



Great Lakes Council

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**Great Lakes Highway  
Service Centre**

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Study and  
Strategy Report

**ARUP**

Great Lakes Council  
**Pacific Highway (SH 10), Great Lakes Local Government Area**  
Highway Service Centre Strategy

May 2004

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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AADT	Annual Average Daily Traffic
AADV	Average Annual Daily Vehicles
DA	Development Application
DCP	Development Control Plan
DIPNR	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EP&A Act	Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
ERM	Environmental Resource Management Pty Ltd
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development
GLC	Great Lakes Council
HCUSS	Hunter Coastal Urban Settlement Strategy
HREP	Hunter Regional Environmental Plan
HSC	Highway Service Centre
HST	Highway Service Town
LEP	Local Environmental Plan
LGA	Local Government Area
LPG	Liquid Petroleum Gas
PB	Parsons Brinkerhoff
RA	Rest Area
RTA	NSW Roads and Traffic Authority
SIP	Stakeholder Involvement Plan
TPB	Truck Parking Bay

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

The provision of highway service centres (HSC) and the role of highway service towns (HST) which have traditionally serviced the needs of travellers using the Pacific Highway (State Highway No. 10) between Sydney and Brisbane is critical to the long-term planning direction, functionality and economic vitality of the townships and communities through which it passes or bypasses.

Great Lakes Council (GLC) with support from the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) has commissioned Arup to prepare a Strategy that identifies and examines potential options for HSC development on the Pacific Highway as it passes through the Great Lakes Local Government Area (LGA) on the NSW mid-north coast (see **Figure 1**). The development of this Strategy is being managed by a Steering Committee comprising representatives from GLC and the RTA.

The principal aim of this Strategy is to determine whether viable options for HSC development exist along the Pacific Highway within the Great Lakes LGA and, if so, to provide a clear framework to guide such development. The Strategy also considers the role of Bulahdelah as a future HST in light of the proposed bypass currently under investigation by the RTA in order to determine whether Bulahdelah should be classified as a HST.

The Strategy is to have regard to the core objectives identified by GLC in the Study Brief as follows:

- To ensure commercial and retail development along the Pacific Highway corridor through the Great Lakes LGA is in accordance with all relevant environmental and planning legislation and state, regional and local planning requirements, in particular, Direction S28 under Section 117(2) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act 1979), otherwise known as the Minister's Direction;
- To protect and reinforce the role of Bulahdelah as a HST, if this is found to be appropriate;
- To strategically locate other HSCs along the Pacific Highway corridor within the Great Lakes LGA in order to:
  - Afford security to the Bulahdelah economy,
  - Safely and adequately provide essential services to the travelling public, and
  - Prevent a breakdown in the cohesion of existing urban centres in the Great Lakes area;
- To provide a greater level of certainty to the GLC, commercially interested parties and the community as to where future HSCs may be established along the Pacific Highway corridor as it passes through the Great Lakes LGA; and
- To identify options and a preferred course of action to give effect to the ultimate HSC Strategy.

**Figure 1**      **Location Plan**





## 1.2 Background

The \$2.2 billion Pacific Highway Upgrading Program, which is jointly funded by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments, has resulted in the progressive upgrade of significant sections of the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border (see **Photograph 1**). This Program is resulting in improved travel times and road safety conditions, altered driver behaviour in terms of the way drivers break their trips along the highway and is changing the dynamics of the relationships between the highway and the towns and settlements through which it has traditionally passed. In many of the towns along the highway and in some non-urban areas, a range of businesses has developed to meet the needs of various highway user groups. These businesses are heavily reliant on highway-related through traffic and upgrade proposals, particularly “out-of-town” bypass schemes can result in significant economic impacts especially if the loss of highway-related trade results in the closure of businesses within town centres. The cumulative nature of such impacts also affects the communities that provide the local employment base to support these businesses.

**Photograph 1 Looking north along the Bulahdelah to Coolongolook Upgrade section of the Pacific Highway**



The RTA is proposing to construct a 8.7km bypass at Bulahdelah, known as the Bulahdelah Upgrade project. Both GLC and RTA are acutely aware of the potential economic impacts that could arise from the bypass on the highway servicing function of the Bulahdelah township. Experience elsewhere in NSW and interstate in relation to the economic impact of highway bypasses indicates:

- Impacts can have significant effects on local economic and community factors; and
- Sound planning and other measures developed and implemented in advance, concurrent with and after the implementation of highway bypasses can aid in the reduction of potential economic impacts subject to prevailing circumstances.

Currently, approval has been granted for HSC developments on the Pacific Highway to the south of Tweed Heads and Taree. These have not yet been implemented fully, although it is understood following consultations with Greater Taree Council that minimum site preparatory works have been carried out.

Of paramount importance is reinforcement, if justified, of the highway servicing function of Bulahdelah, a role that it has performed since the 1960s following the re-routing of the Pacific Highway through the township. The economic future of this township will depend on the strategy and measures instated to preserve and reinforce the existing highway service function available at Bulahdelah to minimise any potential economic implications that may arise from the proposed Bulahdelah Upgrade project.

### 1.3 Need for HSC Strategy

The need for a HSC Strategy arose from the Bulahdelah Community Focus Group consultation process carried out as part of the Bulahdelah Upgrade project. GLC determined at its Ordinary Meeting on 6 June 2002 that a HSC Strategy would need to be prepared for the Pacific Highway corridor as it passes through the Great Lakes LGA. This meeting focussed on various aspects concerning the Bulahdelah Bypass project and the following resolution was reached:

As part of the EIS for the Bulahdelah Bypass, Council would like to see a highway service centre strategy prepared for the route of the Pacific Highway through the Great Lakes.

In accordance with this resolution, and following ongoing consultations with the RTA, GLC issued a Study Brief for the HSC Strategy in April 2003. Following a public tender process administered by GLC, Arup was selected in June 2003 to prepare this HSC Strategy.

### 1.4 The 'Great Lakes' Region

#### 1.4.1 LGA

The Great Lakes LGA covers an area of approximately 3,370km<sup>2</sup> on the NSW mid-north coast. It is situated between the Port Stephens LGA to the south and the Greater Taree LGA to the north and west, approximately 200km or 2½ hours drive north of Sydney, as shown in **Figure 1**. The southern boundary of the LGA is framed by the Karuah River and waters of Port Stephens with the Pacific Ocean forming the eastern boundary. There are three major lake systems situated within the LGA, namely Wallis, Smith and Myall.

Approximately one-third of the Great Lakes LGA is either National Park or State Forest. It is characterised by rolling farmland and river floodplains, occasional steep scarp slopes and coastal ranges, native forests, country villages and coastal settlements. Principal urban areas and townships located within the LGA and/or along the Pacific Highway corridor include:

- Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest;
- Bulahdelah;
- Coolongolook;
- Nahiatic; and
- Foster-Tuncurry.

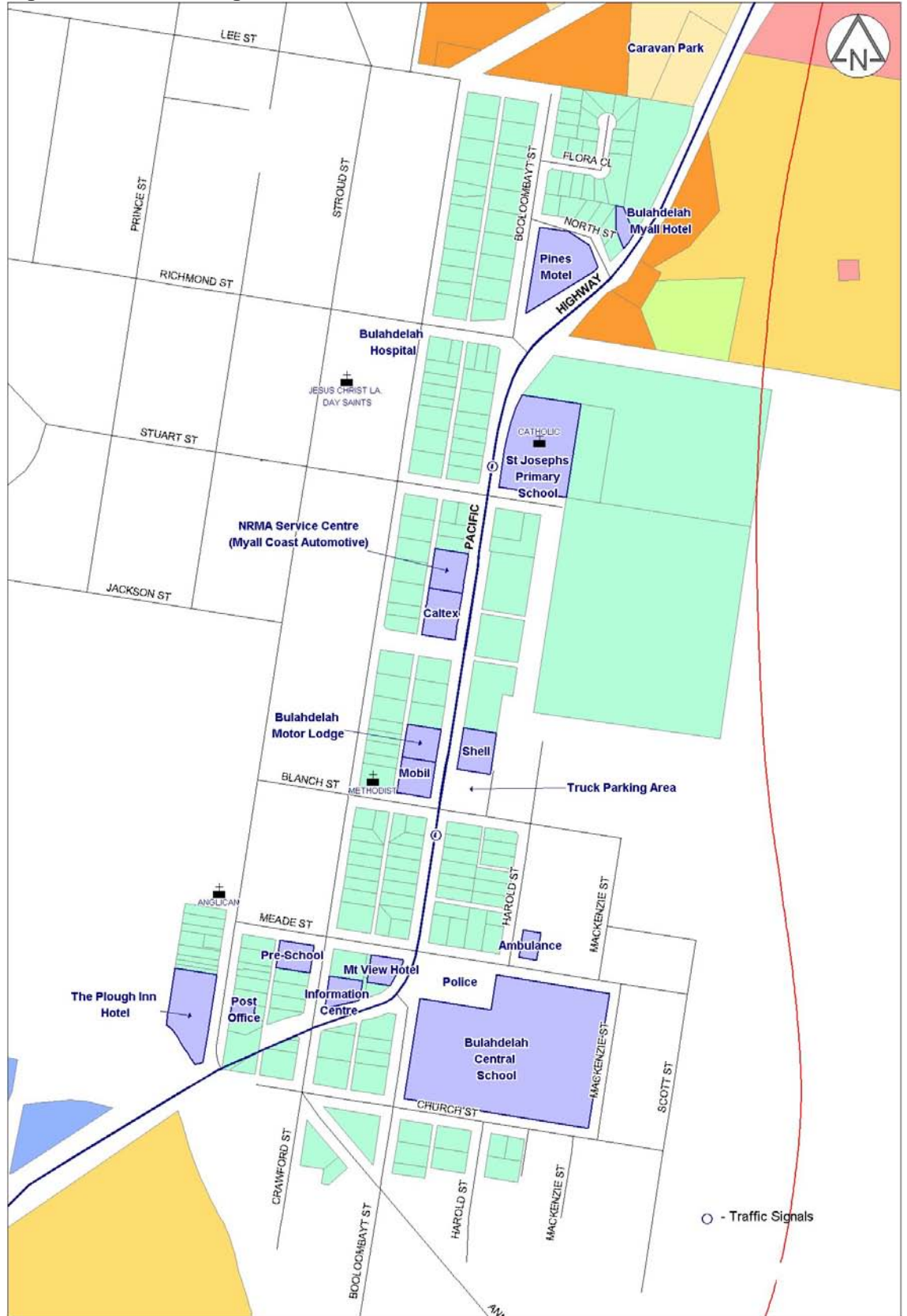
#### 1.4.2 Pacific Highway

The section of the Pacific Highway that passes through the Great Lakes LGA is approximately 90km in length. It currently passes through the townships of Bulahdelah, Coolongolook and Nahiatic. The highway is orientated on a predominantly northeast-southwest axis, and stretches from the north bank of the Karuah River in the south to just north of the township of Nahiatic.

The township of Karuah is located predominantly to the west of the Karuah River within the Port Stephens LGA. The single carriageway of the Pacific Highway traverses the town centre in an east-west direction prior to crossing a narrow point of the Karuah River, which defines the LGA boundary shared by Port Stephens and Great Lakes.

Bulahdelah is located on a ridge above the Myall River floodplain at the base of Alum Mountain. It represents the approximate 'mid-point' on the Pacific Highway within the Great Lakes LGA being approximately 43km north of Karuah, 28km south of Coolongolook and 44km south of Nahiatic. The single carriageway of the Pacific Highway currently traverses to the east of the town centre in a predominantly northeast-southwest direction. There are two sets of traffic signals facilitating pedestrian movement across the highway at Bulahdelah (see **Figure 2**). These signals do not directly facilitate local traffic movements across the highway and the township is prone to major 'bottlenecks' during the peak holiday periods.

**Figure 2 Existing Facilities at Bulahdelah**



### 1.5 Study Area

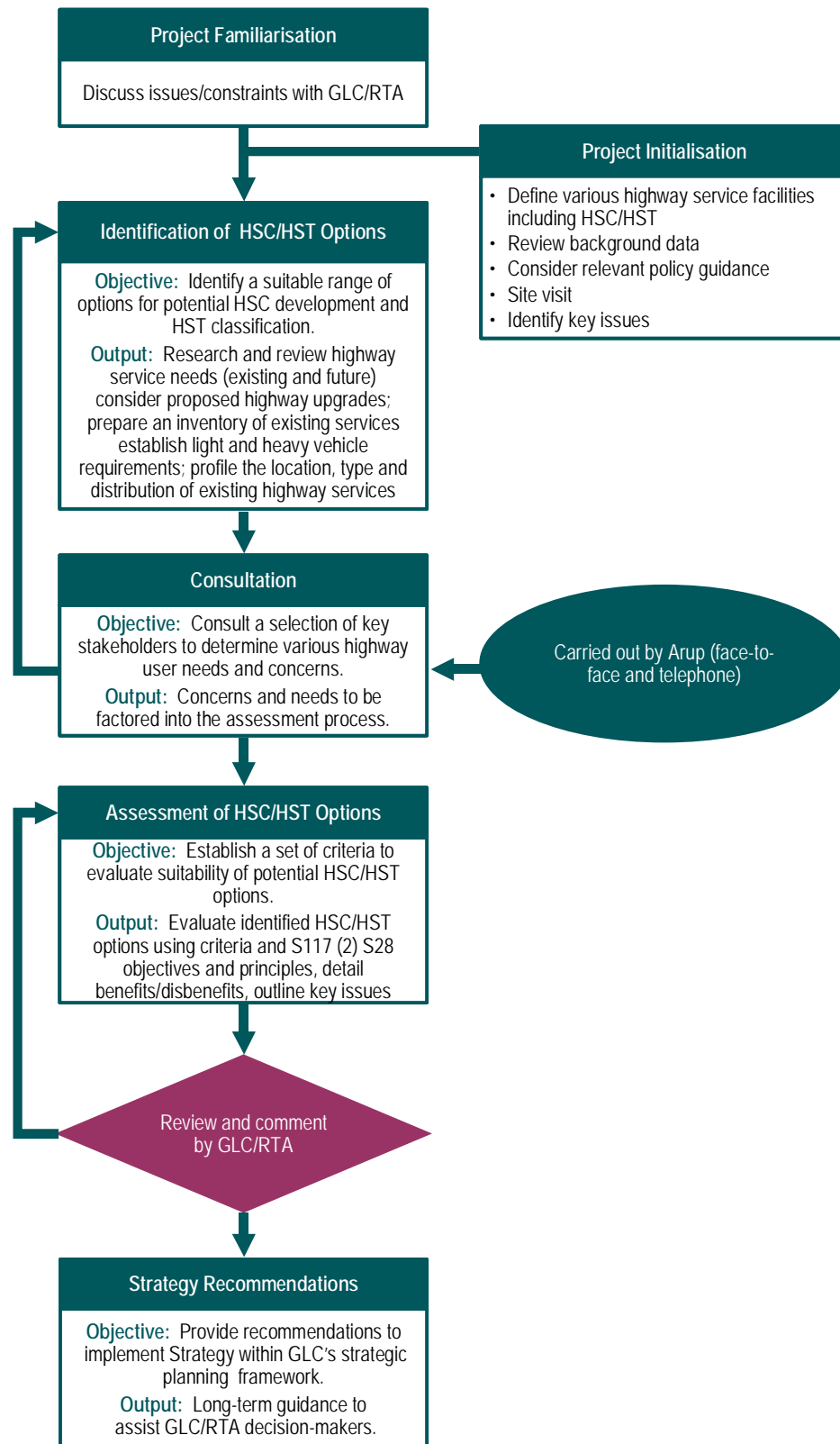
The wider study area adopted for this Strategy has been defined as the current Pacific Highway corridor within the Great Lakes LGA, with some extension into the adjoining LGAs of Port Stephens and Greater Taree to provide context. This is shown on **Figure 3**, with the townships of Karuah, Bulahdelah, Coolongolook and Nahiic highlighted for reference purposes.

**Figure 3 Great Lakes Local Government Area and Study Area**



## 1.6 Study Process

The study process adopted for the preparation of this Strategy comprises a series of sequential steps as depicted in the flowchart below. A more detailed description of the study process is contained in **Appendix A**.



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## 1.7 Stakeholder Consultation

A Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP) was prepared by Arup (September, 2003) for this Strategy (see **Appendix B**) and has been updated regularly throughout the preparation of this Strategy. In summary, the SIP covers:

- Key stakeholder consultations during the preparation of this HSC Strategy; and
- Identification of the key highway user groups and stakeholders with highway service related interests; and
- Presentation of key issues and concerns raised by different highway user groups consulted during the preparation of this Strategy.

Initially, GLC briefed key representatives of Arup at an inception meeting held on 24 September 2003. This was followed by a series of regular face-to-face and/or telephone discussions with key representatives of GLC and RTA during the preparation of this Strategy to more fully understand their needs.

The preparation of this Strategy has included consultation with a selection of key stakeholders as listed in **Table 1**. Their assistance is gratefully acknowledged. Attempts have also been made to consult other stakeholders, however, owing to availability and/or unwillingness to participate in this process their inputs have not been included.

**Table 1 Key highway stakeholders in consultation program**

Stakeholder	Contact(s)	Status
<b>NSW State Government Agencies</b>		
RTA (Pacific Highway and Hunter Regional Offices)	Mr Bob Higgins Mr Roger Fenner Mr David Young Mr Wes Stevenson	Ongoing
Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (Hunter Office)	Mr Shane Kepnich Mr David Gainsford	Complete
<b>Highway User Groups</b>		
NSW Bus and Coach Association	Mr Vic Bowden	Complete
NSW Road Transport Association	Mr Hugh McMaster	Complete
Australian Trucking Association	Mr Robert Howes	Complete
McCaffertys	Mr Hamish Withington	Complete
Murrays Australia	Mr Lyle Friske Mr Paul Wilkinson	Complete
<b>Oil Companies/Service Station Operators</b>		
Caltex (Coolongolook and Bulahdelah) - Corporate	Mr David Hoy (Urbis JHD) Mr Mark Doolan Mr Robert Rynsaardt	Complete
Shell (Bulahdelah)	Ms Sue Chick	Complete
Mobil (Bulahdelah)	Mr John Stellema	Complete
<b>Vehicle/Emergency Services</b>		
NSW Police (Bulahdelah)	Constable Steve Smith	Complete
Local NRMA (Myallcoast Automotive Pty Ltd - Bulahdelah)	Mr and Mrs Peter and Karen Adams	Complete

Stakeholder	Contact(s)	Status
<b>Local Government</b>		
Great Lakes Council	Mr Roger Busby Mr Alex Caras	Ongoing
Port Stephens Council	Mr Phil Buchan Mr Robert Dwyer	Complete
Greater Taree City Council	Mr Greg Blaze Mr Larry Hough	Complete

## 1.8 Report Structure

This HSC Strategy Report is structured as follows:

- Section 1 - provides background context to the study, outlines the need for the Strategy and defines the study area examined during the preparation of the Strategy.
- Section 2 – provides a range of definitions for the different types of highway service facilities. The key components of HSC development and HSTs are also described, together with other highway rest areas. The main user groups that travel on the Pacific Highway have also been identified.
- Section 3 – outlines the relevant legislative and planning context applicable to the development of HSC facilities on the Pacific Highway as it passes through the Great Lakes LGA.
- Section 4 – identifies the key issues associated with the development of HSCs on the Pacific Highway within the Great Lakes LGA.
- Section 5 – describes the existing Pacific Highway corridor and the proposed upgrades planned and/or under construction within the Great Lakes LGA and on the sections of highway adjoining the Great Lakes LGA. Background data comprising relevant and best available traffic flow data is also provided for context.
- Section 6 – presents an inventory of the existing highway services available within the Great Lakes LGA, together with an assessment of the current location, type and distribution of highway services.
- Section 7 – provides detailed descriptions of HSC options identified on the Pacific Highway within the Great Lakes LGA. An assessment of each option is also provided.
- Section 8 – provides a series of recommendations for the implementation of the HSC Strategy.
- Appendix A – presents a detailed breakdown of the study methodology adopted during the preparation of the Strategy.
- Appendix B – a SIP describing the scope and objectives of the stakeholder involvement process, identifying key members of the stakeholder involvement team and key stakeholder groups, and detailing a range of tools available to maximise capture of information and opportunity for involvement throughout this Strategy is presented. Issues and concerns raised by those key stakeholders consulted are also presented in the SIP.
- Appendix C – provides a copy of the Minister’s Direction (i.e. s117(2) S28) for reference purposes.

## 2. HIGHWAY SERVICE DEFINITIONS

### 2.1 Overview

The type, distribution and range of highway service facilities currently available along the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border, including the Great Lakes LGA comprise:

- Service stations and a small number of purpose built highway service centres;
- Towns performing a highway service role;
- Rest areas; and
- Truck parking bays.

The range of services and rest area types available along the Pacific Highway is summarised in **Table 2**.

**Table 2 Services and rest area types available along the Pacific Highway**

Type	Spacing (km)	Users (Heavy/ Light Vehicles)	Facilities										
			Both directions	Direction of travel only	Advisory signage	Sealed surface	Bins	Toilets	Drinking water	Tables & chairs	Lighting	Fuel	Commercially operated
Highway Service Town	Varies	Facilities vary from town to town.											
Highway Service Centre	Min 24km (preferably 50-100km)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Service Station	Varies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rest Area	15mins - 1 hr  25 - 100km	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	(✓)	(✓)	✓	(✓)			
Truck Parking Bay	15 -20mins  20km		✓	✓	✓	✓	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)				
Driver Reviver	2 hrs	At rest areas. Free tea and coffee in peak holiday travel periods.											

(✓) Some facilities, such as toilets, are not provided at every TPB and RA location along the Pacific Highway.

(\*) RTA is aiming to provide TPB at <20km spacings along the Pacific Highway by 2007.

