are important in wildlife conservation. Areas in this vicinity are suitable for planting with preferred feed trees for threatened koalas and potential for the endangered coastal emu which used to be prolific along NSW coast. [Port Stephens LGA coastal emus](#) are endangered and one of only two populations in northern NSW. Coastal forested floodplain such as swamp oak and paperbark forests, heathlands and dry sclerophyll forests are among the important ecological communities for emus and much of these coincide with koala friendly communities – all efforts should be made not to further endanger existing populations and to manage and reduce threats to enhance future rehabilitating populations.

Fauna connection underpasses and overpasses should be included in the design for all options. Farmland and unprotected public land have the potential for corridor plantings and connectivity with tracts of protected land which should not be negated by new roads without designs for the future wildlife considerations. [Land for Wildlife](#) is becoming increasingly important, especially as grants and other subsidies become mainstream to enhance our fragile natural systems. New roads through non-urban settings need to design for future biodiversity needs, protection and connectivity.

Conclusion

EcoNetwork Port Stephens supports the issues raised by [TRRA](#), and from our perspective, in particular, the lack of identification of threatened species and ecological communities. Such considerations should inform decision-making as to the preferred route.



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