

3 July 2016

David Loch
Senior Environment Assessment Officer
Project Assessments West
Environment Standards Division
Department of the Environment and Energy
GPO Box 787, Canberra ACT 2601

Dear David,

GREAT NORTHERN HIGHWAY UPGRADE – MUCHEA TO WUBIN

Subject: EPBC 2016/7761 (Walebing to Wubin) – Response to Public Submissions on the Preliminary Document.

The Preliminary Document was approved for publication and an advertisement inviting public comment on the Preliminary Document was run in the West Australian newspaper on 9 June 2017. The public comment period commenced on 9 June 2017 and ended at 5:00pm on 26 June 2017. Hardcopies of the Preliminary Document and the initial referral documents were made available at the Moora and Dalwallinu libraries and the Environmental Protection Authority Library in Perth. Electronic copies were available for download via the Main Roads WA website.

At the completion of the public comment period, a single submission was received. The complete submission (with identifying information redacted) is provided as Attachment A and a response to the submission is provided below.

Submission

Often the only remaining natural/indigenous flora and fauna present in these areas, are in these road (and also railway) verges. In some instances creating spectacular spring flowering displays.

Considering the whole scale clearing that seems to take place when our road department widens and insets overtaking lanes, I fear we will deplete the whole area of any pre (white) settlement vegetation.

It would seem to me that acquiring already cleared land from neighbouring farmers and land holders for road construction, would allow the conservation of these precarious strips of nature.

Main roads could also use there impressive rehabilitation techniques with provenance plants to enhance them even further.

With our limited understanding of the true value of some of these plants (potential medicinal qualities for instance) it would make sense to preserve them and increase them

Response

Main Roads WA acknowledges the value of roadside vegetation, particularly in the Wheatbelt region which has been extensively cleared for agriculture. In recognition of this, and as outlined in Section 2.2 of the referral form, Main Roads investigated various road design options and favoured the construction of a new carriageway adjacent to the existing Great Northern Highway (GNH) alignment in order to reduce impact to conservation significant habitat and priority flora species. Where significant rebuilding of the road was required the decision was made to acquire additional land from landowners adjacent to the existing GNH and construct a new alignment in previously cleared paddock. This avoided the need to clear the existing vegetation within the road reserve. In some locations, relocation of the road was not undertaken as this would have required a greater amount of native vegetation clearing than was required by widening the existing road.

Where clearing of native vegetation is required, the locations of Threatened and Priority flora species identified during ecological surveys were reviewed against the road design as it progressed. Where

practicable, the design was modified and areas of environmental conservation value and Threatened and Priority flora locations were avoided. This was not always achievable due to aspects such as the road geometry required to meet road safety needs, extent of certain patches of native vegetation and social/landowner impact considerations.

The landscape design for the project identifies a number of distinct flora species mixes for rehabilitation of the road corridor following construction. With the exception of town entrance statements, these mixes are of local provenance native flora species. Town entrance statements may include species which are not of local provenance (such as wildflowers from other areas of the State, or other flowering plants and trees) as a means to attract attention and encourage road users to visit the town.

We believe the above information addresses the concerns raised in the submission. Should you have any queries or require additional information, please contact Lisa Boulden via email (Lisa.Boulden@jacobs.com) or phone (08 9469 4667).

Yours Sincerely,

Lisa Boulden
Senior Environment and Heritage Advisor

Copies to: Marni Baetge (Main Roads WA)

Attachment 1 : Public Submissions Received

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 12 June 2017 1:54 PM
To: CLEMENTS Naomi (PM)
Subject: Great Northern Highway (Walebing to Wubin)

Dear Naomi,
This is a submission regarding the above road works and indeed any road works in areas, such as the wheat belt, where extensive broad scale clearing has taken place. Often the only remaining natural/indigenous flora and fauna present in these areas, are in these road (and also railway) verges. In some instances creating spectacular spring flowering displays.
Considering the whole scale clearing that seems to take place when our road department widens and insets overtaking lanes, I fear we will deplete the whole area of any pre (white) settlement vegetation.
It would seem to me that acquiring already cleared land from neighbouring farmers and land holders for road construction, would allow the conservation of these precarious strips of nature. Main roads could also use there impressive rehabilitation techniques with provenance plants to enhance them even further. With our limited understanding of the true value of some of these plants (potential medicinal qualities for instance) it would make sense to preserve them and increase them.

Yours sincerely,
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]