To assist in the development of appropriate definitions, particularly for HSCs and a HST, existing guidance available from other State Government agencies and road authorities around Australia, including the Victorian Department of Infrastructure, VicRoads, Queensland Main Roads and the RTA has been reviewed (refer to **Appendix A**). This review revealed that whilst there are a number of definitions available for HSCs, no definition currently exists for a HST. For the purposes of this Strategy, a definition of a HST has been developed (refer to Section 2.4).



## 2.2 Service Station

Under the Great Lakes Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 1996 (refer to Section 3.3.1) definitions are provided for a service station, and related uses such as a shop and restaurant as follows:

Service Station – a building or place used for the fuelling of motor vehicles involving the sale by retail of petrol, oil or other petroleum products, whether or not the building or place is also used for one or more of the following: the sale by retail of spare parts and accessories and installation of motor vehicle accessories for motor vehicles; the washing and greasing of motor vehicles; the repairing or servicing of motor vehicles (other than body building, panel beating or spray painting)

Shop – a building or place for the retail sale, auction sale or hire, or for the display for the purpose of sale or hire of goods, material and merchandise, but does not include a building or place elsewhere defined in the LEP 1996.

Restaurant – a building or place used principally to provide food for people to consume in that building or place.

There are currently eight service stations located along the Pacific Highway within the Great Lakes LGA. **Table 3** presents the location of these service stations in a south-north direction along the highway.

**Table 3 Service stations located along the Pacific Highway within the Great Lakes LGA**

Northbound	Southbound
Mobil (24-hour) at Bulahdelah	The Rock 1km south of Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest Road turnoff
Caltex at Bulahdelah	Shell (24-hour) at Bulahdelah
O'Sullivan's Gap 4km north of Bulahdelah	Caltex (24-hour) at Coolongolook
Ampol at Nahiabac (24-hour)	
Ampol at caravan park, Nahiabac	

## 2.3 Highway Service Centre (HSC)

A HSC can be defined as a development that has direct access to a highway and provides essential services and facilities to cater for the needs of all highway users. Principal objectives governing HSC development on the Pacific Highway include:

- Improvement to driver safety by encouraging drivers to stop and take an effective rest break at appropriate intervals;
- Avoidance of driver fatigue; and
- Promotion of long-term economic viability.

To achieve these key objectives, it is recommended that HSC development:

- Provides safe, quick and convenient access onto and off the highway for both light and heavy vehicles;
- Is highly visible and high-profile, advance advisory signage is erected at appropriate spacings (i.e. 5km, 2km, 1km) to announce HSC facility, so that drivers can make a timely and safe decision to stop;
- Provides a recognised and expected range of high-quality services and facilities to cater for the needs of both heavy and light vehicle traffic which encourage patronage;
- Is open on a 24-hour/7-days per week basis;

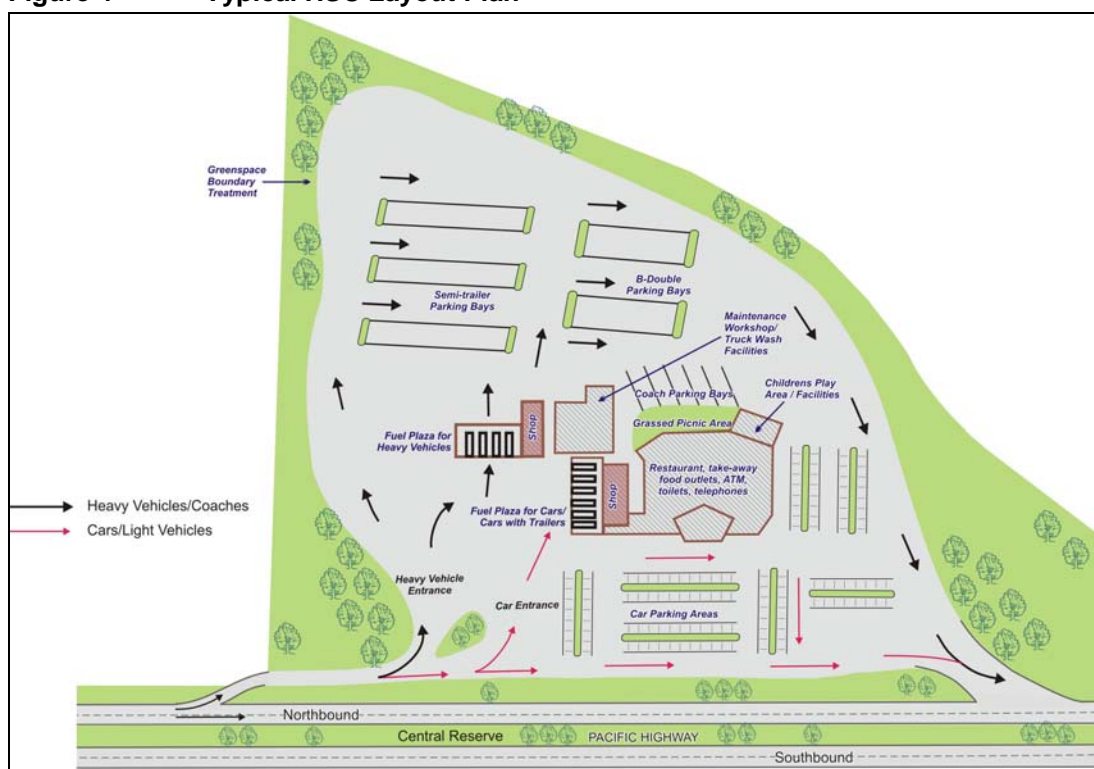
- Is well lit, safe and staffed; and
- Complements the services and facilities available in local townships that have been either bypassed or are in close proximity.

HSC developments should provide only essential services and facilities that encourage travellers to take an effective rest break in the interest of driver safety and that also encourage continued economic viability of nearby towns, including:

- Designated parking spaces for both light (cars, cars with trailers, vans) and heavy vehicles (trucks, bus and coaches);
- Undercover and segregated fuel sales plazas, including petrol, diesel and LPG designed to cater for both light and heavy vehicles;
- Food and refreshment facilities, including an indoor sit-down eating area, take-away food outlet and convenience store;
- Comfortable and safe toilet and washroom facilities;
- Public telephone;
- Local and regional tourist information;
- Outdoor picnic and eating areas and playground facilities for children.

A typical HSC layout is presented in **Figure 4**.

**Figure 4** Typical HSC Layout Plan



Non-essential services and facilities that may encourage unsafe driver behaviour and should not be permitted at HSC developments include gaming or entertainment machines, and the sale, distribution and consumption of alcohol. Other services and facilities such as vehicle and maintenance repair workshops, post office and banking facilities, overnight accommodation should be promoted at the nearest townships.

Currently, no planning definition exists under the LEP 1996 for HSC development, however, the following definition for a HSC development is provided under the Greater Taree LEP 1995:

HSC – an integrated development providing on the one site a variety of facilities intended for the provision of services required by the travelling public and commercial highway users, including provision for:

Refreshment

Motor vehicle servicing facilities

Which development may also include the use of the site for advertisements, bus stations, car parks, drive-in take away food outlets, dwellings occupied in conjunction with uses permissible on the site, emergency repair facilities (including towing facilities), facilities for commercial vehicles, information centres, playgrounds, refreshment rooms, rest areas, rest rooms, service stations and utility installations.

To assist GLC, a planning definition for HSC development within the LGA has been prepared as follows:

**Table 4 Planning definition for a HSC development**

Land Use	Definition	Permitted Activities	Prohibited Activities
<b>Highway Service Centre</b>	<p>A 24-hour facility at a single location that has direct access to a highway and provides a range of essential services required by the travelling public and commercial highway users to encourage drivers to stop and take an effective rest break at appropriate intervals along a highway in the interests of driver safety. A key characteristic of a HSC facility is that it is integrated and approved as part of a single development application. Essential services to be provided at a 'highway service centre' may include:</p> <p>Designated parking areas for light and heavy vehicles</p> <p>Segregated undercover fuel sale plazas (petrol, diesel, LPG) for light and heavy vehicles</p> <p>Emergency vehicle repairs</p> <p>Food and refreshment facilities, including a sit-down area</p> <p>Toilets</p> <p>Public telephone(s)</p> <p>Tourist information</p> <p>Outdoor eating areas</p> <p>Children play facilities</p>	<p>Segregated car parking for light and heavy vehicles</p> <p>Service station</p> <p>Emergency vehicle repairs</p> <p>Shop</p> <p>Restaurant (sit-down)</p> <p>Food and drink outlets (fast-food)</p> <p>Amenities (toilets, baby changing, children's playground)</p> <p>Outdoor picnic / eating area</p>	<p>Gaming or entertainment machines</p> <p>Drive through take-away food outlets</p> <p>Vehicle and maintenance repair workshops</p> <p>Post-office and banking facilities</p> <p>Overnight accommodation</p> <p>Medical facilities</p> <p>Liquor sales</p> <p>Video hire</p>

## 2.4 Highway Service Town (HST)

A HST can be defined as a town that is located on or within close proximity to an existing highway corridor and which, over time, has developed to provide a range of services and facilities to cater for the needs of highway users and the local community. A definition has been developed specifically for HSTs within the Great Lakes LGA (refer to **Table 5**).

Typically, a significant proportion of businesses within a HST (i.e. NRMA service centres, service stations, take-away food outlets, accommodation) are heavily reliant on highway through-traffic. Other services and facilities, however, exist within the town to meet the specific social and economic needs of the local community.

HSTs can therefore be distinguished from HSCs as centres that meet the needs of both highway users and a local community, whereas HSCs are developed primarily for the safety, convenience and comfort of highway users as entities in their own right.

A HST could be expected to contain some but not necessarily all of the following elements:

- Established town centre providing a mix of services and facilities to cater for the needs of both highway users and the local community. Typically such services might include banking outlets, post office, pharmacy, supermarket and range of local produce type stores (i.e. butcher, grocer etc), newsagent, cafes, public telephones, basic services (i.e. running water, toilets, electricity) etc;
- Service stations serving both directions of traffic through the town, including at least one 24-hour facility;
- Maximum additional off-highway travel distance of not more than 2km from a new/planned highway bypass corridor;
- Motor vehicle repair and maintenance workshops;
- Provision of a range of accommodation types, including motel/hotel/caravan park style accommodation;
- Emergency roadside service outlets such as the NRMA;
- In-town emergency services including the NSW Police, NSW Ambulance and NSW Fire Brigade;
- Medical facilities including a local GP practice and/or hospital;
- Visitor information centre; and
- Community and recreational facilities such as public parks and playground areas.

The following definition of a HST has been prepared for the Great Lakes LGA:

**Table 5 Definition for a HST**

Definition	Permitted Activities	Prohibited Activities
<p>A township that is located within 2km (off-highway travel distance) from a bypass and provides a range of services to the travelling public and local community which promote driver safety, local tourism and community interests. The range of services available at a HST must include at a minimum:</p> <p>Service stations including at least one 24-hour facility</p> <p>Sit-down and take-away food outlets</p> <p>Motor vehicle repair and maintenance workshops</p> <p>Overnight accommodation</p> <p>Post-office and banking outlets</p> <p>Medical facilities</p> <p>Visitor information centre</p> <p>Roadside emergency services</p> <p>Public parks and children's playground areas</p>	<p>May include:</p> <p>Service stations</p> <p>Restaurants</p> <p>Shops</p> <p>Vehicle repair workshops</p>	<p>None</p>

Based on the above definition, two HSTs have been identified within the Great Lakes LGA:

- Bulahdelah; and
- Nahiac.

Although not located within the Great Lakes LGA, it will be noted that Karuah also meets the criteria for being a HST.

## 2.5 Other Highway Rest Areas

Other rest area types are provided along the Pacific Highway corridor including:

- **Rest Areas (RA)** – RA are usually small to medium-sized stopping areas, which are distributed at frequent intervals between townships along the highway (see **Photograph 2**). They have direct highway access and provide safe and/or segregated parking for both heavy and light vehicles with a range of facilities including rubbish bins, toilets, covered tables and BBQ areas, children’s play furniture etc.
- **Truck Parking Bays (TPB)** – TPB are small stopping areas/bays that provide safe parking for generally up to two or three heavy vehicles only with limited amenities, i.e. rubbish bins.

**Photograph 2 Rest Area on the Northbound Carriageway of the Pacific Highway approximately 12km to the north of Bulahdelah**



## 2.6 Highway User Groups and Service Needs

The identification of key highway user groups that travel on the Pacific Highway is integral to the preparation of this Strategy to ensure that the needs of different users are taken into account. The outcomes of consultations conducted with the following highway users, together with other key stakeholders that service the highway are presented in **Appendix B**:

- Heavy vehicle drivers (Australian Trucking Australia, NSW Road Transport Association, commercial trucking companies, etc);
- Long-distance express, charter and tour bus and coach drivers and passengers (NSW Bus and Coach Association, individual coach operators, etc);
- General motoring public travelling for business, holiday or local purposes (NRMA); and
- Holiday motoring public.

### 3. STATUTORY CONTEXT AND POLICY

#### 3.1 NSW State Legislation

##### 3.1.1 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

The EP&A Act and the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulations 2000* (Regulations) provide the statutory context governing the upgrade of the Pacific Highway in NSW including the Bulahdelah Upgrade. Subject to the type of highway development proposed and land designations affected, an assessment process subject to determination under the provisions of Part 4 or Part 5 of the EP&A Act 1979 is required to ‘*examine and take into account to the fullest extent possible all matters affecting or likely to affect the environment by reason of that activity*’.

Ministerial guidance is provided under Section 117(2) of the EP&A Act, and applies to GLC as instructed by the Minister for Planning when a draft LEP is prepared to control the development of land for certain purposes in the vicinity of the existing and/or proposed alignment of the Pacific Highway. Direction S28 provides a policy framework to govern commercial and retail development along the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border.

A series of key objectives and guiding principles are stated under the Section 117(2) S28 Direction with those considered particularly relevant to the preparation of this Strategy outlined as follows:

**Objective 4:** To provide for the food, vehicle service and rest needs of travellers on the highway.

**Objective 5:** To achieve Objective 4 in such a way that the role of the HSCs is differentiated from the role of commercial areas in towns.

**Principle 6 – Acceptance of the need of highway service centres:** Highway service centres should be permitted to establish beside the Pacific Highway, subject to Principles 7 to 9.

**Principle 7 – Location criteria for highway service centres:** highway service centres will be limited in distribution. They should be strategically located to serve, but not to overserve, the travelling public. They should:

- Be located as near as possible to an existing town that has been bypassed, preferably at an intersection/interchange with the town access road, so that they act to economically support that town, to encourage visitation to that town and so that employees do not have to use the Pacific Highway to get to work. Highway service centres should not be located remote from existing towns. Where a town or village is to be bypassed and that town has developed largely to service the needs of highway traffic, the likely future impact on the town’s economy should be considered before approval is given to establish any new or expanded service centre on the edge or outside the town;
- Be spaced no closer than 24km from another highway service centre through which the highway still passes;
- Be limited to one highway service centre to serve both directions of traffic, or one highway service centre per side of the highway, for each segment identified as potentially appropriate for a highway service centre. If there is a need for one highway service centre each side of the highway, they should be located either opposite each other, or staggered such that the highway service centre on the driver’s approach is viewed first and is no more than 500m from the other.

**Principle 8 – Uses allowed in a highway service centre:** The only uses which will be allowed in highway service centres are:

- Service stations (which may supply convenience goods catering for the needs of the travelling public);
- Emergency vehicle repairs;
- Bus/coach terminal facilities (but not depots);
- Restaurant facilities (preferably both sit-down and fast food);
- Toilet/shower facilities;
- Tourist information (but not commercial tourist facilities);
- Telephones;
- Rest areas (including seating, BBQ and play areas);
- Adequate parking for cars, buses and trucks).

**Principle 9 – Access and safety at highway service centres:** Access to and from highway service centres should be carefully designed such that highway travel is not slowed or made more dangerous. The following criteria should apply:

- Where access is necessary from the far side of the highway, it should only be provided via grade separation or via safely designed public road intersection;
- If it is not possible to safely and efficiently provide vehicular access from the far side of the highway or to duplicate the highway service centre, then the highway design should prevent access from the far side, including pedestrian access;
- Any proposal to provide access to a highway service centre from local streets will be assessed on its merits. The principal concerns to be addressed in such circumstances are:
  - The need to avoid highway service centre access becoming a defacto, unplanned, uncontrolled intersection;
  - The need to avoid the highway service centre becoming an access to other commercial ventures such as shopping centres and motels;
  - The need to provide access for service vehicles (including those needed to restock fuel tanks and food outlets);
  - The desirability of having highway service centre employees gaining access to highway service centres without the need to use the Pacific Highway;
  - The desirability or otherwise of using the highway service centre also as a service for the local population.

A copy of Section 117(2) S28 of the EP&A Act 1979 is provided in **Appendix C**.

### **3.1.2 Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act 1999 and Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) (Driver Fatigue) Regulation 1999**

Both the *Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act 1999* and the *Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) (Driver Fatigue) Regulation 1999* provide the legislative framework for safety and traffic management on roads in NSW.

The *Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act 1999* contains provisions that are consistent with National conditions contained in the *National Road Transport Commission Act 1991*. Key objectives of this Act are to reduce the overall costs associated with the administration of road transport and to improve the safety and efficiency of transport on roads and road-related areas.

The *Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) (Driver Fatigue) Regulation 1999* provides a framework to manage fatigue for drivers of heavy trucks and commercial buses. Under Part 2 of this Regulation, regulated hours for maximum driving and work times, and minimum rest times for drivers of heavy vehicles and commercial buses are stipulated. The regulated hours for maximum driving times are presented in **Table 6** based on the times under Section 19 of the Regulation.

**Table 6 Regulated Driving Hours and Rest Times for Drivers of Heavy Vehicles and Commercial Buses**

Heavy Vehicle Drivers	Maximum Driving Time		
	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3
Heavy Trucks	5 hrs	12 hrs	72 hrs
Commercial Buses	5 hrs	12 hrs except under 2-driver arrangement. 11 hrs under a 2-driver arrangement.	72 hrs except under a 2-driver arrangement. 66 hrs under a 2-driver arrangement.
Minimum Rest Time (following completion of maximum driving time periods)			
Heavy Trucks/ Commercial Buses	30 mins or 2 x 15 mins breaks	10 hrs or at least 6 hrs not spent in heavy truck and/or commercial bus without a sleeper cabin.	96 hrs including a single 24 hrs not spent by the driver in a heavy truck and/or commercial bus.

*Note:* The relevant periods (i.e. Period 1 to Period 3) refer to the maximum driving times of a driver who drives a heavy truck or commercial bus. It is offence for a driver who drives a heavy truck or commercial bus where the driver's total driving time exceeds the driver's maximum driving time as indicated in the Driver Periods above.

## 3.2 Regional Planning Requirements

### 3.2.1 Hunter Regional Environmental Plan 1989

The Hunter Regional Environmental Plan No. 1 1989 (HREP) provides a regional planning framework for development in the Hunter Region over a 20 year period. It consolidates various planning policies relating to the region with the aim of protecting the region's diverse natural environment, regulating future population growth and economic development through sound planning. The HREP applies to land along the coastal strip between Lake Macquarie in the south to Taree in the north extending westwards incorporating the Shires of Scone and Dungog.

Whilst the HREP was prepared 14 years ago, it still contains some relevant guidance to the development along the Pacific Highway corridor within the Hunter region, including the Great Lakes LGA. The urban settlement component of the HREP involves encouraging urban settlement in areas of planned growth such as the main townships, in order to optimise the distribution and use of existing infrastructure and minimise environmental impacts. It recommends that growth should be encouraged in urban areas, which can expand economically. Larger town centres should continue to develop and so provide an increasing range of community facilities and services for the population.

A principal objective relating to road development in the Hunter is to maximise accessibility and facilitate movement throughout the region *'in a manner which has regard to social, economic, environmental and safety considerations'* and recognise the importance of the Pacific Highway in the region. Other key objectives include:

- Highway upgrades are to meet identified demands, including the provision of bicycle facilities; and
- Promotion of other transport modes such as rail to carry bulk goods.



The HREP states that the following key issues need to be considered for road development:

- Conflicts between local traffic and high-speed, long-distance tourist and commercial traffic; and
- Traffic peaks and the large numbers of accidents experienced on the highway during holiday periods.

The HREP recommends the provision of dual carriageway or improved alignment, including overtaking lanes and bypasses on the Pacific Highway where appropriate to alleviate the above issues.

### 3.3 Local Planning Requirements

#### 3.3.1 Great Lakes Local Environmental Plan 1996

The Great Lakes Local Environmental Plan 1996 (LEP 1996) is the principal local environmental planning instrument for the Great Lakes LGA. It establishes a policy framework to regulate and control the development of land within the LGA including along the Pacific Highway corridor. LEP 1996 divides land within the LGA into a series of zones specifying a range of uses permissible or otherwise for development. The zoning pattern of land located along the Pacific Highway corridor as it passes through the Great Lakes LGA (see **Figure 5**) is principally characterised as follows:

- 1(a) Rural;
- 1(f) Forestry;
- 2 Village;
- 5(d) Arterial Road Reservation;
- 7(b) Conservation; and
- 8(a) National Parks and State Recreation Areas.

Under each of the above zonings, development is permitted with development consent, with the exception of Zone 1(f) Forestry (for example Nerong State Forest and Bulahdelah State Forest) which is designated to protect and conserve forest resources. In accordance with the provisions under this zone, road development is prohibited. This provision is over-ridden by Clause 15 of the LEP 1996:

- ...nothing in this plan restricts, prohibits or requires development consent for:
- the use of existing buildings of the Crown by the Crown; or
  - any activity listed in Schedule 1.

Of the above listed zonings, two are particularly relevant to potential HSC development within the Great Lakes LGA, namely Zones 1(a) Rural and 2 Village. **Table 7** specifies the provisions relating to the development of land within each of these zones.

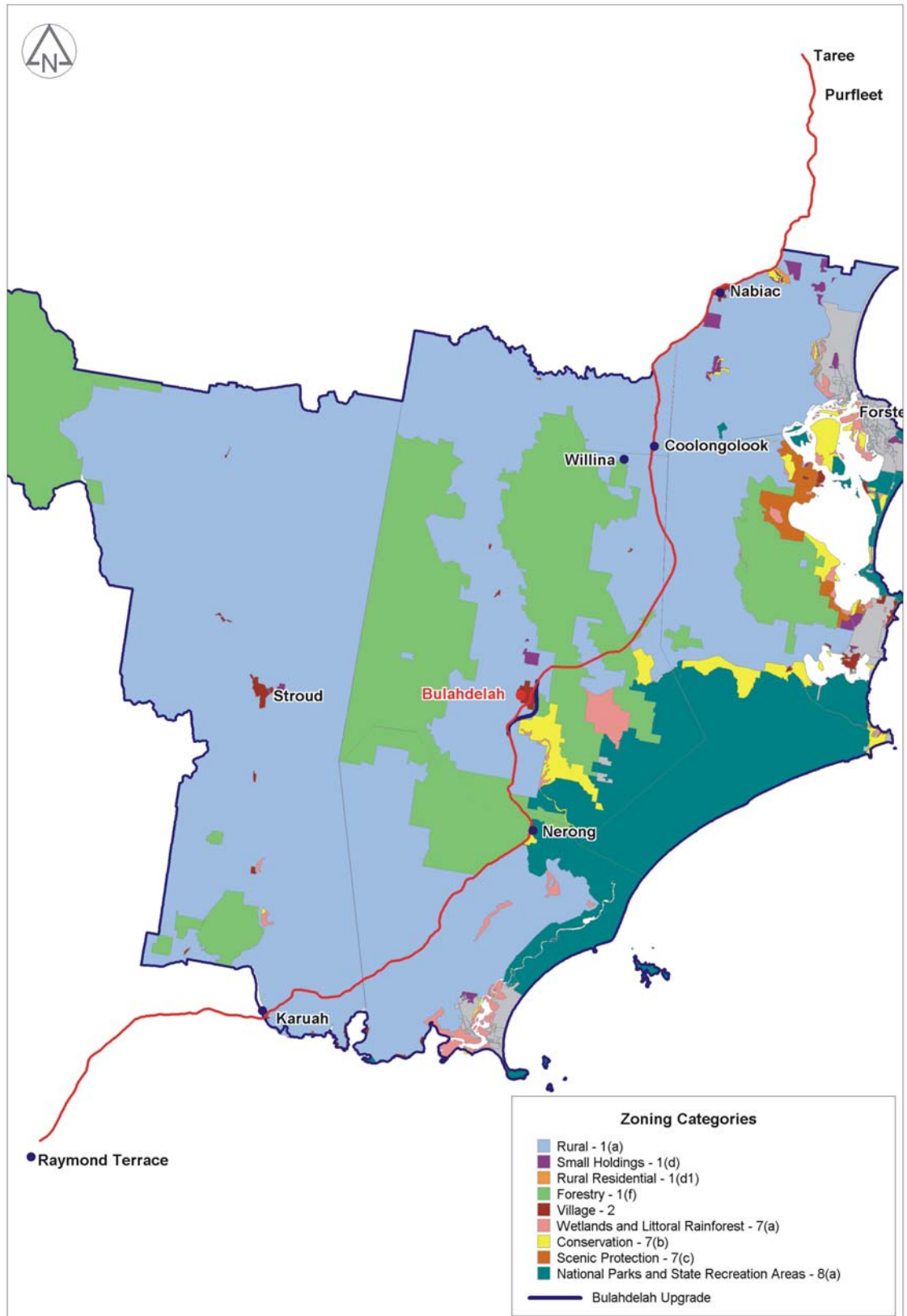
It is acknowledged that appropriate “use” definitions and provisions would need to be prepared and incorporated into an amended version of the LEP 1996 to regulate the development of land for HSC purposes along the Pacific Highway within the Great Lakes LGA. Any amended version of the LEP 1996 should aim to establish planning guidance and the development controls for potential HSC development within the LGA.

#### 3.3.2 Strategic Plan for the Economic Development of the Great Lakes Area 2003

This Strategic Plan provides a guidance package to assist GLC and various local stakeholders (i.e. local businesses and the community) to advance economic development within the Great Lakes LGA. Key aspects of this Plan focus on the identification of impediments to local economic growth and the development of appropriate initiatives to help strengthen the local economic base and stimulate employment opportunities throughout the LGA.

In the context of considering potential HSC development opportunities within the Great Lakes LGA aspects of this Plan should be taken into account.

**Figure 5 Great Lakes LGA Zoning Pattern**



**Table 7 Zoning Provisions and Development Controls**

Zone Type	Development Permitted without Consent	Development Permitted with Consent	Prohibited Development
<b>1(a) Rural</b>	Agriculture, bushfire hazard reduction	Service station, restaurant, shop and other uses	Boarding houses, bulky goods salesrooms or showrooms, commercial premises, hotels, medical centres, multiple dwellings, off-site promotional signs, residential flat buildings, shops (other than convenience stores), vehicle body repair workshops, vehicle repair stations, warehouses
<b>2 Village</b>	Bushfire hazard reduction, dwelling houses	Service station, restaurant, shop and other uses	Aerodromes, extractive industries, generating works, hazardous storage establishments, heliports, industries (other than light industries), material recycling yards

### 3.4 RTA Policies

#### 3.4.1 Corporate Policy No.11 (1994) - Policy on Roadside Rest Areas and Other Stopping Places

This policy relates to all road users including light and heavy vehicles. The principal objective relating to the provision of all types of roadside rest areas is to:

Reduce the number of road accidents related to driver fatigue, and the number of fatigued drivers on NSW roads, by increasing the frequency, duration and quality of rest breaks taken by long distance drivers.

This is supplemented by a number of sub-objectives:

- To provide a network of good quality, well maintained, signposted roadside rest areas and other stopping places at reasonable intervals across the NSW road system;
- To provide roadside rest areas/parking areas which complement the local natural and built environments;
- To broaden the application of signposting of stopping places to cover service centre facilities, where appropriate;
- To ensure adequate information on rest areas and other stopping places is provided for all users;
- To improve the usefulness and amenity of roadside stopping places for drivers; and
- To improve the driving experience on NSW roads, providing support for tourism.

The policy states that there are three types of rest area:

- **Parking Area** – provision of safe parking for heavy vehicles and other vehicles;
- **Rest Area** – provision of safe parking and at least two amenities other than a bin, for example water supply, tables and benches, barbecue facilities etc or toilets; and
- **Service Centre** – privately operated centres that provide petrol, food and toilets on a 24-hour basis, parking for heavy vehicles.

### 3.4.2 'Stop-Revive-Survive' Awareness Program

The NSW RTA has actively embarked on a campaign to reduce driver fatigue on highways across NSW, including the Pacific Highway. Commonly known as 'Stop Revive Survive', this campaign has been promoted through a number of multi-media outlets such as print media, regional radio stations and 'Dr Karl'.

In an effort to reduce driver fatigue, around one hundred Driver Reviver stops operate across NSW at peak holiday times, such as Christmas, Easter and Public Holidays. The RTA and NSW Police recommend that drivers stop every 2-hours to refresh and minimise the potential for driver fatigue. There are two Driver Reviver stops located within the Great Lakes LGA at Wang Wauk and the Bulahdelah Golf Club entrance. One major rest area is located approximately 12km to the north of Bulahdelah (refer **Photograph 2** and **Figure 8**).

### 3.4.3 North Coast Road Strategy

This Strategy identifies the key issues associated with the long-term development of the Pacific Highway as it serves the North Coast region of NSW. It is widely acknowledged that the North Coast region of NSW is experiencing rapid population growth and tourism development. In the context of HSC development, key aspects of this Strategy focus on the *'links between road infrastructure and the operation and development of regional economies'*. This is underpinned by issues associated with road safety and management of the Pacific Highway as the key road asset in northern NSW.

### 3.4.4 Draft RTA Stopping Areas Strategy

The principal aim of this Strategy is to rationalise the number and type of stopping facilities provided along the Pacific Highway. The Strategy aims to coordinate the provision of vehicle stopping areas with the objectives of the Pacific Highway Upgrading Program by:

- Upgrading and providing a suitable range of facilities on the existing highway; and
- Providing new facilities at designated sites on upgraded sections of the highway and town bypasses

A hierarchy of facilities has been developed for the Pacific Highway. The Strategy sets out the distance requirements and design criteria for stopping areas on the highway corridor.

## 3.5 Other Relevant Policies

### 3.5.1 Planning Policy on Commercial/Retail Development along the Pacific Highway from the Queensland Border to Hexham 1998

This policy has been prepared to specifically regulate and control commercial and retail development along the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border. A key driver of the policy is to prevent the inadvertent or otherwise 'ribbon' development of commercial and retail activities along the highway, which may impinge on the economic and social cohesion of existing towns through which it passes or bypasses.

The policy contains a series of objectives and guiding principles to manage and control commercial and retail development along the Pacific Highway. Key aspects of this policy are:

- The Pacific Highway is a strategic road corridor carrying a diverse road traffic mix originating from a range of interstate and regional locations. It principally facilitates regional transport movements and should not be seen as a local traffic access route to retail facilities;

- General retail activity along the Pacific Highway should be controlled and located at strategic intervals, in particular in urban areas as distinct commercial centres and such activity located with frontage to the Pacific Highway should be designed to protect and enhance the safety and efficiency of the highway. The inadvertent spread or otherwise of such activities needs to be regulated;
- Commercial and retail activities, which are bypassed by the Pacific Highway should not be relocated to facilitate direct highway access. Key locational criteria governing the development of HSC should include locating HSC facilities as close to bypassed towns as possible, adherence to minimal 24km spacings between HSCs and be limited to one HSC to serve both directions of traffic;
- HSCs may be required to serve long distance travellers provided that they do not detract from the role of commercial interests in local townships, particularly those planned to be bypassed; and
- Existing development, which adjoins the highway and fulfils highway service functions, may be allowed to expand if such expansion will help conform with other principles of the policy.

### **3.5.2 NSW Department of Planning Circular No. 14 – Highway Service Centres on the Hume Highway**

The former NSW Department of Planning produced Circular No.14, which addresses HSC development on the Hume Highway. The Department of Planning assisted the NSW RTA in conducting a review on the location of service facilities for travellers using the highway. The main trigger for this review evolved from the program of bypassing towns along the highway.

The Circular states as policy, that only essential services are to be permitted in service centres with direct access from the Hume Highway. Services such as accommodation, entertainment, substantial repairs or non-essential repairs should not be made available at service centres. The policy does not specifically address the provision of drive through take away food and refreshment facilities at HSC. It also does not identify precise locations for new HSC, however, there is the expectation that centres will be established at approximately 80km spacings along the highway.

Notwithstanding the provisions outlined above, there are HSC developments along the Hume Highway that are located within 80km of each other, namely at Mittagong, Berrima, Goulburn and Yass, due to inconsistencies in local development controls and LEP provisions, and highway access.

## 4. KEY ISSUES FOR HSC DEVELOPMENT

### 4.1 Location

HSCs need to be located at strategic intervals along highways so that the demands of highway users are met in the interests of driver safety, comfort and convenience whilst the proliferation of competitive centres in one area is avoided. The over-concentration of HSCs along a section of highway may:

- Compromise highway traffic operation and safety due to the frequency of HSC entry and exit points;
- Affect the likely commercial viability of each HSC;
- Over-serve the needs of the travelling public; and
- Affect the local economic interests and community dynamics of nearby towns, in particular HSTs such as Bulahdelah.

The NSW Department of Planning<sup>1</sup> therefore advises that HSCs should be spaced at a minimum of 24km apart, and should ideally be spaced 80 to 110km apart, whilst Federal<sup>2</sup> and Victorian State Government<sup>3</sup> guidance advises that HSCs should be spaced at a minimum of 50km apart. All guidance, however, recommends that the exact location of HSCs should be market driven, such that new centres are located only where it has been demonstrated that existing centres (i.e. HSC/HST) do not already provide this service for highway users, for example, within identified fatigue zones. The need for and viability of HSCs along a section of highway will therefore be dependent on:

- The amount and type of passing traffic;
- The predominant trip length; and
- The location and spacing of any existing or planned HSCs and HSTs.

HSCs should also be located as close as reasonably practicable to an existing township that has been bypassed, preferably at a interchange or intersection point with a local town access road to facilitate the provision of local employment and connections to utility services at the HSC.

### 4.2 Road Safety

#### 4.2.1 Access

HSC access arrangements must be in accordance with RTA design standards and must not compromise highway traffic operation and safety in any way. Federal<sup>2</sup> guidance recommends that entry and exit roads should be located at an absolute minimum of 2km from existing and proposed interchanges and any other major access road to or from the highway. There should be no more than two HSC access points to and from the highway, and through traffic should not be able to access the local road system. The construction and maintenance of HSC access should be at the proponent's expense.

<sup>1</sup> NSW Department of Planning, Circular No. 14, 'Highway Service Centres (Hume Highway)', June 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Federal Department of Transport and Communications, 'National Highway Service Centres', July 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Victorian State Government, 'Guidelines for the Development of Service Centres on Rural Freeways', September 1995.

#### 4.2.2 Signage

Appropriate signage should announce the location of HSCs so that highway users are made aware of the facility well in advance, allowing them to make a timely and safe decision to stop. Signage should be provided to approaching traffic at a minimum of 5km, 2km and 1km distance from the HSC. Signage should also promote high standards of road safety and should encourage highway users to take regular rest breaks. Signs should be positioned to enhance the safe operation of the highway.

#### 4.2.3 Layout

The layout of HSCs should be simple, understandable and accessible. In the interest of driver safety, and the efficient operation of the HSC, the number of decision points for drivers should be minimised. Internal traffic circulation should be safe, directional, free-flowing and should allow easy entry and exit. The progress through the facilities should be via a one-way network, with return opportunities prior to exit. The layout of the HSC should discourage the wrong-way movement of traffic back onto the highway.

Parking areas must be sealed, drained, well-lit, well-marked and must provide adequate space for a range of vehicles including cars, motorcycles, cars with caravans or trailers, disabled persons, semi-trailers, B-doubles and coaches. Car, truck and coach parking areas must be separated and parking areas must be positioned to allow safe and efficient pedestrian access to facilities. Truck parking should be located so as to allow forward movement from the parking lot without the need for reversing.

Generally HSCs should be established in pairs to serve both carriageways of a highway, with equivalent services offered at each facility. If centres are staggered i.e. not located directly opposite each other, the centre on the driver's approach must be viewed first. If a single centre only is proposed, the proponent must demonstrate that the safe operation of the highway is not affected by the presence of the HSC. No median break should be permitted opposite or in the vicinity of any HSC to facilitate right turn or U-turn movements, as this will result in more conflict points and decreased safety. Pedestrian links between paired HSCs should be only permissible if appropriate safety standards are met.

The positioning of HSCs relative to the highway should preserve the benefits arising from the substantial investment in current and future highway upgrades, such as town bypasses and dual carriageways, to provide a high level of service and safety. The development of HSCs should not necessitate further highway upgrades in the future. Services and facilities provided at HSCs must be for the benefit of highway users only and must not generate additional traffic in their own right apart from that necessary to service them.

#### 4.2.4 Driver Fatigue

Driver fatigue is a major cause of serious casualty and fatality accidents on highways. The primary objective of a HSC is to improve driver safety by providing safe, convenient and accessible services and facilities, which encourage drivers to stop and take an effective rest break during a journey, thereby alleviating driver fatigue. HSCs invite or provide the opportunity for highway users to stop and rest when they otherwise would not because:

- The turn off to a bypassed town has been passed inadvertently or otherwise;
- The distance to travel to a nearby town or highway service facility (HSC/HST) is uncertain or perceived to be too great or inconvenient; and
- The services required may not be available in bypassed towns on a 24-hour basis or during night-time hours.

As discussed in Section 2.3, only those facilities that are essential to or encourage an effective rest break should be included as part of a HSC.

## 4.3 Visual and Environmental Impacts

### 4.3.1 Site

Potential HSC development sites should be located to minimise the potential for environmental harm. The following environmental factors should be taken into account in the planning and design of a HSC site:

- Retention of native vegetation and habitats of high conservation value;
- Noise and vibration impacts associated with heavy vehicle movements to, within and from a HSC;
- The natural topography, avoiding the need for substantial excavation and levelling of the site;
- Extent of flood prone land located on or within proximity to the site;
- Nature, type and sensitivity of the local water environment (i.e. surface and groundwaters)
- Potential for erosion and sediment prevention and pollution control;
- Litter control strategy, including a weed management strategy;
- Waste storage, removal and disposal arrangements;
- Potential conflict with adjoining landuses, including appropriate fence, mounding and landscape planting treatment to address noise and visual amenity issues, light and other impacts;
- Ground conditions and soil contamination and presence of acid sulfate and potential acid sulfate soils;
- On-site effluent disposal (if proposed);
- Retention of top soil for redistribution across the site.

### 4.3.2 Built Form

The built form of HSCs should be both functionally efficient and aesthetically pleasing so as to encourage drivers to stop. All buildings within a HSC development should adopt a unified architectural approach, and signage should be integrated with the overall architectural approach. The design, cladding, colour and layout of the buildings should address the local landscape character and visual context. Buildings should also be designed to promote the penetration of natural daylight, use natural ventilation and incorporate materials with low embodied energy.

### 4.3.3 Landscape Treatment

HSCs should be integrated with the natural environment by protecting, retaining and enhancing existing native vegetation communities wherever possible, and identifying and protecting significant flora and fauna habitat areas. The retention of trees and other existing vegetation, especially mature trees, should be considered as part of the HSC design process. A landscape buffer zone should also be maintained between the HSC and the highway. Construction works and work on underground services should also be carried out in a manner that minimises impact on local vegetation communities.

New species to be planted as part of the HSC should be native and endemic to the local area, and robust to local climatic conditions. Any new vegetation should be located and positioned so as to avoid obscuring access, signage or lighting.

Screening of buildings from the highway and surrounding areas should take into consideration that visibility of a HSC may encourage drivers to stop.



## 4.4 Economic Impacts

The majority of the economic impacts arising from the operation of a HSC concern nearby or bypassed highway towns. The extent to which these towns are affected will depend on:

- The types of services and facilities provided at the HSC;
- The distance between the HSC and nearby towns, and the ease of access between them; and
- The interaction between the HSC and nearby towns in terms of access and function.

The services and facilities considered essential for highway users, and therefore included as part of a HSC, may duplicate some of those services provided in nearby or bypassed towns. A HSC can also detract from opportunistic trade that occurs when people drive directly into a township. However, by controlling the type and scale of services provided at a HSC, the economic impact on nearby towns resulting from competing services can be reduced. In particular, longer stay or multi-purpose developments should not be part of HSCs and should be located off the highway, in existing towns.

In addition, developers and operators of HSCs should be encouraged to work with the local community, traders associations and tourism associations such that the development of the HSC will result in mutually beneficial arrangements in relation to:

- Promotion of driver safety, which is in the interest of the wider community;
- Local employment opportunities at the HSC that cater for the local socio-economic fabric;
- Local produce purchase agreements;
- Job training/re-training schemes for all age groups; and
- Promotion of services, facilities, tourist destinations etc in nearby towns and the surrounding region.

These mutually beneficial arrangements can offset concerns about the perceived detrimental economic effects of a HSC on a local community.

## 5. THE PACIFIC HIGHWAY NETWORK

### 5.1 The Pacific Highway

The Pacific Highway between Sydney and Brisbane forms part of the trans-Australia National Highway network. It links the two State capital cities and passes through coastal regions that are recording high population growth rates and increasing economic importance, particularly through the development of tourism.

The Pacific Highway is approximately 1,000km in length and runs predominantly in a north-south direction along the eastern coast of Australia between Sydney and Brisbane (refer to **Figure 1**). It comprises a combination of single and dual carriageway sections. By 2006, it is expected that approximately 50% of the 677km of the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border will have been upgraded to a dual carriageway standard (i.e. four-lane divided highway).

**Photograph 3 Pacific Highway at Bulahdelah looking south**



### 5.2 The Pacific Highway Upgrading Program

#### 5.2.1 Background

In August 1996, the NSW and Commonwealth Governments announced their joint commitment to a ten-year program of upgrading the Pacific Highway between Hexham on the NSW central coast and the Queensland border. The \$2.2 billion program will significantly improve the standard of the highway, eliminating accident 'blackspots' and reducing travel times.

The principal objectives of this program are:

- Reduced travel times
- Reduced travel costs
- Significantly reduced road accidents and injuries
- Reconstruction of the route in accordance with ESD principles
- Maximum effectiveness of expenditure
- A community satisfied with physical development of the route
- A route that supports economic development.

Currently, 21 major projects and 19 smaller projects have been completed as part of the Pacific Highway Upgrading Program and they have reduced travel times between Hexham and the Queensland border by approximately 55 minutes. An additional 4 major projects are under construction with 15 other projects currently in the planning and development stages.

### 5.2.2 Bulahdelah Upgrade

On the 29 November 2001, the NSW Minister for Roads announced that the preferred route option for the upgrade of the Pacific Highway at Bulahdelah. The preferred route option deviates to the east of the township traversing the base of Bulahdelah (Alum) Mountain and was selected following a route selection process that examined the development and assessment of a number of possible options to the west, to the east and directly through the Bulahdelah township. A diagrammatic representation of the proposed Bulahdelah Bypass (which may subject to further revisions) is shown in **Figure 6**.

The Bulahdelah Upgrade is approximately 8.7km in length and will operate with a 110km/h design speed. This option will comprise the construction of new bridges over the Myall River and Frys Creek, together with vehicle overpasses at Myall Road, Lee Street and to connect the waste depot/sewerage treatment plant and Mackenzie Street. Two interchanges will be constructed at the northern and southern 'tie-in' points with the existing highway (refer to **Figure 6**) and will comprise a half interchange (southern) and full interchange (northern). The length of the proposed upgrade option is 1,235m or 1 minute 30 seconds from the northbound exit ramp to the Bulahdelah Post Office or 1,315m or 1 minute 35 seconds from the southbound exit ramp to the Bulahdelah Post Office.

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is currently being prepared by Parsons Brinkerhoff (PB) for the Bulahdelah Upgrade. Following the completion of the EIS it will be placed on public exhibition for comment. Subject to consideration of the EIS and the nature of the comments received, the RTA will seek approval from the NSW Minister for Planning to proceed with the project.

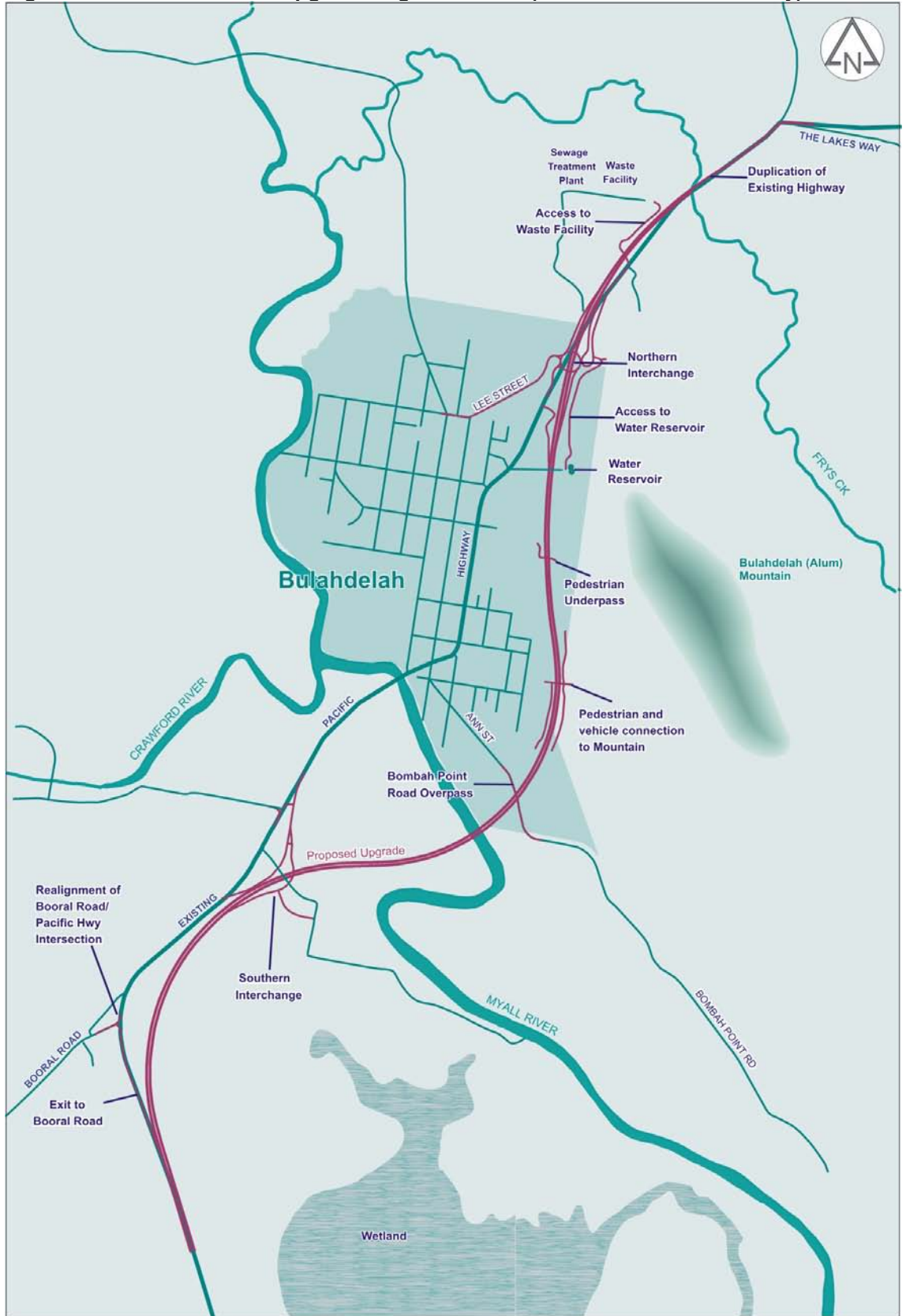
### 5.2.3 Karuah Upgrade

The 9.8km, four-lane bypass at Karuah is currently under construction. This highway upgrade will form a bypass approximately 3km to the west of the Karuah township. It will run from Swan Bay Road and connect with the Pacific Highway at The Branch Lane located approximately 4.7km to the east of Karuah. The Karuah Bypass involves the construction of a 612m bridge over the Karuah River at Horse Island, and a 700m crossing over a designated SEPP 14 wetland. Several smaller bridges will be constructed to facilitate local access.

Junctions at the western and eastern ends of Karuah would provide access to and from Karuah. The existing Pacific Highway route, which runs through the centre of Karuah, together with the existing bridge that spans the Karuah River, would be retained to maintain local access within and to/from Karuah.

The Karuah Bypass is planned to be completed and open to traffic by the end of 2004.

**Figure 6** Bulahdelah Upgrade Alignment Plan (indicative illustration only)



### 5.2.4 Relationship with Other Highway Upgrades

In the vicinity of the Great Lakes LGA, substantial improvements to the Pacific Highway have either been recently completed, are under construction, or completing environmental determination. These improvements to the south of the Bulahdelah township include:

- Completion of the 7.6km divided dual carriageway upgrade bypass of Raymond Terrace in 1998.
- Completion of the 18km duplication of the highway between Raymond Terrace to a point 5km west of Karuah (Swan Bay Road) in late-2000.
- Duplication of the highway between Karuah to Bulahdelah from 5km east of Karuah (The Branch Lane) to approximately 2km south of Bulahdelah has been granted development approval. Construction of the first 11km section of this upgrade project is planned to commence in late 2004.

To the north of Bulahdelah the duplication and upgrading of more than 54km of the highway from just north of Bulahdelah to Taree has been completed and opened to traffic as part of the Pacific Highway Upgrading Program. Improvements include:

- Completion of the 23km dual carriageway upgrade between Bulahdelah and Coolongolook in 1999;
- Completion of the 11.7km dual carriageway upgrade between Coolongolook and Wang Wauk in 2000;
- Completion of the 4.8km dual carriageway upgrade between Wang Wauk and Bundacree Creek in late-1998; and
- Completion of the first stage of the 14.5km dual carriageway highway bypass of Taree in 1997 with the duplication of the bridge over the Manning River completed in 2000.

Construction of a 9.7km section of the highway between Bundacree Creek and Possum Brush (Nabiac) is planned to commence in late 2004.

## 5.3 Role of the Pacific Highway at Bulahdelah

As it passes through the Great Lakes LGA, the Pacific Highway serves national, regional and local transport and accessibility roles, carrying a diverse mix of traffic.

In **national terms**, the Pacific Highway links Sydney with Brisbane. The highway passes through North Coast region that has, and is forecast to continue to have, the highest population growth rate in NSW. Many areas along the highway experience increases of up to 50% to 100% in traffic volumes during peak holiday periods throughout the year.

Annual average traffic volumes on the Pacific Highway between Sydney and Brisbane are estimated to be growing at 4.3% per annum.

In **regional terms**, the Pacific highway links the rapidly growing coastal areas on the NSW mid-north coast between Newcastle and Coffs Harbour, such as around Port Stephens, Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest, Forster-Tuncurry and Taree. Population growth is occurring in response to population shifts based on lifestyle factors for families and retirees seeking residential locations with high environmental amenity, as well as economic development particularly related to tourism development. Based on the Roadside Interview Survey conducted by PB in 2000, it was determined that the proportion of regional drivers stopping at Bulahdelah is approximately 8% to 10% of total highway traffic.

In **local terms**, in the vicinity of the townships of Bulahdelah, Coolongolook and Nabiac, the Pacific Highway also provides local access for residents of these townships and surrounding areas as there are no alternative routes for many local trips, especially in relation to trips travelling in a north-south direction between the major centres of Taree and Newcastle.

## 5.4 Baseline Traffic Data

### 5.4.1 Existing Traffic Volumes

Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) represents the average number of axle pairs passing in both directions during a 24-hour period estimated over a period of one-year, for example a typical car produces one axle pair and a three axle truck one and a half axle pairs. AADT is different from AADV (Average Annual Daily Vehicles), which is the average number of vehicles passing in both directions during a 24-hour period estimated over a period of one year.

The RTA maintains a Permanent Traffic Counter located at South Bulahdelah (Count Station 09.909). The AADT for the Pacific Highway at Bulahdelah has progressively increased from approximately 4,000 in 1984 to approximately 13,354 in 2001. The AADV based on traffic counts and estimates carried out by PPK (May, 2000 and 2002) on selected roads around Bulahdelah indicated that the Pacific Highway carries approximately 14,600 vehicles/day south of Bulahdelah, increasing to 15,000 vehicles/day in the centre of Bulahdelah. This slight increase reflects the relatively small contribution made by local traffic movements within the town. Weekend traffic flows increase by up to 10% to 12% and this volume increases more significantly during peak holiday periods.

Based on data presented in the Bulahdelah Upgrade Route Options Report – Traffic Assessment (PPK, 2001) which utilised traffic count data generated by the RTA for the Hunter Region in 1998 and traffic counts carried out by PPK in 2000 on the Pacific Highway to the south of the Myall River bridge at Bulahdelah, heavy vehicle movements (i.e. trucks with two or more axle pairs, buses and coaches, semi-trailers, B-doubles, road trains) on average account for approximately 21% of total daily vehicles and 55% of total night-time vehicles during weekdays. Weekend movements recorded heavy vehicle movements accounting for approximately 9% of total daily vehicles and 30% of total night-time vehicles.

Traffic on the Pacific Highway within the Great Lakes LGA peak during the major holiday periods such as Christmas, Easter and school holidays. At these times traffic flows are 50% to 100% greater than the average weekday level. The highest recorded daily traffic flow in vehicles per day during the Christmas/New Year period of 1998 was approximately 29,000 vehicles. During these peak periods, considerable delays and congestion can occur on the highway, particularly at Bulahdelah as traffic is slowed in the built-up area by local traffic and the operation of the traffic signals opposite the Catholic Church just to the north of the Stuart Street intersection and at the intersection of Meade Street. For non-holiday weekdays, traffic on the Pacific Highway at Bulahdelah is uniformly distributed throughout the day, without the major ‘commuter peak’ that is evident in metropolitan regions.

### 5.4.2 Traffic Origin-Destinations

Bulahdelah has evolved as a traditional stopping point on the highway and this reflected by the type and extent of services available to all highway users and local residents. The principal reasons for stopping at Bulahdelah are for refuelling and rest/meal breaks. Shopping and personal business accounts for a small proportion of stopping.

Whilst, there is a scarcity of good quality recent data relating to origin-destination information at Bulahdelah, traffic flowing through the township comprises a mix of through and local movements. A roadside interview survey was conducted at key points along the Pacific Highway at Bulahdelah between the 4 May 2000 and 7 May 2000 by PB. Based on the findings of these survey results provided by PB Bulahdelah, Port Macquarie, Sydney and Newcastle were the most common origin-destination points. Trips originating and ending at Bulahdelah accounted for a significant proportion of journeys on weekdays, for example 18% of origin trips and 10% of destination trips. Over half of these journeys were within the Bulahdelah township.

The majority of traffic travelling through Bulahdelah is dominated by the origin-destination points of Sydney, Central Coast, Foster, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and other areas in northern NSW. Inter-regional journeys tend to be predominantly in a north-south direction, particularly on weekends due to an increase in the number of social and recreational trips along this section of the highway.

Journeys to the east of Bulahdelah are negligible with local journeys to and from points to the west of the township accounting for less than 7% of overall journeys. All journeys within Bulahdelah decrease across the weekend whilst inter-regional/city journeys increase due to an increased number of recreational trips.

Combined weekday/weekend trip origins are split between 45% to the north and 32% to the south of Bulahdelah with the highest origin point being Sydney. Approximately 37% of trip destinations were generated to the north and 46% to the south of Bulahdelah with Sydney being the highest destination point. Truck traffic accounts for approximately 20% of the total stopping traffic surveyed.

#### 5.4.3 Travel Times

Travel times are an important consideration in determining the optimum location for major stops on the Pacific Highway, particularly HSC facilities. Travel times are particularly variable for heavy vehicles. Travel time is dependent on the road alignment, pavement conditions, type of heavy vehicle, weight and type of load and weather conditions.

The typical trip time (driving time without stops for cars and light vehicles) between Sydney and Brisbane based on data supplied by the NRMA is approximately 10½ hours. Heavy vehicle trip times are likely to take longer subject to loads and other factors. To comply with driving regulations, heavy vehicle drivers would need to stop for at least two 30-minute breaks during such a journey.

The travel times presented in **Table 8** are inclusive of recently completed upgrade projects along the Pacific Highway corridor between Sydney and Brisbane. Given that the whole dynamics of travel on the highway is likely to change once all the upgrade projects are completed, the travel times presented in **Table 8** will change. It is expected that the future travel time to Bulahdelah from Sydney's northern suburbs and the start of the F3 will be close to the "2-hour" mark as the Karuah Bypass and eventually the Karuah to Bulahdelah Upgrade Projects become operational.

**Table 8** Travel times along the Pacific Highway between Sydney and Brisbane

Distance (km)		Town	Average between towns (north bound)			Cumulative time	
(from Sydney)	(from Brisbane)		km	time	km/h	(from Sydney)	(from Brisbane)
0	926	Sydney	-			0	10:25
155	771	Hexham	155	1:50	84.5	1:50	8:35
190	736	Karuah	35	0:20	105	2:10	8:15
233	693	Bulahdelah	43	0:25	103.2	2:35	7:50
306	620	Taree	73	1:00	73	3:35	6:50
416	510	Kempsey	110	1:10	94.3	4:45	5:40
521	405	Coffs Harbour	105	1:00	105	5:45	4:40
601	325	Grafton	80	1:05	73.8	6:50	3:35
726	200	Ballina	125	1:25	88.2	8:15	2:10
831	95	Qld border	105	1:15	84	9:30	0:55
926	0	Brisbane	95	0:55	103.6	10:25	0

#### 5.4.4 Road Accident Data

Based on information contained in the Karuah to Bulahdelah Upgrade EIS (ERM, 1999) there was a total of 21 fatalities on the Karuah to Bulahdelah section of the Pacific Highway between January 1993 and March 1999 with 11 of those occurring in 7 accidents since January 1997. The current average annual accident rate is calculated at 0.27 accidents per million vehicle kilometres. Around 68% of all accidents recorded were either 'head on' or 'off path' accidents, which are considered to be the most serious. These accidents between Karuah and Bulahdelah represent 75% of all fatal accidents.

A review of the road accident data presented in the Bundacree Creek to Possum Brush EIS (SKM, 2001) indicated that between January 1990 and September 1998 a total of 101 accidents had occurred along a 10.44km stretch of the highway between Bundacree Creek and 1km north of Failford Road. Of these 101 accidents, 10 have resulted in fatalities. Overall the rate of accidents along this stretch of the highway is generally below the State average with around 27% of all accidents recorded being either 'head-on' or 'off-path'.

Based on recent road accident data provided by the RTA, a total of 70 fatalities have been recorded on the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border between 1 January 2003 and 11 March 2004. Of these 70 fatalities, 14 or 20% have been recorded either within or on the boundary of the Great Lakes LGA.

The recorded accident statistics presented above profile stretches of the Pacific Highway that are susceptible to fatal accident occurrences within the Great Lakes LGA. These stretches of the highway are known 'fatigue zones' and at times the mixing of local and through traffic movements has resulted in conflicts accounting for a proportion of the above accident statistics presented.



## 6. EXISTING HIGHWAY SERVICES WITHIN THE STUDY AREA

### 6.1 Introduction

An inventory has been prepared to profile the type, location and distribution of existing highway service facilities along the Pacific Highway as it passes through the Great Lakes LGA. This inventory details and maps the locations and types of existing service facilities along the highway corridor between Raymond Terrace in the south and Taree in the north (see **Figure 7**). It also takes into account those facilities and townships which will be bypassed to provide additional context. This information was based on a series of site visits carried out by Arup between September and November 2003.

### 6.2 Categorisation of Existing Highway Service Facilities

The categorisation of the type and distribution of existing facilities located along the Pacific Highway within the Great Lakes LGA was developed. A summary of the highway service facilities and stopping areas available to travellers using the highway is based on a hierarchical approach ranging from service stations, to rest areas (RA) and truck parking bays (TPB).

#### 6.2.1 Raymond Terrace

Raymond Terrace is a large town of approximately 12,332 (ABS, 1996) people located approximately 68km and 25km to the south of Bulahdelah and Karuah respectively. Recent highway upgrade works have included the opening of the Raymond Terrace Bypass in 1998. The range of highway service facilities on the Pacific Highway at Heather Brae (i.e. located at the southern 'tie-in' point with the Raymond Terrace Bypass) includes:

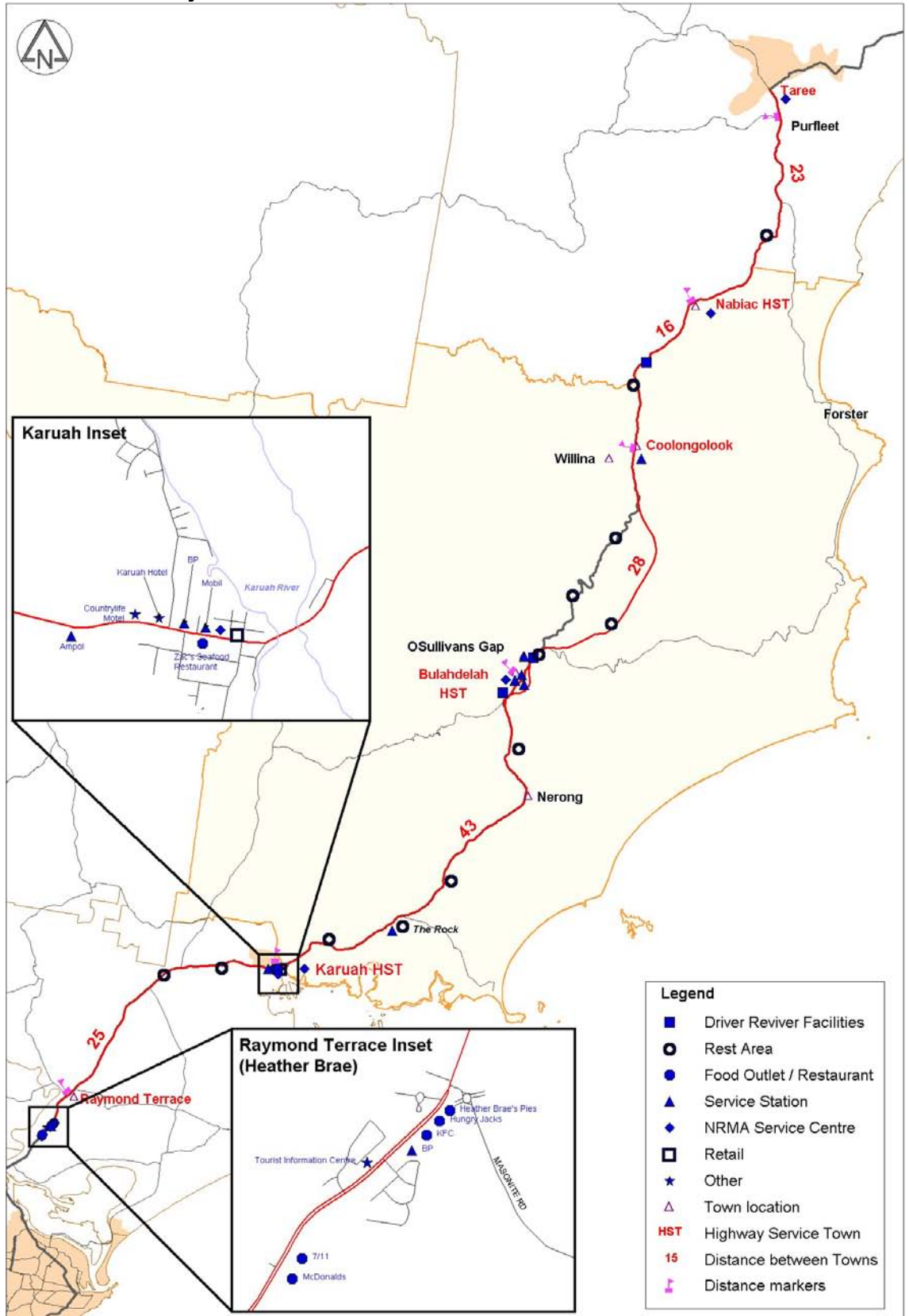
##### *Northbound*

- Tourist Information Centre with a motel, restaurant, café and take-away food outlet;
- Sir Francis Drake Inn; and
- Pacific Gardens Van Village.

##### *Southbound*

- Heather Brae's Pies outlet;
- Hungry Jacks outlet;
- Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet;
- BP service station;
- McDonalds outlet; and
- 7/11 store.

**Figure 7 Existing Facilities and Stopping Areas on the Pacific Highway between Raymond Terrace and Taree**



### 6.2.2 Karuah

Karuah is a township of approximately 1,062 people (ABS, 2001). It has a lineal town centre that straddles a 1km stretch of the Pacific Highway on the western side of the Karuah River. Approximately 40 businesses are located on this stretch of the highway and key facilities available to serve the needs of highway users include:

#### *Northbound*

- Countrylife Motel;
- Karuah Hotel;
- BP service station and roadhouse;
- Mobil service station;
- Mini-supermarket and newsagent;
- NRMA service centre; and
- Motor vehicle repair workshop.

#### *Southbound*

- Zac's seafood restaurant; and
- Ampol service station.

The Karuah Bypass is planned to open to traffic at the end of 2004 and direct access to what will be the former highway, functioning as a local road, will remain.

### 6.2.3 Great Lakes LGA

Highway service facilities available in the Great Lakes LGA vary between TPB for heavy vehicles which are closely spaced to RA with basic amenities such as rubbish bins, toilets and covered tables to service stations which are predominantly located at the townships of Bulahdelah, Coolongolook and Nahiatic.

The range of facilities available at the townships of Karuah, Bulahdelah, Coolongolook and Nahiatic is presented in **Table 9. Figure 2** specifically shows the type and location of existing facilities available at Bulahdelah.

Existing 24-hour service stations operating along this segment of the Pacific Highway are located at:

- Mobil and Shell service stations on the north and southbound carriageways respectively at Bulahdelah;
- Caltex service station on the southbound carriageway at Coolongolook; and
- Ampol service station on the northbound carriageway at Nahiatic.

**Table 9 Facilities by type and relevance to highway users at Karuah, Bulahdelah, Coolongolook and Nahiic**

Facility Type	Karuah	Bulahdelah	Coolongolook	Nahiic
Bank/Building Society		✓		✓
Post Office	✓	✓		✓
Police	✓	✓		✓
Ambulance		✓		
Health Services/Doctor	✓	✓		✓
Pharmacy	✓	✓		✓
Mini-market with Fresh Foods	✓	✓		✓
General Store	✓	✓	✓	✓
Newsagent	✓	✓		✓
Takeaway/Café/Restaurant	✓	✓	✓	✓
Service Station	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hotel/Motel	✓	✓		✓
Tourist Information Centre		✓		✓
NRMA Service Centre		✓		✓
Parks/Outdoor Playground Areas	✓	✓		✓
Caravan Park	✓	✓		✓

#### 6.2.4 Taree

Taree is a regional centre situated in the Manning Valley approximately 27km to the north of Great Lakes LGA boundary with a population of approximately 16,000 people (ABS, 2001). It contains a large range of shops, shopping centres and recreational facilities. A variety of accommodation types are also available including motels, holiday apartments, caravan parks and Bed and Breakfast style accommodation. The first stage of the Taree Bypass opened to traffic in 1997 with the duplication and bridging of the Manning River completed in 2000.

DA approval has been granted to a HSC development on the south-western part of the southern interchange (Old Bar Road) of the Taree Bypass, however, as indicated in Section 1.2 only minimal works have been carried out.

### 6.3 Assessment of Current Situation

#### 6.3.1 Approach

The current distribution of highway service facilities in terms of location and spacing, and the extent and type of facilities available at Bulahdelah, Coolongolook and Nahiic has been examined. A summary of this process is presented in **Table 10** (see below).

The approach principally comprised the following sequential process:

- Division of the Pacific Highway corridor into three sections according to the townships through which it passes within the Great Lakes LGA
  - Karuah River to Bulahdelah
  - Bulahdelah to Coolongolook
  - Coolongolook to Nahiic
- Determination of current spacing between service facilities in terms of distance and driving time; and

- Assessment of the current spacing with respect to the information presented in **Table 10**, topographical conditions, the need for commercial facilities and feedback from the consultation exercise carried out with the various highway user groups (refer to **Table 1**).

### 6.3.2 Karuah River to Bulahdelah

The type of service facilities and stopping opportunities available to drivers travelling along this 41km section of the highway comprise:

- Service Stations;
- Truck parking bays (TPB);
- Rest areas (RA); and
- Service facilities at Bulahdelah.

The distribution of roadside stopping areas between Karuah and Bulahdelah for northbound traffic tends to be limited. There is one RA located approximately 6km to the north of the Karuah township. The distance between this stop and Bulahdelah for northbound traffic is approximately 37km. Basic facilities comprising rubbish bins are available at this location, however, there is no segregated parking for heavy and light vehicles. Based on site observations there appears to be adequate parking to accommodate up to five B-Doubles.

Northbound traffic travelling through Bulahdelah can select from the following range of facilities to stop at, however, only some of these facilities cater for heavy vehicle parking and this is usually limited to two or three vehicles at any one time:

- Town centre extending off the highway along Stroud Street comprising a selection of cafes, mini-supermarket, pharmacy, Plough Inn Hotel, bakery, newsagency, hairdressers, post office and banking facilities etc;
- Information Centre located on the corner of the highway and Crawford Street;
- Mt View Hotel;
- Mobil service station (24-hour facility);
- Bulahdelah Motor Lodge;
- Caltex service station and NRMA service centre;
- Pines Motel, Bulahdelah Myall Hotel and caravan park; and
- O'Sullivan's Gap service station located approximately 4km to the north of the Bulahdelah town centre.

Southbound traffic travelling through Bulahdelah is exposed to the following range of services and stopping areas:

- Shell service station (24-hour facility and heavy vehicle parking on roadside available); and
- Alum Mountain Forest Park located a short distance off Meade Street.

Stopping facilities available to southbound traffic travelling along this section of the highway are located at RAs with basic amenities such as rubbish bins, toilet facilities and covered tables at approximately 5km and 25km south of Bulahdelah. A facility known as "The Rock" comprises a service station and a large-scale model of Uluru (Ayers Rock), within which there are shops selling food and souvenirs. It is located on the southbound carriageway approximately 1km to the south of the Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest turnoff or 31km south of Bulahdelah/13km north of Karuah. This facility does not currently operate on a 24-hour basis. The Rock formed part of Leyland Brothers World, a tourist theme park that is no longer in operation. However, many of its facilities remain and a DA (DA 630/2004) has been lodged to GLC for determination to upgrade and modernise this facility including operating on a 24-hour basis.

### 6.3.3 Bulahdelah to Coolongolook

This 28km section of the highway is generally characterised by a new section of 4-lane divided road linking the townships of Bulahdelah and Coolongolook. Along this stretch of highway a range of quality RA and TPB cater for the needs of both light and heavy vehicles travelling along the north and southbound carriageways of the highway with adequate and segregated areas for parking available. RAs shown in **Photograph 2** (i.e. located 12km to the north of Bulahdelah) feature segregated parking areas for light and heavy vehicles, toilets, covered tables and rubbish bins, children's play facilities and BBQ equipment.

There is one 'out-of-town' service station (O'Sullivan's Gap) located at the intersection of Wootton Road and the Bulahdelah to Coolongolook Upgrade section approximately 4km to the north of the Bulahdelah town centre. This service station principally caters for northbound travelling traffic along the highway and/or local traffic travelling along Wootton Road and the surrounding hinterland areas.

#### Photograph 4 Northbound Carriageway of the Pacific Highway as it passes through the centre of Coolongolook



### 6.3.4 Coolongolook to Nabiac

The range of service facilities and stopping areas located along this 16km section of the highway is limited to the facilities available in the townships of Coolongolook and Nabiac through which the highway currently passes.

Coolongolook is a small town of around 380 people straddling the highway, approximately 30km to the north of Bulahdelah. It provides a limited range of services for both highway users and the local community. There is a 24-hour Caltex service station located on the southbound carriageway within the town. This is a traditional stop for long distance truck drivers travelling between Sydney and Brisbane.

A designated "Driver-Reviver" site is located near the Wang Wauk River approximately 4km to the south of Bundacree Creek. Access is available to both north and southbound travelling traffic.

Nabiac is a small township of approximately 500 people and provides a range of services for both highway traffic and the local and rural communities located in the surrounding hinterland primarily to the south, south-west and north. It has a small commercial centre containing a doctor's surgery and pharmacy, hotel, two small supermarkets, butcher, bakery, café, hardware store, video shop etc, primary school and residential properties.

There is a 24-hour Ampol service station located at the intersection of the highway and Wallambah Road. It is located on the northbound carriageway of the Pacific Highway and caters for interstate and intrastate bus services. A second service station is located at the caravan park on the north-west side of the highway adjacent to Hoskins Street. This does not operate on a 24-hour basis.

**Photograph 5 Ampol Service Station located on the northbound carriageway of the Pacific Highway at Nabic**



## 6.4 Conclusions

The overall philosophy for the provision of highway service facilities along the Pacific Highway is that RA and TPB should be provided at regular intervals and, HSCs and HSTs with an integrated range of facilities at less frequent intervals.

Based on the inventory conducted above, it is concluded that the distribution of existing highway service facilities recorded along the Pacific Highway within the Great Lakes LGA are generally well-spaced and located on both sides of the highway corridor to cater for the needs of the travelling public (refer to **Table 10**). These facilities comprise a range of 'out-of-town' facilities and/or facilities available in the townships of Bulahdelah, Coolongolook and Nabic. A total of eight service stations are located along the Pacific Highway between the Karuah River and Nabic with four of these operating on a 24-hour basis.

**Table 10 Summary of highway service facilities**

Criteria/Section	Karuah River - Bulahdelah	Bulahdelah - Coolongolook	Coolongolook - Nabic
Distance (km)	43	28	16
Driving time (hrs)	0:25	0:17	0:10
Maximum distance between stops (km)	37 (north)	18	10
* Total number of stops (RA/service stations) in highway section	7	3	4
Total number of service stations in section (including 24-hour operations)	4 (2)	2 (1)	2 (1)

\* This excludes TPB and the ancillary services and facilities located within the townships of Bulahdelah, Coolongolook and Nabic such as take-away food outlets and restaurants, vehicle repair workshops etc. Service stations and ancillary facilities available at Karuah have also been excluded.

## 7. HSC/HST OPTION ASSESSMENT

### 7.1 Introduction

To continue to effectively service the needs of the travelling public along the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border, which includes the 90km stretch within the Great Lakes LGA, an adequate range of quality facilities must be made available to meet the needs of all highway users.

The future direction and viability of highway service facilities along the Pacific Highway as it traverses the north coast of NSW is integral to meeting the varying needs of the travelling public. Taking into account multiple journey origin and destination points, the intensification of land use and population growth, and the reduced travel times along the Pacific Highway corridor between Hexham and the Queensland border, the relationships, and the way in which they are changing, between highway users and local towns performing a highway service role is critical to meeting such needs.

It is acknowledged that recent and future highway upgrade projects will continue to result in improved driver safety conditions and reduced travel times on the highway. In the case of Great Lakes LGA, future travel times from Sydney's northern suburbs and the start of the F3 are likely to be around the 2-hour mark following the opening of the Karuah Bypass and duplication of the Karuah to Bulahdelah section of the highway. This is the time that motorists travelling along the highway should be looking to 'stop revive survive'. Travel times will continue to change as the various highway upgrade projects open to traffic in future years.

The provision of highway services either in the form of new HSC developments, upgraded RA/TPB or the reinforcement of towns currently servicing the needs of highway users must be planned and 'tie-in' with the Pacific Highway Upgrading Program. For the purposes of this Strategy the current minimum separation distance between HSC facilities of 24km suggested under the Minister's Direction (see Section 3.1) has been considered and used to guide the identification of potential HSC options within the Great Lakes LGA. Other provisions contained under Principles 6 to 9 of this Direction have also been taken into account.

### 7.2 Methodology

A site identification exercise was conducted to locate potential HSC development options and to classify HSTs within the Great Lakes LGA. A limited range of options was developed for further consideration. The purpose of this exercise was to test the suitability of these options against physical, social, economic and environmental factors, including the needs of the travelling public and also to assess the impact of these upon existing towns with a highway servicing function and HSCs. The development of options aimed to:

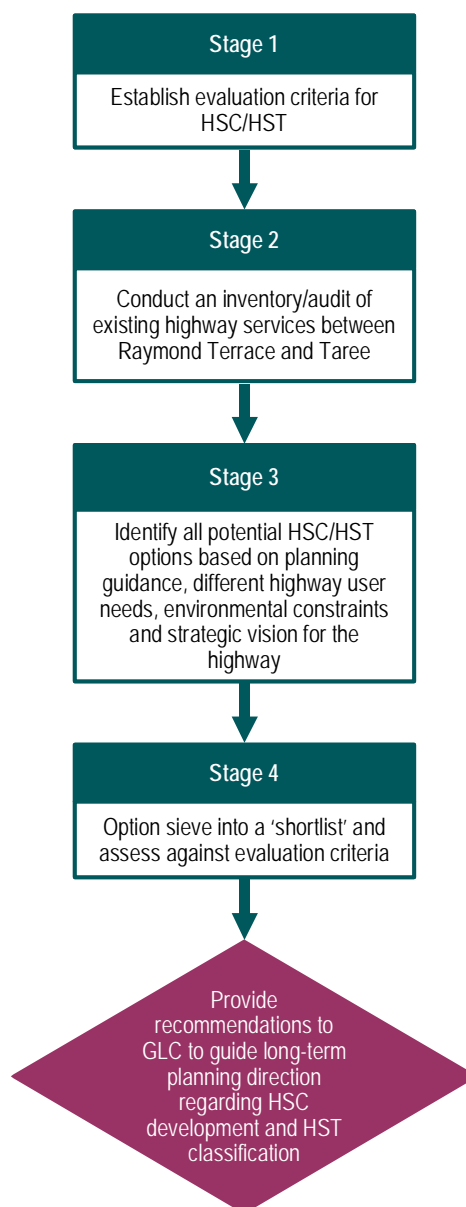
- Maximise the benefits in terms of location, distribution and flexibility for future highway upgrades;
- Minimise landtake and the impact on local townships, communities and the environment;
- Provide the greatest opportunities for integration with the Pacific Highway and the adjacent road network and the motoring public;
- Take into account planned and future highway upgrades within and adjacent to the Great Lakes LGA;
- Satisfy the varying needs of the travelling public; and



- Conform with the requirements of the Minister’s Direction which guides “*commercial and retail development along the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border*”, the controls of LEP 1996 and other environmental planning instruments.

More generally, the evaluation of alternatives, the nature of HSC developments, their location and distribution along the existing and future highway network is regarded as good practice, resulting in a more transparent and robust application of planning and development controls.

The evaluation process has been based on an iterative approach of desk-based review, consultations with a selection of road users and other stakeholders with a highway service role/interest, and site visits. Specifically, the approach employed during this evaluation process has comprised the following steps:



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### 7.2.1 Evaluation Criteria

Implicit to the outcomes of this Strategy is to make clear the circumstances that would be needed to justify the development of HSCs and the criteria necessary to classify HSTs within the Great Lakes LGA. In the case of potential HSC development within the Great Lakes LGA it would be most unusual for a HSC development proposal to be considered if it did not meet all the requisite criteria presented in **Table 11** unless all other practicable solutions for locations have been exhausted and other considerations had been fully taken into account.

Specific evaluation criteria have therefore been developed based on knowledge of the requirements set-out by DIPNR under the Minister's Direction for "*commercial and retail development along the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border*" and previous project development experience along the Pacific Highway. A copy of the current Minister's Direction is presented in **Appendix C**.

In deciding on whether there are any appropriate locations for potential HSC development and towns that satisfy the requirements of a HST within the Great Lakes LGA, the following criteria have been established to sieve the options identified during the site identification exercise.

**Table 11 HSC/HST evaluation criteria**

Criteria	Description
<b>Location</b>	Potential HSC sites must be located as close as reasonably possible to an existing town that has been bypassed, namely at or adjacent to interchanges but not in environmentally sensitive areas, or on controlled access roads connecting the town to the bypass.
<b>Distribution</b>	Potential HSC developments must be located as near to bypassed towns as possible and are to be spaced approximately 24km apart or beyond 24km of a town through which the highway passes. The distribution of HSTs will vary subject to town locations and the range and quality of services provided.
<b>Access</b>	Direct connections and frontage to a new or planned highway bypass are essential to maximise travel dynamics, particularly efficient journey times and efficiencies, and road safety.
<b>Economic Viability</b>	HSC/HST should provide benefits to all highway users, including commercial bus/truck operators; local businesses with a highway service role/interest through maximising the opportunities to capture a proportion of highway through trade; potential for regeneration and redistribution of economic activity; and new economic growth opportunities along the Pacific Highway corridor as it passes through the Great Lakes LGA.
<b>Capacity and Facilities</b>	HSC must only provide a range of essential services considered necessary to 'stop revive survive' and supply fuel. HSC facilities should provide segregated parking facilities to accommodate between 25-30 B-Doubles and 5-10 bus/coach vehicles, segregated fuel plazas for both light and heavy vehicles, a combination of sit-down and take away food outlets, toilets and showers, public telephones, limited retail space that provides essential vehicle service products and refreshments, and an outdoor picnic and children's play area. HSCs must operate on a 24-hour, 7-days per week basis.  The range and quality of facilities available at HST must in part cater for the needs of all highway users and be maintained to facilitate opportunistic trade from through traffic. There must be at least one 24-hour service station operating in a designated HST
<b>Layout and Geometry</b>	HSC developments should be configured to serve either both directions of traffic from one side of the highway via appropriate access connections, and/or from opposite sides of the highway (i.e. two HSCs) in a staggered formation not more than 500m apart from each other.
<b>Planning Policy</b>	Conformance with the objectives and principles set under the s117(2) S28 Direction and integration with other strategic policy guidance governing HSC development in NSW and the upgrading of the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border.
<b>Environmental Factors</b>	Sites of potential HSC development or consolidated development of HSTs should be selected to avoid any designated "environmentally sensitive areas" and not result in any significant adverse impacts on the environment.

### 7.3 Key Issues

Key issues considered as part of the assessment of potential HSC/HST options within the Great Lakes LGA are:

- The intensity of land use along and in the vicinity of the Pacific Highway contributing to a significant number of vehicle movements with multiple origin-destination points;
- The stopping requirements of heavy vehicles travelling between Sydney and Brisbane or Newcastle and Brisbane, i.e. two major stops will need to be taken by drivers to ensure that they comply with the requirements of the *Heavy Vehicle Driver Regulations*;
- The suitability of the Great Lakes LGA as an attractive stopping point on the overall Pacific Highway network in terms of location and travel times from major population centres;
- The different highway user needs of heavy and light vehicles in terms of stopping, i.e. rest, fuel and comfort;
- The current and future spacings between highway service facilities, stopping areas and towns, particularly in relation to proposed highway upgrade projects;
- The influence of traditional stops on driver behaviour; and
- The potential economic impact associated with ‘out-of-town’ bypasses and possible HSC developments on the highway-related businesses in Bulahdelah and Karuah and their capacity to respond positively and strategically to reduce such impacts.

### 7.4 Light and Heavy Vehicle Stopping Requirements

The stopping needs of heavy vehicles and light passenger vehicles differ slightly. Heavy vehicles are legally required to take periodic rest breaks and sufficient opportunities and facilities must be provided along the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border to facilitate drivers to meet the requirements under the *Heavy Vehicle Driver Regulations 1999*.

Light passenger vehicles are more likely to stop at rest areas for personal comfort reasons rather than to specifically seek rest and, therefore, these vehicle types require regular opportunities for comfort breaks at sites with an appropriate range of facilities.

The Great Lakes LGA is just over two-hours travel time from the northern suburbs of Sydney and the start of the F3, and approximately eight-hours travel time from Brisbane. It is an ideal place for both light and heavy vehicle drivers to stop. Under the ‘stop-revive-survive’ program promoted by the RTA, drivers are encouraged to stop every 2-hours to take an effective rest break in the interests of driver safety. There is already a good range of quality facilities available within the Great Lakes LGA including two designated ‘driver reviver’ locations for highway users to stop at. In terms of long-distance heavy vehicle drivers, the Great Lakes LGA offers an opportunity for southbound drivers to take their second mandatory rest break prior to the final run into Sydney (see **Figure 8**).

A primary function of a town bypass is to redirect through traffic out of the town, particularly heavy vehicle traffic, which can result in demonstrable positive impacts to road safety, community cohesion and connectivity, local amenity and the environment (i.e. noise and emissions). However, negative impacts do arise and they are generally associated with the short-term economic impact arising from a reduction in trade previously generated by through traffic for highway reliant businesses located in the bypassed towns. The Strategy has taken into account these factors as part of the HSC option identification and evaluation process.

**Figure 8** Locations of 5-hour Heavy Vehicle Stopping Areas and Drive-Revive-Survive Areas between Sydney and Brisbane



### 7.5 Description of Highway Service Options (HSC/HST)

Potential HSC and HST options have been identified with their respective locations presented in **Figure 9**. Detailed descriptions of each option follow.

**Figure 9** Locations of HSC Options



### **7.5.1 Option A - The Branch Lane HSC Proposal, north of Karuah**

The Branch Lane site is located approximately 5km to the north of the Karuah township at 1783 The Branch Lane. It is currently the subject of DA 681/2003 for the development of a proposed HSC. The determining authority for this DA is GLC.

### **7.5.2 Option B – The Rock Service Station**

The Rock is an existing service station with restaurant and tourist facilities located on the southbound carriageway of the highway, approximately 1km to the south of the turnoff to Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest between Karuah and Bulahdelah. This stretch of the highway is characterised by a straight section of two-lane road. The terrain across the site is flat and access for northbound traffic to The Rock is currently provided by a right-hand turning bay.

It has sufficient capacity to accommodate the parking requirements of about 10 to 15 trucks. The zoning of the site is 1(a) Rural under the LEP 1996, allowing for “service station” development. The surrounding land use is also zoned 1(a) Rural.

The Rock is currently the subject of DA 630/2004 for upgrading and modernisation of existing uses on the site. The determining authority for this DA is GLC. It is proposed to renovate and upgrade the existing facilities including restoring the external cladding of the mini “Ayres Rock”, a new fuel sales area, shop and dining room, new parking arrangements to cater for up to 63 car parking spaces and 6 coach/truck parking spaces, upgrade underground fuel storage and supply lines, widen the existing driveway, provide new landscaping and a driver reviver area along the highway frontage.

Subject to the new access arrangements associated with the duplication of the highway along this section and the proposed construction of a grade separated interchange at the Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest intersection approximately 1km to the north, it is understood that direct access off the highway will be lost. Travellers wishing to continue to stop at The Rock to refuel, rest or take an amenity break will have to access this facility via the new interchange and connecting road.

Current access to the site for northbound travelling vehicles is via an at-grade right-hand turning lane from the highway into the site where the current speed limit is 100km/h. Although truck turning movements are usually performed at low speed all along the highway at median openings, the potential for road accidents is likely to increase.

### **7.5.3 Option C – Bulahdelah HST**

The township of Bulahdelah is located at the approximate mid-point on the Pacific Highway as it passes through the Great Lakes LGA. Bulahdelah offers a variety of facilities and services to cater specifically for the needs of the travelling public including 24-hour service stations serving both directions of travel through the town, restaurants and take-away food outlets, established town centre with a variety of shops, vehicle repair and maintenance workshops and emergency vehicle service centre.

### **7.5.4 Option D – O’Sullivans Gap Service Station**

This option locates a HSC approximately 2km to the north of Bulahdelah immediately adjacent to the northbound carriageway of the Bulahdelah to Coolongolook Upgrade section.

The O’Sullivans Gap service station currently operates with direct road access available off Wootton Road (i.e. the Old Pacific Highway) via the Bulahdelah to Coolongolook Upgrade section of the Pacific Highway. Land at this site is currently zoned 1(a) Rural under LEP 1996.

Significant capital investment would be required to upgrade this site into a HSC, which would also constitute a material change of use to a newly defined use if the LEP 1996 was to be amended. Upgrading of underground storage tanks and fuel lines, demolition of the existing fuel plaza and development of new fuel plazas would be required, together with new RTA standard access and high standard pavements suitable to accommodate frequent truck movements in/out of A HSC type facility at this location.

This site would primarily serve northbound travelling vehicles unless duplicated or grade separated access is provided.

#### **7.5.5 Option E – Coolongolook HSC**

This option seeks to optimise the existing Caltex service station, which is located on the southbound carriageway of the Pacific Highway at Coolongolook and introduce a new HSC facility on the northbound carriageway. Currently, the highway passes directly through the centre of the town with at grade direct access to the Caltex service station and land along the northbound carriageway. The Caltex service station is a 24-hour facility and a traditional stop for heavy vehicles with informal parking areas available to accommodate them at the rear of the roadhouse. It principally serves southbound travelling traffic. Heavy vehicles travelling northbound do park on the hard shoulders of the highway opposite the service station.

The Caltex service station site is not reticulated with ‘in-town’ services but is well lit by existing street lighting within the town. Based on visual observations, the site could be developed to provide adequate parking for between 25 and 30 heavy vehicles at the rear of the existing roadhouse building. The site is currently bound by the highway, local street grid and intermittent residential dwellings. The landowner currently owns a number of land parcels adjoining the site, bringing the total area under single ownership to approximately 1ha. At this size there is potential for future expansion.

The exact location of the new HSC facility on the northbound carriageway could either be directly opposite or staggered no more than 500m north or south of the Caltex service station.

#### **7.5.6 Option F – Ampol Service Station at Nabiac**

The site of the existing Ampol service station is located on the northbound carriageway of the highway at Nabiac. Currently, the highway passes to the west of the town centre with direct highway access to the service station and local driveway entry/exit access via Wallambah Road. This site is currently utilised by long-distance bus and coach operators travelling between Sydney and Brisbane.

The site is not reticulated with ‘in-town’ services but is well lit by existing street lighting within the town. Based on visual observations, the site is likely to provide only sufficient parking areas to cater for up to 2 to 3 bus/coaches and/or heavy vehicles at any one time.

The site is currently bound by the highway, local street grid and residential dwellings, which restrict the capacity for expansion beyond the existing limits of the site.

#### **7.5.7 Option G – Nabiac HST**

Nabiac is a small town dissected by the LGA boundaries of Greater Taree and Great Lakes. The town supports two service stations with the Ampol facility being located at the intersection of Wallambah Road and the Pacific Highway (Greater Taree LGA). A small commercial centre exists at Nabiac which currently offers a range of facilities attracting opportunistic trade from through traffic travellers including supermarkets, bakery, café, butcher, rural produce store, pharmacy and doctor’s surgery.

## 7.6 Benefits and Disbenefits of Options

In **Table 12** below, the benefits and disbenefits of each of the options described above are presented.

**Table 12 Benefits and Disbenefits of Options A to E**

Option	A (The Branch Lane)
<b>Benefits</b>	<p>Potential job creation/replacement opportunities for Karuah and district residents following the opening of the Karuah Bypass at the end of 2004.</p> <p>Differentiation between ‘in-town’ services and highway servicing functions.</p> <p>Convenient option available to highway users to ‘stop revive survive’.</p>
<b>Disbenefits</b>	<p>Potential to directly compete with existing highway service facilities within the Great Lakes LGA, particularly those at Bulahdelah, Coolongolook and Nahiab, as well as direct competition with facilities in Karuah.</p> <p>Potential to impact on HST roles of Karuah and other towns within the Great Lakes LGA and affect local socio-economic well-being in Karuah through decreased trade in existing businesses heavily reliant on highway through trade.</p> <p>Duplication of services provided within Karuah township is likely to impact on local service station proprietors, short-stay accommodation operators, take-away food outlets and restaurants, vehicle repair and maintenance workshops.</p> <p>Potential decrease in commercial activity within Karuah town centre resulting in a modified economic base and possible business closures, in particular the 3 service stations currently operating in-town. This may ultimately impede Karuah’s capacity to function as a HST in the future.</p> <p>Potential to contravene the conditions set under the Karuah Bypass Project Approval in terms of supporting the economic and social future of the town.</p> <p>Out-of-town with no existing facilities and/or infrastructure for highway users.</p>
Option	B (The Rock)
<b>Benefits</b>	<p>Existing highway service facilities, infrastructure, and client base. Currently, operates as an existing service station with a fuel sales shop and centre.</p> <p>Site relatively free of any major planning and environmental constraints.</p> <p>Available area to upgrade and expand current facility, particularly the provision of adequate parking for both light and heavy vehicles.</p> <p>Potential employment opportunities available to residents in Karuah and Bulahdelah, and Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest.</p> <p>Upgrades in the form of expansion/modification to existing service stations, restaurants and shops etc are permissible with consent in the ‘1a Rural Zone’ under Part 4 of the EP&amp;A Act 1979.</p>
<b>Disbenefits</b>	<p>Located 13km to the north of Karuah (i.e. within the 24km spacing interval recommended under s117(2) S28) and 30km from Bulahdelah and, therefore, may directly compete for jobs and the economic interests of established businesses in both townships.</p> <p>Likely to only serve southbound travelling traffic as northbound traffic would need to exit off the highway at the new grade separated interchange to be located at the intersection with the Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest Road approximately 1km north and follow a newly constructed service road to access The Rock. To rejoin the highway motorists will need to travel back along this service road to continue their journey.</p> <p>Loss of direct highway access once the Karuah to Bulahdelah Upgrade is completed.</p> <p>Isolated in terms of location on the highway (i.e. ‘out-of-town’) – not ideally placed to take advantage of local workforce.</p> <p>Non-conforming with Principle 7 (see Section 3.1) under the s117(2) S28 Direction.</p>



Option	C (Bulahdelah HST)
<b>Benefits</b>	<p>Centrally located within the Great Lakes LGA and well-spaced in terms of distance from other townships within the LGA and neighbouring LGAs, particularly Karuah and Taree.</p> <p>Local workforce available that understands how to service the varying needs of all highway users.</p> <p>Emergency services located within the town such as Police, Ambulance, vehicle repair and maintenance which are available to service the needs of all highway users.</p> <p>Potential to optimise and utilise existing highway service infrastructure and facilities with ease of access to Bulahdelah a major feature of the southern interchange design.</p> <p>Highly visible for both directions of traffic both now and in the future, particularly northbound travelling traffic.</p> <p>Provision of a suitable range and quality of services to cater for the needs of all highway users travelling along this segment of the highway.</p> <p>Existing 24-hour service station facilities serving both north and southbound travelling traffic.</p>
<b>Disbenefits</b>	<p>Deviation required off the proposed bypass to access services and facilities within Bulahdelah.</p> <p>Additional journey times and distance (refer to Section 5.2.2) for travellers wanting to access services and facilities within Bulahdelah.</p> <p>Loss of direct highway exposure to those businesses reliant on through traffic trade.</p>
Option	D (O’Sullivans Gap)
<b>Benefits</b>	<p>Centrally located within the Great Lakes LGA and well-spaced in terms of distance from townships within the LGA (excluding Bulahdelah) and neighbouring LGAs, particularly Karuah and Taree.</p> <p>Potential to integrate HSC access with the northern ‘tie-in’ point of the Bulahdelah Upgrade project with the Bulahdelah to Coolongolook section of the highway.</p> <p>Potential job creation/replacement opportunities for mainly Bulahdelah residents following the opening of the Bulahdelah Upgrade project.</p> <p>Differentiation between ‘in-town’ services and highway servicing functions.</p> <p>Convenient option available to highway users to ‘stop revive survive’ travelling north.</p> <p>Upgrades in the form of expansion/modification to existing service stations, restaurants and shops etc are permissible with consent in the ‘1a Rural Zone’ under Part 4 of the EP&amp;A Act 1979.</p>
<b>Disbenefits</b>	<p>Potential to directly compete and impact on the level of commercial activity within the Bulahdelah town centre which could result in a modified economic base and possible rationalisation of existing businesses reliant on highway trade, in particular the 3 service stations currently operating in-town. This may ultimately restrict Bulahdelah’s capacity to maintain a highway servicing role in the future. The quantum of economic impacts likely to arise may also affect other towns within the Great Lakes LGA (i.e. Coolongolook and Nahiabac) and highway services available at Karuah to the south and Taree to the north.</p> <p>No visual connection with the Bulahdelah town centre and/or existing highway services and facilities available ‘in-town’.</p> <p>Reduction in opportunistic trade potential at Bulahdelah as the majority of highway users are unlikely to divert from the main highway corridor into the town.</p> <p>Unlikely to service both directions of traffic without significant capital investment on appropriate standard access arrangements. Current highway access arrangements are biased toward northbound travelling motorists.</p> <p>Potential to impact on the HST role of Bulahdelah, and other towns within the LGA such as Nahiabac and Coolongolook, as well as Karuah.</p>

Option	E (Coolongolook HSC)
<b>Benefits</b>	<p>Potential job creation opportunities for local residents, and possibly the residents of Bulahdelah and Nahiab following the completion of the proposed highway upgrade projects at these towns.</p> <p>An existing facility with traditional client base.</p> <p>Optimisation of a traditional stopping location to focus on servicing the needs of heavy vehicles.</p> <p>Convenient option available to highway users to ‘stop revive survive’ with direct highway access.</p> <p>The location is along an upgraded section of the highway with an 80km/h speed limit and is therefore not likely to be directly affected by future upgrade proposals.</p> <p>Potential to operate in tandem with a new facility on the opposite of the highway to serve both directions of traffic without raising any driver safety issues.</p> <p>Existing infrastructure and services available.</p> <p>Potential to upgrade the existing Caltex service station to capture heavy vehicle traffic thus directing some heavy vehicle movements away from bypassed townships such as Bulahdelah (planned) and Karuah.</p> <p>Upgrades in the form of expansion/modification to existing service stations, restaurants and shops etc are permissible with consent in the ‘2 Village Zone’ under Part 4 of the EP&amp;A Act 1979.</p>
<b>Disbenefits</b>	<p>Potential to directly compete with existing highway service facilities located elsewhere within the Great Lakes LGA, particularly the HST roles of Bulahdelah and Nahiab and impact the local socio-economic well-being of Bulahdelah (i.e. through decreased trade in businesses heavily reliant on highway through trade).</p> <p>Location is not an ideal match for the 2 hour and 5 hour stopping recommendation for Brisbane/Sydney trip.</p> <p>Potential for increased environmental and social impacts with local residents, particularly noise associated with increased road vehicle movements in/out of the facility especially during night-time hours.</p>
Option	F (Ampol Service Station at Nahiab)
<b>Benefit</b>	<p>Proven demand with existing client/customer base.</p> <p>Existing facilities such as fuel, restaurant, lights etc.</p> <p>Upgrades in the form of expansion/modification to existing service stations, restaurants and shops etc are permissible with consent in the ‘2 Village Zone’ under Part 4 of the EP&amp;A Act 1979.</p>
<b>Disbenefits</b>	<p>Located 23km to the south (within 24km minimum) of approved HSC development south of the Old Bar Road turnoff into Taree and, therefore, does not comply with the minimum separation distance requirements recommended in Principle 7 of s117(2) S28.</p> <p>Future capacity to expand is limited by surrounding development and infrastructure.</p> <p>Current access arrangements with highway are likely to require a redesign.</p> <p>Potential for increased environmental and social impacts with local residents, particularly noise associated with increased road vehicle movements in/out of the facility especially during night-time hours.</p>
Option	G (Nahiab HST)
<b>Benefits</b>	<p>Skilled local workforce available that understands how to service the varying needs of all highway users.</p> <p>Potential to optimise and utilise existing highway service infrastructure and facilities.</p> <p>Highly visible for both directions of traffic.</p> <p>Provision of a suitable range and quality of services to cater for the needs of all highway users travelling along this segment of the highway.</p> <p>Existing 24-hour service station facilities located on the northbound carriageway.</p>
<b>Disbenefits</b>	<p>Deviation required off the bypass to access services and facilities located within the town centre.</p> <p>Town centre enhancement and maintenance of high levels of service and quality of existing facilities within Nahiab.</p> <p>Potential for increased environmental and social impacts with local residents, particularly noise associated with increased road vehicle movements in/out of the facility especially during night-time hours.</p>

## 7.7 Conclusions

### 7.7.1 General

The section of the Pacific Highway that passes through the Great Lakes LGA is approximately 90km in length. Along this section of the highway, the provisions set out under the Minister's Direction (i.e. recommended 24km minimum separation distance between HSC type developments) could make it feasible for up to 4 HSC type developments to be established. Currently, the highway in the Great Lakes LGA supports two HSTs that meet the criteria established in Section 2 (Bulahdelah and Nahiack); one 'in-town' 24-hour service station (Coolongolook); two 'out of town' service stations (The Rock and O'Sullivan's Gap), two 'Driver Reviver' stops; and a number of RA and TPB serving both north and southbound carriageways. On this basis, it is reasonable to conclude that a well-spaced network of highway services and stopping areas is already provided within the LGA, adequately catering for the needs of both light and heavy vehicles.

A number of Pacific Highway upgrade projects are either under construction or planned in the LGA and in adjoining LGAs. These are referred to in Section 5.2.4 and will largely comprise town bypasses and highway duplications resulting in the loss of some existing RA sites and TPB areas along the highway and direct access to 'in-town' services and facilities currently available at towns such as Bulahdelah. An obvious concern is the potential economic implication that may arise from these highway upgrade projects on the local townships within the Great Lakes LGA, namely Bulahdelah, Nahiack and Coolongolook. Karuah will also experience negative economic impacts associated with the planned opening of the bypass at the end of 2004.

It is therefore critical that the planning and regulation of land use along the Pacific Highway corridor between Hexham and the Queensland border, including the Great Lakes LGA is coordinated and integrated into a common policy agenda endorsed by the RTA and all local councils along the highway. This is principally to ensure that the existing highway service facilities are consolidated rather than dispersed throughout the LGA, particularly along the 'out-of-town' segments of the highway. Planning measures to control land use and development can assist the performance of the highway whilst preserving and reinforcing the highway servicing functions of towns, particularly those which have been or are planned to be bypassed such as Bulahdelah and Karuah.

### 7.7.2 HSC Development

The development of potential HSC options has taken into account the provisions under the Minister's Direction.

Principally, HSC developments seek to realise a viable economic return from the significant capital investment required in their establishment. Indeed, the economic returns that may be generated by such developments are integral to determining the overall commercial viability to potential investors. Whilst HSC developments seek to combat 'driver fatigue' by encouraging drivers to stop and take effective rest breaks, they also take into account the role of business activities available in nearby or bypassed towns. They generally provide a mix of services that offer short-stay comfort and convenience, however, it is accepted that some of the services provided at a HSC will duplicate those available at nearby or bypassed towns. Consequently, HSC developments located close to bypassed towns may also compete with local businesses located in these towns ultimately reducing the likelihood for capturing opportunistic trade from through traffic.

Development Applications (DA) made to GLC for HSC development that involve a change of use from a service station, or a service station and associated facilities, to a HSC should not be granted approval. Applications that require direct access to the highway or connections to the highway via an access controlled road shall be referred to the RTA for approval.

In terms of the HSC/HST options considered and evaluated during the preparation of this Strategy, the following conclusions are made:

- Option A, an ‘out-of-town’ HSC facility located at the intersection of Branch Lane and the interchange of the realigned Pacific Highway may offer some benefits to highway users in terms of direct access and convenience to essential highway services. It is important to note that the existing services and facilities available at Karuah will suffer due to the bypass regardless of whether consent is granted for The Branch Lane facility or not. However, the development of a HSC facility at this location is likely to result in future economic impacts on existing businesses located in the Karuah town centre, the quantum of which cannot be reasonably estimated now. The extent of these impacts may also be felt by business operators at Bulahdelah.

The key issue is whether a HSC facility at The Branch Lane would conform with Principle 7 (in part) of the Minister’s Direction and the conditions set under the Karuah Bypass Project Approval in terms of the economic and social future of the town. Furthermore, under Section 9 of the Social and Economic Impact Assessment prepared by Key Insights Pty Ltd (2003) for the Karuah HSC at The Branch Lane it was concluded that *“there are marked differences between Bulahdelah and Karuah, particularly in relation to the HSC proposal at The Branch Lane and due to its proximity Karuah stands to gain more from the HSC development than Bulahdelah”*.

Given the distance of Karuah from the proposed bypass, it is recommended that measures and investment be directed to ensuring that adequate signage, access and connectivity to the Karuah town centre is provided in order to maintain a highway servicing capability at Karuah. The operation of the bypass will rationalise existing highway reliant businesses within the town, particularly the 3 service stations. The development of a HSC at The Branch Lane could result in further adverse economic impacts on the commercial viability of highway reliant businesses operating within the town.

On this basis, it is recommended that Karuah should be maintained as a HST and that a potential HSC development located directly to the north of the township within the Great Lakes LGA (i.e. The Branch Lane) would act as a major impediment to the future economic viability of the town.

- Direct highway access to The Rock (Option B) will be lost due to the proposed Karuah to Bulahdelah Upgrade project. New access arrangements comprising a full grade separated junction at the Hawks Nest/Tea Gardens turnoff located 1km to the north of The Rock would be constructed as part of this highway duplication. A service road will link The Rock with the new junction arrangement. It is unlikely that highway users, particularly northbound travellers will look to deviate off the highway at this point and stop for a rest break or to refuel. The identification of The Rock as a HSC would not satisfy the requirements prescribed under Principles 6 and 7 of the Minister’s Direction for the following reasons:
  - Remote, ‘out-of-town’ location;
  - Potential future impacts on the local economies of Karuah and Bulahdelah; and
  - Avoidance of a proposed HSC at ‘The Rock’ becoming an access node to other commercial ventures at this location and elsewhere along this stretch of the highway.
- Option C classifies Bulahdelah as a HST based on the existing range and quality of services available within the township to effectively service the varying needs of highway users. Bulahdelah has traditionally serviced the needs of the travelling public for over 40 years. The HST classification satisfies the definition provided in Section 2 and applicable criteria presented in **Table 11**. It needs to be made clear to both GLC and the RTA that Bulahdelah is a HST and centre for the RTA’s “drive-revive-survive” campaign.

The proposed Bulahdelah Upgrade project will result in some measurable loss of opportunistic trade as through traffic is rerouted along the new bypass and businesses currently straddling the existing highway and others located within the town centre lose direct exposure to this traffic. However, it must also be acknowledged that the RTA is ensuring that the design of the proposed Bulahdelah Upgrade integrates the new bypass alignment with the local street network and business interests of the town. Accordingly, any proposals to develop an 'out-of-town' HSC at Bulahdelah requiring direct access or use of a connector road to the highway should be prohibited.

- Option D an 'out-of-town' HSC development (O'Sullivan's Gap) located on the site of an existing service station approximately 4km to the north of the Bulahdelah town centre offers an opportunity to tie-in with the northern section of the Bulahdelah Upgrade project. It is considered that the redevelopment of O'Sullivan's Gap service station into a HSC will directly compete with highway reliant businesses located in Bulahdelah, which are likely to experience a downturn in turnover from highway through traffic as a result of the Bulahdelah Upgrade project. The potential impacts of Bulahdelah Upgrade (e.g. loss of direct/opportunistic highway trade) could result in job losses and rationalisation of the local business base within Bulahdelah, namely for the existing service station operators, fast/take-away food outlets and short-stay accommodation operators, which are heavily reliant on highway through traffic.

Development of a HSC facility 'out-of-town' at Bulahdelah could capture some highway related trade and related jobs for the local community, however, this would most likely be at the expense of existing highway related business in the township. It is therefore recommended that no 'out-of-town' HSC development be considered at Bulahdelah.

- Option E comprises a dual 'in-town' HSC development at Coolongolook. It includes the upgrade and modification of the existing Caltex service station located on the southbound carriageway of the highway and the introduction of a new 24-hour service station/HSC development on the northbound carriageway. The exact location of the new facility would either be directly opposite or staggered within 500m of the existing Caltex service station.

This dual HSC facility could operate in tandem to serve both directions of traffic, particularly the growing numbers of heavy vehicles travelling along this section of the highway. Given that Coolongolook is located 41km south of Taree and 28km north of Bulahdelah, already operates a 24-hour service station, has direct highway access and an existing client base, and conforms with the evaluation criteria presented in **Table 11** it is recommended that proposals for HSC development be considered by GLC under the approval process applied by the EP&A Act 1979. In addition, the provision of direct highway access is not expected to be modified further at Coolongolook and sufficient area exists to accommodate B-Doubles at the Caltex service station, which are making up an increasing proportion of heavy vehicle traffic.

A new HSC development on the northbound carriageway may also provide additional job opportunities to local residents within the township and other towns within the LGA, namely Nahiab and Bulahdelah. The consolidation of the highway servicing function at Coolongolook may also assist in attracting a proportion of heavy vehicles that may otherwise pass through bypassed towns such as Bulahdelah along this stretch of the highway. This could contribute to ensuring that the potential benefits of the highway bypass proposed for Bulahdelah in terms of amenity (air quality, noise etc) and safety are maximised, whilst acknowledging the coincident loss of business that would occur.

- Option F establishes the existing Ampol service station at NABIAC as an ‘in-town’ HSC. The future expansion of this option from an existing service station to a HSC is limited by surrounding land use and existing development. Acquisitions would be necessary to effectively expand and upgrade this existing facility to a HSC. In addition, this site is also located 23km to the south (i.e. within 24km minimum separation distance) of an approved HSC facility at Taree and, therefore, marginally, does not conform with the requirements of Principle 7 of the Minister’s Direction. No HSC development is recommended for NABIAC as it is envisaged that NABIAC will continue to service the needs of travellers as it currently does by providing an alternative location to stop and refuel, rest and/or comfort reasons. Future highway upgrades may result in modifications to the current access arrangements to the Ampol service station and other services currently available in the town centre, however, the overall impacts on the economic interests of businesses operating in this town are unlikely to be adverse in nature as NABIAC already relies on a large proportion of local custom.

It is therefore concluded that proposals to upgrade and modernise this existing service station be considered on its merits by GLC in accordance with the requirements of s79c of the EP&A Act 1979.

- Option G classifies NABIAC as a HST based on the existing range and quality of services available within the township and traditional service function performed by the town over many years to effectively service the varying needs of all highway users. NABIAC has traditionally serviced the needs of the travelling public as they pass along this stretch of the highway. To rationalise the classification of NABIAC as a HST, a definition and set of specific criteria have been developed as part of this Strategy. Based on the definition of a HST in Section 2 and the requisite criteria presented in **Table 11**, NABIAC satisfies the requirements of a HST. It is recommended that GLC classify NABIAC as a HST.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The principal finding of this Strategy is to recommend that GLC does not support any proposed HSC development located 'out of town' at Karuah (east of the Karuah River), Bulahdelah, Coolongolook and Nahiic. Where possible, priority should be given to consolidating the existing highway service facilities within the Great Lakes LGA rather than increasing their dispersion not only in this locality but along the entire Pacific Highway network.

Proposals to upgrade existing 'in-town' service stations within Bulahdelah, Coolongolook and Nahiic should be considered on their merits. The stated objectives and principles contained under the Minister's Direction must also be taken into account when considering whether consent should be granted for potential HSC development within the Great Lakes LGA.

Integral to the above is for GLC to prepare a Strategic Policy Statement endorsing that both Bulahdelah and Nahiic be classified as HSTs and to prohibit the development of any HSC type development (as defined in Section 2) outside of these towns. Any proposal involving the potential upgrade and/or modification of existing 'out-of-town' service stations, for example O'Sullivan's Gap and The Rock should be prohibited to avoid any potential detrimental economic impacts on the towns of Karuah, Bulahdelah, Coolongolook and Nahiic from arising as a consequence of such development. Notwithstanding this, such development proposals could contravene, in part, the objectives and principles under the Minister's Direction.

The following recommendations should also be taken into account by GLC when considering potential HSC development proposals and the classification of HSTs within the Great Lakes LGA.

- Amend the Great Lakes LEP 1996 to include the following:
  - Planning definition for HSC development. An example definition is provided in Section 2 to guide GLC on classifying the type of essential services and facilities permissible in the interests of driver safety, and those, which are prohibited. This definition, together with the provisions under s79c of the EP&A Act 1979, should assist GLC in determining proposals for the future development of highway service facilities along the Pacific Highway within the Great Lakes LGA.
  - It is recommended that GLC establish a set of provisions that prohibit the development of HSCs at 'out-of-town' locations as the highway passes through the Great Lakes LGA.
  - Review the existing service station, restaurant and convenience store definitions and provisions contained in LEP 1996 to clearly differentiate between future service station and HSC development within the LGA. Of paramount importance is a statement confirming that any existing 'out-of-town' service station would not be permitted to upgrade or expand its existing operation to a newly defined use or activity such as a HSC development. The amended LEP 1996 must also establish provisions that prohibit 'out-of-town' service stations operating on a 24-hour basis if they do not already do so.

- Establish a set of development controls to regulate potential HSC development within the Great Lakes LGA so as to protect the established retail and commercial centres at Bulahdelah, Coolongolook and Nahiic. This should involve the preparation of a Development Control Plan (DCP) in accordance with the EP&A Act 1979 for “Non-Complying Development”. It is recommended that this DCP accompanies an amended LEP 1996 and defines the type of uses classified as non-complying development such as HSC development. The amended LEP 1996 should also prohibit the upgrade and/or modification of existing service stations, truck parking areas or other roadside land within bypassed towns such as Bulahdelah to discourage the movement of heavy vehicles back through these towns.
- Clearly stated objectives governing the development of HSCs within the Great Lakes LGA. GLC will need to consider DAs lodged for proposed HSC type developments on their merits in accordance with the provisions of the EP&A Act.
- GLC is to develop and implement Town Centre Management Plans for Bulahdelah and Nahiic for the long-term management and maintenance of services and viability of local business interests in these towns. These plans should identify future opportunities to improve the amenity of town centres, traffic management, diversify the business profile, provide street furniture and landscaping, and increase local tourism opportunities, for example ‘Gateway to the Great Lakes’.
- Ensure that the range and quality of services and facilities available within the HSTs are continually maintained to an appropriate level to cater for the needs of the travelling public and local communities, which they serve.
- Set and rigorously administer timeframes for the implementation of approval conditions granted to HSC developments, for example commencement of works must be carried out within two years of granting the approval and that the development must be completed within five years of granting the approval otherwise the approval lapses. This is to ensure that HSC development approvals are implemented within a set timeframe and in accordance with the requirements imposed under Section 95(2) of the EP&A Act 1979.

It is also recommended that the GLC advise the RTA to consider the following:

- The RTA should review current policy guidance on suitable minimum separation distances between HSC developments and their provision along the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border. The policy should also focus on the changing relationships between the travelling needs of highway users, the availability and distribution of highway services and towns that provide a highway servicing role, irrespective as to whether these towns continue to be located directly on the highway or are bypassed. The principal outcome of the policy is to establish a framework within which all councils and the RTA can base long-term planning decisions on with respect to HSC type development along the highway corridor.

Development of the policy must review the current 24km recommended minimum separation distance between HSC facilities for adequacy and sufficiency in the context of the future planning vision of the highway as it traverses the NSW coast to the Queensland border. The policy should protect against the potential overdevelopment of such facilities along the highway, which could result in a “saturation” of such development. Policy recommendations should also take into account existing Commonwealth guidance, which recommend minimum spacings of between 50km and 100km.



- It would appear that there is no research to demonstrate a correlation between the provision of highway signage and patronage of facilities/services in nearby towns. On this basis, it is recommended that consistent fixed signage should be erected at appropriate intervals along the Pacific Highway to ensure that highway users are aware of their stopping options and facilities available at each location. High profile advance signage can influence driver choice and desire in relation to selecting a stopping location to either refuel or for amenity purposes. This is particularly critical at Bulahdelah and other townships such as Coolongolook and Nahiab within the Great Lakes LGA to maintain a highway servicing role. It is suggested that a review of the RTA's signage policy be undertaken to determine the appropriate currency of signage, particularly in terms of heightening driver awareness and visualisation of the attractions available at the various townships through which it passes or bypasses.
- The demand for heavy vehicle parking locations will become increasingly important as the volume of heavy vehicles travelling along the Pacific Highway increase throughout the 10-Year Pacific Highway Upgrading Program. This should be monitored by the RTA on an ongoing basis to ensure that the needs of heavy vehicles users are continually met as the dynamics of the highway in terms of travel times, driver behaviours and patronage change.

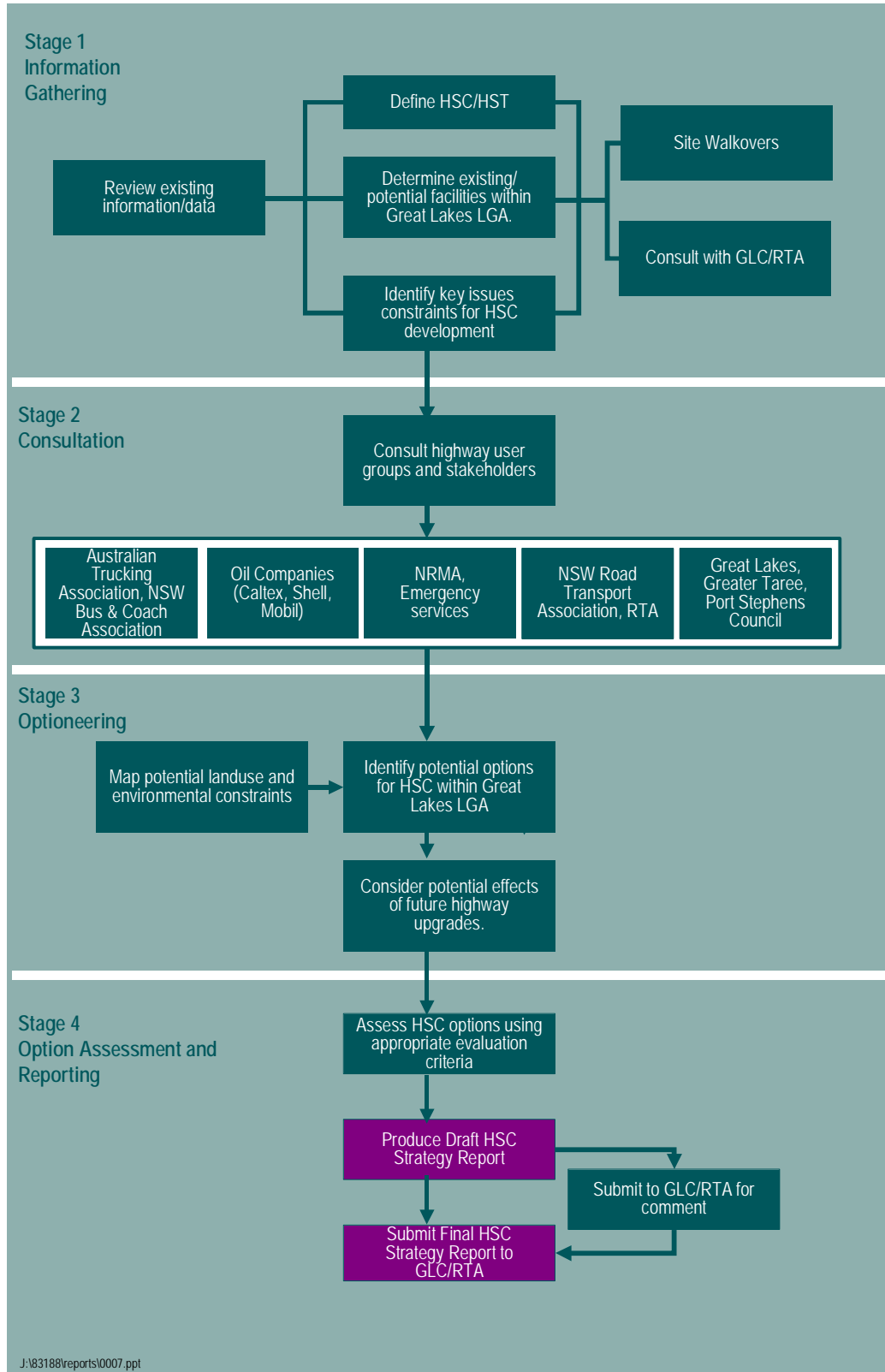
APPENDIX A

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**Study Process**

## A1. OVERVIEW

The study process adopted for the preparation of this Strategy is presented in the following flowchart.



## **A2. DOCUMENT COLLECTION AND REVIEW**

Relevant background information and data essential to the preparation of this Strategy has been identified from information made predominantly available by GLC and RTA including:

- Published reports;
- Development and layout plans;
- Information sheets and brochures; and
- Targeted consultations with key representatives from the RTA and GLC, highway user groups and relevant stakeholders with service related interests in the Pacific Highway.

Documentation was gathered and assessed to gain a full understanding of the issues pertinent to the development of HSC type facilities and the role of HSTs, in particular Bulahdelah.

## **A3. LEGISLATION AND PLANNING POLICY**

The following key statutes were considered during the preparation of this Strategy:

- Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, particularly Section 117(2) Direction No. S28 of this Act;
- Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act 1999;
- Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) (Driver Fatigue) Regulation 1999;
- Hunter Regional Environmental Plan 1989;
- Great Lakes Local Environmental Plan 1996;
- Karuah Local Area Plan, including Swan Bay (July, 2003);
- Port Stephens Urban Settlement Strategy 2002; and
- Greater Taree City Council Local Environmental Plan 1995.

## **A4. LITERATURE**

Arup carried out a desktop review on the following documentation provided by GLC and RTA:

- Relevant Development Application information provided by GLC to Arup in September 2003;
- Arup (August 1998) Rest Area and Truck Parking Bay Strategy Summary Report for Vic Roads;
- Arup (August 1998) Location of Truck Stops – New England Highway (SH 9) Murrurundi to Queensland Border for NSW RTA;
- HASSELL and Arup (November 1996) Service Centres on Rural Freeways Volume 1 – An Analysis of the Issues for VIC Department of Infrastructure;
- HASSELL and Arup (May 1997) Freeway Service Centres Design Guidelines for VIC Department of Infrastructure;
- Key Insights Pty Ltd (July 2003) Social and Economic Impact Assessment for Karuah Highway Service Centre for NSW RTA;
- PPK Environment and Infrastructure (August 2000) Pacific Highway Bulahdelah Upgrade Value Management Workshop for NSW RTA;

- PPK Environment and Infrastructure (9 August 2000 to 13 December 2001) Pacific Highway Bulahdelah Upgrade Community Focus Group Minutes of Meetings for NSW RTA;
- Arup (November 1999) Proposed Upgrade of the Pacific Highway at Karuah Environmental Impact Statement for NSW RTA and Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services;
- PPK Environment and Infrastructure (2001) Bulahdelah Upgrade of the Pacific Highway Project Development and Preferred Route Option Report for NSW RTA;
- ERM Mitchell McCotter (May 1999) Karuah to Bulahdelah Pacific Highway Upgrade Environmental Impact Statement for NSW RTA;
- Sinclair Knight Merz (October 2001) Bundacree Creek to Possum Brush (Nabiac) Upgrade of the Pacific Highway Environmental Impact Statement for NSW RTA;
- SGS Economics and Planning, and O'Neil Pollock and associates Pty Ltd (2003) Strategic Plan for the Economic Development of the Great Lakes Area 2003 for GLC;
- Department of Urban Affairs and Planning and the NSW RTA (1998) Pacific Highway: Planning Policy on Commercial/Retail Development along the Pacific Highway from the Queensland border to Hexham; and
- Dr Bruno Parolin and Professor Barry Gainer (1996) Evaluation of the Economic Impacts of Bypass Roads on Country Towns: A Guide to Good Practice for NSW RTA.

## **A5. MAPS**

The following published mapping data was consulted as part of the preparation of this Strategy:

- 1:25,000 scale Topographical Map for Bulahdelah (9333-3-S) produced by the Central Mapping Authority of NSW;
- 1:200,000 scale Lower and Mid North Coast (Northern Section) Touring Map 1 produced by the NRMA (2001);
- Driver Reviver Stops Map produced by the NSW RTA (2001); and
- Great Lakes LEP 1996 Land Zoning Map for the Great Lakes LGA.

## **A6. SITE VISITS**

To supplement the information collected from the data gathering and consultation exercises, site visits were carried out by Arup staff (Ken Conway and Natasha Connolly) along the Pacific Highway during September 2003 and November 2003. These site visits included a visual inspection of the following areas:

- Highway in general, in terms of topography, ground conditions and vegetation;
- Existing and surrounding land uses;
- Transportation linkages and highway access;
- Location and type of highway rest areas and amenities, and service stations;
- Traffic flows, particularly those through the townships of Bulahdelah, Coolongolook and Nabiac;
- Nearby drainage lines and surface water features; and
- Other relevant environmental and social features.

Site visits were carried out at the following locations along the Pacific Highway corridor:

- Bulahdelah;
- Coolongolook;
- Nahiack;
- Other roadside areas on the Pacific Highway within the Great Lakes LGA, i.e. rest areas, truck parking bays, 'out-of-town' service stations etc; and
- Pacific Highway 'tie-in' points with the Great Lakes LGA, i.e. Raymond Terrace, Karuah and Taree.

The principal aim of these site visits is to gain a thorough understanding of the physical conditions of the highway within the Great Lakes LGA and to justify the identification and elimination of alternatives for the location of potential HSC facilities and supporting infrastructure and reinforcement of HSTs. Key activities comprised:

- Recording the location of existing roadside rest area sites ranging from designated rest areas to truck parking bays and service stations;
- Recording the facilities available for highway users at these sites;
- Taking photographs at the majority of these sites;
- Estimating the capacity of heavy and light vehicles that could be accommodated; and
- Identifying opportunities and constraints for the development of HSCs and classification of HSTs within the Great Lakes LGA.

A series of photographs was taken at key points along the Pacific Highway within and on approach to the Great Lakes LGA to supplement the preparation of this Strategy. A selection of these photographs is presented in various sections throughout the HSC Strategy report.

APPENDIX B

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**Stakeholder  
Involvement Plan**

## B1. INTRODUCTION

### B1.1 Background

Great Lakes Council (GLC) and the NSW RTA (RTA) in response to community interest raised during the planning and development of the Bulahdelah Upgrade project have decided to prepare a Highway Service Centre (HSC) Strategy. The Strategy explores a number of issues associated with the identification and evaluation of potential HSC development options and the classification of HSTs along the Pacific Highway corridor as it passes through the Great Lakes LGA.

The preparation of the HSC Strategy involved the following facets of work:

- Review of current Policy and Guidance relating to commercial and retail development along the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border;
- Review of current and proposed highway upgrades planned on the Pacific Highway within the Great Lakes LGA or immediately adjoining the LGA boundary and the potential effects of these upgrades on service facility requirements;
- Research and reporting on HSC needs;
- Identify key highway user groups and stakeholders;
- Stakeholder consultations with highway user groups and key stakeholders in the highway service sector;
- Development of suitable HSC and HST planning definitions for GLC;
- Appraisal of existing and future service requirements of Bulahdelah;
- Identification of suitable locations for potential HSC development and HST within the Great Lakes LGA; and
- Production of a Strategy to guide the long-term planning and development or otherwise of HSC within the Great Lakes LGA.

A Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP) has been prepared for this study. This Plan has been developed to maximise the opportunities available for stakeholder involvement during the preparation of this study.

GLC has appointed Arup to carry out this HSC Study and Strategy. The stakeholder involvement elements of this work have been managed by Arup from its Sydney office and supplemented by a series of site visits and meetings with the Steering Committee comprising representatives for GLC and the RTA during the preparation of this Strategy.

### B1.2 The Study Area

A map of the study area is provided in **Figure B1** (see overleaf).

The Great Lakes LGA (as it extends along the Pacific Highway corridor) covers the area from the northern bank of the Karuah River in the south to the township of Nahiab in the north – a total distance of approximately 100km. A particular focus of this HSC Study has concentrated on the area surrounding the township of Bulahdelah.



**Figure B1 Study Area**

### B1.3 Scope of this Stakeholder Involvement Plan

The various highway user groups and other stakeholders in the highway service sector that either travel on or have vested interests in the Pacific Highway as it traverses the Great Lakes LGA have differing amenity needs and facility requirements. At a strategic level, the impact of HSCs and provision of suitable facilities to cater for the various needs for all highway users is paramount and underlies the need for effective stakeholder involvement during this Study. This SIP provides an approach to ensure maximum capture of stakeholder views and opportunities for involvement in the Study are afforded. It has been prepared to guide all aspects of stakeholder involvement as they apply to this Study. The SIP also aims to be flexible so that the stakeholder's involvement needs can be monitored throughout the Study and any necessary changes to the program made to maximise such involvement.

This SIP has been prepared in accordance with the RTA's *Community Involvement Practice Notes and Resource Manual* (July 1998) and recognises the RTA's Community Involvement Policy being: *The Roads and Traffic Authority will strive for effective community involvement in decision making across all functional areas and at all levels of activity.* It seeks to ensure the following outcomes from the stakeholder involvement process (RTA 1998, p2.4):

- efficiency;
- equity;
- accountability;
- participation;
- flexibility;
- integrity;
- representativeness;
- cost-effectiveness; and
- certainty.

Stakeholder involvement has been integral to maximising the capture of stakeholder views and concerns as they relate to HSC development. This has also facilitated the identification and assessment of HSC options within the Great Lakes LGA to ensure that a suite of practical and feasible options have been considered.

#### **B1.4 Stakeholder Involvement Plan Objectives**

The principal objective of this SIP is to provide an opportunity for all highway user groups and other key stakeholders in the highway services sector to cast their views/opinions on the existing service facilities and recommend options for future facilities based on their individual needs. Other important objectives include:

- to ensure an open accountable and transparent stakeholder involvement process;
- to ensure all potentially affected highway user groups owners and other stakeholders in the highway service sector are provided with sufficient information about the study so that they can provide informed input;
- to encourage stakeholder support and involvement in the study to facilitate better and more generally accepted outcomes; and
- to build an ongoing relationship between the various highway user groups and stakeholders and GLC, and the RTA in order to gain long term support for the Strategy.

#### **B1.5 Stakeholder Involvement Team**

The stakeholder involvement team assembled for the preparation of this Strategy and their principal responsibilities are listed in **Table B1** below.

**Table B1 Stakeholder Involvement Team**

Name	Role	Organisation	Responsibilities
<b>Roger Busby</b>	Manager Strategic Planning and Environmental Services (Client and Steering Committee)	GLC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• arrange approval of communication material from GLC</li> <li>• monitor communications and related issues</li> </ul>
<b>Alex Caras</b>	Senior Strategic Planner (Client and Steering Committee)	GLC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• monitor performance of Arup in delivering effective consultation throughout the study</li> <li>• approve release of communication material (if required)</li> <li>• participate in stakeholder meetings and interviews</li> </ul>
<b>Ken Conway</b>	Study Manager	Arup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• liaise directly with the GLC and RTA on stakeholder involvement issues and outcomes</li> <li>• ensure integration of needs and issues raised in the stakeholder involvement process in HSC Strategy</li> <li>• responsible for implementation of all SIP components including coordination and management of stakeholder meetings</li> <li>• acknowledge issues/concerns from stakeholders as they arise throughout the study and communicate back to GLC</li> <li>• review and updates SIP on a regular basis</li> </ul>
<b>Natasha Connolly</b>	Community Consultation Assistant	Arup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• responsible for the implementation of SIP components</li> <li>• assist in carrying out the stakeholder involvement process and incorporation of issues and outcomes into report documentation</li> <li>• report on community feedback to GLC.</li> </ul>

## B2. STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

### B2.1 Stakeholders

A list of stakeholders with their respective contact details has been established for the preparation of this Strategy. The list has been reviewed throughout the preparation of this Strategy and updated to ensure that all stakeholders details are correct and interested parties are added either when contact has been made or upon request by GLC. Initially, three key stakeholder groups were identified, as presented in **Table B2**.

**Table B2 Stakeholder groups**

<b>Group 1</b> Potentially affected businesses	This group comprises businesses such as local petrol filling station operators (i.e. Caltex, Mobil, Shell, BP etc) within the study area that could potentially be directly affected by the planned highway upgrades such as the Bulahdelah Upgrade project and the Karuah to Bulahdelah duplication.
<b>Group 2</b> Highway user groups	This group comprises existing and potential users of the highway within the Great Lakes LGA including Trucking Australia, NRMA, Emergency Services (NSW Police), long distance bus companies etc.
<b>Group 3</b> Government agencies	This group comprises State Government agencies such as DIPNR, Local Government such as Great Lakes, Port Stephens and Greater Taree Councils, and representatives from the NSW RTA Pacific Highway Office and Corporate Services.

### B2.2 Potential Issues

The potential issues considered during the preparation of this Strategy of interest or concern to highway users and stakeholders in the highway service sector, and broader study area are presented in **Table B3**.

**Table B3 Potential issues**

<b>Highway User Groups</b> <i>[Note: Issues would be specific to the project area]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road user safety and security</li> <li>• Travel times and needs</li> <li>• Service and facility provision</li> <li>• Access and connectivity to services and facilities</li> </ul>
<b>Highway Service Sector Stakeholders</b> <i>[Note: Issues would be specific to the project area]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• road user safety (motorists, cyclist, pedestrians)</li> <li>• official signage of HSC</li> <li>• proximity of competing facilities</li> <li>• access</li> <li>• amenity impacts</li> <li>• ongoing commercial and retail development and security</li> <li>• noise/air quality impacts</li> <li>• urban growth potential impacts</li> <li>• impacts on existing HSC and recreation facilities</li> <li>• visual impacts</li> <li>• land use considerations</li> <li>• impacts on residential properties</li> </ul>
<b>Government Agencies</b> <i>[Note: Issues would be specific to the project area]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local employment opportunities</li> <li>• highway and road user safety</li> <li>• environmental and social impacts</li> </ul>

## **B3. METHODS OF COMMUNICATION**

### **B3.1 Communication Strategy**

The communication strategy adopted for the preparation of this Strategy comprised a combination of mediums (“tools”) for communicating with the stakeholders such as face-to-face interviews and meetings, and targeted telephone conversations. The principal communication tools used during this Strategy are presented below.

#### **B3.1.1 Stakeholder Records**

A proforma for recording contact with stakeholders was used throughout the project. Records, including minutes of meetings, were kept for all consultation activities undertaken by Arup during the preparation of the Strategy.

#### **B3.1.2 Face-to-Face Interviews/Meetings**

Direct contact with all potentially affected/affected highway user groups and other key stakeholders nominated in **Table 2** took place to advise in greater detail the needs and requirements of the various highway user groups. Arup with the prior agreement of GLC personally conducted these interviews.

#### **B3.1.3 Stakeholder Workshop (possible)**

Subject to GLC and RTA approval a workshop attended by key representatives of the highway user and service sector groups could be held following the completion of the Strategy Report. This workshop may be held at the discretion of GLC and the RTA at a suitable time and venue within the LGA to discuss all the different needs and requirement of each highway stakeholder and how these inputs have been balanced into this HSC strategy.

## **B4. STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

### **B4.1 Consultation Process**

Components of the communication strategy have been undertaken throughout the duration of this Study to ensure continued stakeholder involvement.

### **B4.2 Approvals procedures**

GLC will be directly responsible for the approval of this SIP. A copy of the SIP was issued to the RTA with suggested comments and inputs provided on an as-needs-basis.

## B5. STAKEHOLDER ISSUES AND CONCERNS

In order to gain a thorough understanding of the views of identified stakeholders on proposed HSC type development on the Pacific Highway within the Great Lakes LGA, face-to-face meetings and telephone discussions were held with key highway user groups and stakeholders with a highway service role, for example service station proprietors.

There has been considerable interest expressed in this study and development of an appropriate HSC strategy to serve the Great Lakes LGA. A number of key issues and concerns have been raised by the stakeholders consulted during the preparation of this strategy. These have been summarised and presented in **Table B4** below.

**Table B4 Stakeholder Issues Raised during the Study Process**

Stakeholder	Issue Raised
<b>NSW Government Agencies</b>	
DIPNR	<p>HSC Strategy is to take into consideration the key objectives and guidance provided in the Planning Policy on Commercial Retail Development Along the Pacific Highway from the Queensland Border to Hexham, i.e. Section 117 S28 Direction.</p> <p>Two key objectives that need to met include: 1) commercial development needs to remain within the towns along the highway and 2) HSC development must have direct highway access and be located on the bypass route.</p> <p>Key question relating to the selection and development of a suitable site for a new HSC: <i>'is does the local township still perform a highway service function or is this replaced by the new HSC?'</i>.</p> <p>Challenge for Bulahdelah centres on whether a % of traffic travels an extra 500m to 1km off the bypass into town to utilise existing infrastructure and services or a new out-of-town HSC is developed on the bypass corridor.</p> <p>DIPNR's policy stance on new commercial/retail development on the Pacific Highway is supportive of highway arrangements that encourage drivers to access in-town services and the development of an-out-of-town HSC on a new interchange facility as the town being bypassed can still maintain it's highway service function on both counts.</p> <p>Interchanges are the prime locations for HSC type developments.</p> <p>Land acquisition and planning issues.</p>

Stakeholder	Issue Raised
<b>Local Government</b>	
Port Stephens Council	<p>Heather Brae could be considered a HSC given the range and type of facilities available to service the needs of the travellers on the highway, e.g. Hungry Jacks, Kentucky Fried Chicken, BP, Shell, 7/11 etc.</p> <p>Consideration needs to be given to 'controlled access road' issues.</p> <p>HSC developments do provide employment opportunities.</p> <p>PSC would be willing to assist GLC in reviewing and amending the LEP 1996 in relation to HSC development.</p> <p>Both towns (Karuah and Bulahdelah) have the capacity to serve the needs of travellers on the highway.</p> <p>Key issue for the highway users is good quality food and service, safe and easy access arrangements, and adequate parking to accommodate both heavy and light vehicles.</p> <p>Fast-food outlets do not necessarily encourage highway users to stop at bypassed towns and, therefore, high profile advisory signage is essential to influence travel plans and stopping preferences so as to promote the facilities available in towns located off the new highway sections.</p> <p>Currently, there are 3 service stations operating at Karuah, however, there is a concern that once the bypass opens to traffic in 2004 that the viability of these businesses will be significantly impacted.</p> <p>Karuah is dependent on highway-related trade and is a HST.</p> <p>PSC provided Arup with copies of the Karuah Local Area Plan and Urban Settlement Strategy.</p>
Greater Taree City Council	<p>An approval was granted some 5 years ago for a HSC development on the northbound carriageway of the Pacific Highway just south of the Old Bar Road turnoff.</p> <p>Minimum works have been carried out on this site to maintain the DA approval conditions, however, no extensive of this site has been undertaken.</p> <p>Likely that a HSC development will take place at this site in due course.</p> <p>No objection to potential consolidation of Caltex operation at Coolongolook to service the needs of heavy vehicles – already a traditional heavy vehicle stop. Given it's location on the southbound carriageway of the highway it could potentially compliment the proposed HSC to the south of Taree which is located on the northbound carriageway.</p> <p>Not supportive of Ampol service station located on the corner of the highway and Wallambah Street being developed into a HSC facility as it is likely to conflict with the approved HSC proposal to the south of Taree and is in too close proximity, i.e. within the 24km zone of another facility and/or town as recommended by the RTA.</p>



Stakeholder	Issue Raised
<b>Highway Users</b>	
NRMA (local agent)	<p>Loss of local custom - there is no money in road servicing. Does not support an out-of-town HSC.</p> <p>Local business will suffer once the bypass is developed. NRMA depends on local trade, tourist traffic, particularly those travellers that pass through a service station in town and encounter problems or break-down.</p> <p>Lack of visibility and exposure of highway traffic are key concerns. Attracting people with good quality skills will be made more difficult once a bypass is developed due to inadequate infrastructure within the town.</p> <p>Due to the high rents at a HSC the NRMA would not consider becoming a tenant.</p> <p>Further investigations are required on the need for a bypass at Bulahdelah and HSC.</p> <p>If an out-of-town HSC is to be developed would like to see a central connection of the bypass running into Bulahdelah.</p> <p>At least 2 service stations will close as a result of the bypass. Service stations are the only place where young people are able to get a job.</p> <p>Employ 15 people at Bulahdelah and 3 to 4 at Tea Gardens. 1 mechanical workshop has already closed in town and another possible closure is likely.</p>
NSW Bus and Coach Association	<p>Upgrades on the Pacific Highway facilitate improved driving conditions, provide less obstacles for travel, namely passing through towns, relieve driving pressures and offer time-savings.</p> <p>Supportive of HSC developments from an operational point of view, however, are sensitive to the needs of local communities that are dependent on highway trade for their survival.</p> <p>HSC provide opportunities for better amenities increasing passenger choice and offer greater flexibility to timetables and the planning of long-distance travel runs.</p> <p>Traditional coach stops between Sydney and Brisbane are typically located at Kempsey and Ballina. Usually, 2 planned stops are factored into this journey comprising ½ hour breaks for meals etc. This also conforms with the requirements of the Heavy Vehicle Driving Regulations.</p> <p>Key requirements for coach operators and their passengers in terms of stopping include: good and safe access, designated coach parking bays, diverse range of food choice, quick and reliable service. The majority of operators are unlikely to refuel as 1 tank is usually sufficient for travel between Sydney and Brisbane. Also, fuel prices are generally cheaper in Queensland.</p> <p>Occasionally pull into townships such as Bulahdelah for a short 15 minute amenity stop.</p>

Stakeholder	Issue Raised
NSW Road Transport Association	<p>Prefer an out-of-town HSC facility to avoid delays and traffic congestion, particularly during peak periods.</p> <p>Time and convenience are key operational factors for hauliers.</p> <p>Quality of the Pacific Highway is improving and there is a critical need to provide a suitable range of stopping options at appropriate spacings along the highway corridor.</p> <p>Hauliers are continually looking at ways to improve time management on their long-distance runs.</p> <p>Significant shift of heavy vehicle traffic from the New England Highway to the Pacific Highway due to the travel time savings available on the journey between Sydney and Brisbane.</p> <p>Road transport is growing at approximately 6% per year.</p> <p>Under the Heavy Vehicle Driving Regulations, truck drivers must only drive for a maximum of 12hrs within any given 24-hour period and are required to stop for at least 15 minutes every 5hours. It is anticipated that further restrictions will be imposed on heavy vehicle drivers in due course.</p>
Australian Trucking Association	<p>Supportive of any initiatives that will contribute to an overall improvement to travel up and down the Pacific Highway, including HSC development.</p> <p>Key focus is on the provision of good amenities and quick service for drivers, and a suitable distribution of stopping opportunities that 'tie-in' with route plans and driver stopping requirements.</p>
McCaffertys bus company	<p>Aware that HSC do impact the well-being of small towns and their businesses. Benefits do exist in terms of employment opportunities.</p> <p>Bypass and HSC development shortens the service run time, which is good from an operational point of view and good for passengers.</p> <p>HSC offer the opportunity to coach drivers to factor in a meal breaks on a long-distance run.</p> <p>HSC contain a variety of food outlets and are not constrained by the limited range of choice available at a typical roadhouse. Greater degree of choice is available to both drivers and passengers.</p> <p>Supportive of HSC development but do express an interest in the social needs of towns to be bypassed.</p>

Stakeholder	Issue Raised
<b>Oil Companies</b>	
Caltex (Corporate)	<p>Petrol and diesel fuel are motorists concerns.</p> <p>Is in the process of upgrading the Bulahdelah site, i.e. upgrading the image/shop/workshop which is to be leased to the NRMA.</p> <p>Supportive of Bulahdelah retention as a HST.</p> <p>Lack of certainty at Karuah in the context of the bypass under construction.</p> <p>Prefer to keep trucks out of town.</p> <p>Survival of the fittest at Bulahdelah with up to 2 existing service stations operators to shutdown.</p> <p>Economic viability re: 2 x HSC located on both sides of a divided highway. HSCs are likely to cost approximately \$10 to \$20 million each and are unlikely to be sustainable.</p> <p>HSC will compete directly with local businesses in towns such as Bulahdelah.</p> <p>Lack of population and highway traffic to sustain a HSC operation.</p> <p>Diesel trucks – safe-t-cam ensures drivers stop every 2/3 hours, however, type of stop is dictated by the fuel fleet cards held by each haulier company. A number of hauliers usually stop for an amenity break and not to refuel.</p> <p>Considering developing Coolongolook facility into a major truck stop. Considering the costs of upgrade and ongoing maintenance – a growing % of customers do not buy fuel and only spend about \$10 on a meal when they stop.</p> <p>Trucks and cars need to be segregated.</p>
Mobil (Local Proprietor)	<p>Operates as a 24-hour business serving highway traffic needs. It is a reliable site and business offering good job security.</p> <p>Independent operator is likely to run a new HSC out-of-town. Concerns that this will result in the closing down of at least one operator in Bulahdelah.</p> <p>One HSC will not provide employment opportunities to cover the three main sites currently operating in Bulahdelah, which is estimated to be greater than 100 people.</p> <p>Will the HSC be committed to purchasing local produce and support local business interests? Anchor tenants such as McDonalds import goods via truck and also look to a younger workforce. Opportunities are limited for workers in the 40+ category.</p> <p>Bus and coach drivers are very particular about the quality of meals and prefer to stop at a roadhouse offering a traditional menu than a fast food outlet.</p> <p>Lack of incentives to leave the highway once the bypass is completed.</p> <p>Potentially the first Mobil on the highway if the Karuah operation shuts down.</p> <p>Fuel prices are generally greater in towns such as Bulahdelah.</p>

Stakeholder	Issue Raised
Shell (Local Proprietor)	<p>Two 24-hour operations within Bulahdelah township will not survive should an out-of-town HSC be developed.</p> <p>Why develop new facilities at the expense of others?</p> <p>Staff of 35 people will not be sustainable when the bypass is developed due to a loss of business and exposure to highway traffic.</p> <p>HSC development on the new bypass is likely to result in significant cumulative effects on local business and the loss of long-term/traditional customers, i.e. service station operators in Bulahdelah source local produce etc. A new HSC may import produce at the expense of local business.</p> <p>Approval of the HSC at The Branch Lane near Karuah may determine whether people decide to travel and stop at Bulahdelah. Bulahdelah does not have the drawcards available at Karuah, namely the Karuah River.</p> <p>Viability of the proposed bypass in terms of local business interests is a key issue.</p> <p>HSC are usually synonymous with poor quality food choice and service.</p>
Emergency Services	
NSW Police (Bulahdelah Branch)	<p>Inadequate parking areas to accommodate B-doubles in Bulahdelah. The land between the existing Shell garage and Telstra depot could be optimised and converted into a parking area to serve both light and heavy vehicle parking needs.</p> <p>Safety and access issues are a major priority, particularly in terms of response times to the scenes of road vehicle accidents.</p> <p>Highway through Bulahdelah struggles to cope with traffic flows during peak holiday periods and the traffic volumes are increasing.</p> <p>Traditional stops tend to dictate where frequent users travelling up and down the highway will stop.</p> <p>General feeling that an out-of-town service centre may be to the detriment of the economic viability of the township.</p>

APPENDIX C

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**Section 117(2) S28 of  
the EP&A Act 1979**

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT ACT 1979  
DIRECTION UNDER SECTION 117(2) No. S28

COMMERCIAL/RETAIL DEVELOPMENT  
ALONG THE PACIFIC HIGHWAY, NORTH COAST,  
FROM THE QUEENSLAND BORDER TO HEXHAM

I, the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, pursuant to Section 117(2) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (the Act), hereby direct each Council specified in Schedule 1 to exercise its functions under Divisions 4 and 5 of Part 3 of the Act in relation to the preparation of a draft local environmental plan specified in Schedule 2.

Craig Knowles  
Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning

Sydney, 1998.

SCHEDULE 1

COUNCIL

Ballina Shire Council  
Bellingen Shire Council  
Byron Shire Council  
Coffs Harbour City Council  
Grafton City Council  
Great Lakes Shire Council  
Greater Taree City Council  
Hastings Municipal Council  
Kempsey Shire Council  
Maclean Shire Council  
Nambucca Shire Council  
Port Stephens Shire Council  
Richmond River Shire Council  
Tweed Shire Council  
Ulmarra Shire Council

## SCHEDULE 2

### **Proposed Direction**

Commercial/retail development along the Pacific Highway, North Coast, from the Queensland border to Hexham.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of this Direction relate to managing commercial/retail development along the Pacific Highway. The objectives are:

Objective 1: To recognise that the Pacific Highway's function is to operate as the North Coast's primary inter- and intra-regional road traffic route. That is, the purpose of the Pacific Highway is regional transport, not retailing;

Objective 2: To recognise and protect the very large public expenditure being invested in the Pacific Highway; specifically, to limit the need for future public expenditure (eg: further by-passes) to overcome new ribbon development;

Objective 3: To prevent, and as opportunities arise to reverse, the losses in highway safety and highway efficiency caused by incremental additions of out-of-town or town fringe retail/commercial development fronting the highway;

Objective 4: To provide for the food, vehicle service and rest needs of travellers on the highway;

Objective 5: To achieve Objective 4 in such a way that the role of highway service centres is differentiated from the role of commercial areas in towns; and

Objective 6: To prevent retail/commercial foci of towns from shifting from town centre areas (where they can best serve the populations of the towns) to highway-oriented sites.

### **When this direction applies**

This Direction will apply when a council listed in Schedule 1 prepares a draft local environmental plan for land in the vicinity of the existing and/or proposed alignment of the Pacific Highway.

## **What a council must do if this direction applies**

A draft LEP must:

- be consistent with the objectives; and
- be consistent with the following principles:

### **Within Town Segments of the Pacific Highway**

For the purposes of Principles 1, 2 and 3, “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.

Principle 1: Within towns, new commercial or retail development should not spread along the highway. Rather, it should be concentrated within distinct commercial centres.

Principle 2: Notwithstanding Principle 1, some commercial activities may not always be suited within a town’s commercial centre (eg. short stay accommodation, entertainment, tourism developments, clubs, petrol stations, vehicle sales, building materials/products sales or showrooms, other bulky goods retailing, wholesaling). These uses should be located “within town”.

Principle 3: Where a commercial/retail outlet or area is established with frontage to the Pacific Highway within a town, special effort should be made to protect or enhance the safety and efficiency of the highway.

### **Out-of-Town Segments of the Pacific Highway**

For the purposes of Principles 4 and 5, “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.

Principle 4: In out-of-town locations (except as provided in Principle 6), new commercial or retail development should not be established near the Pacific Highway if this proximity would be inconsistent with Objectives 1, 2, 3 or 6 of this Direction.

Principle 5: Retail or commercial uses which become by-passed by the Pacific Highway should not be relocated onto the new by-pass, except as provided in Principle 6.



## Highway Service Centres

Over the next 10 or more years, many towns on the Pacific Highway will be by-passed, while the highway will continue to pass through other towns. In either case, these towns will continue to act as service centres for the travelling public. However, in addition to the existing service towns, to meet Objective 4 it may be necessary to provide some highway service centres where towns have been by-passed. For the purposes of Principles 6 to 9, a highway service centre is a place which provides only services essential to long distance travellers on the highway.

Principle 6 - Acceptance of the need for highway service centres: Highway service centres should be permitted to establish beside the Pacific Highway, subject to Principles 7 to 9.

Principle 7 - Location criteria for highway service centres: Highway service centres will be limited in distribution. They should be strategically located to serve, but not to overserve, the travelling public. They should:

- be located as near as possible to an existing town that has been by-passed, preferably at an intersection/interchange with the town access road, so that they act to economically support that town, to encourage visitation to that town and so that employees do not have to use the Pacific Highway to get to work. Highway service centres should not be located remote from existing towns. Where a town or village is to be by-passed and that town has developed largely to service the needs of highway traffic, the likely future impact on the town's economy should be considered before approval is given to establish any new or expanded highway service centre on the edge or outside the town; **and**
- be spaced no closer than 24 kilometres from another highway service centre or a town through which the highway still passes; **and**
- be limited to one highway service centre to serve both directions of traffic, or one highway service centre per side of the highway, for each segment identified as potentially appropriate for a highway service centre. If there is a need for one highway service centre each side of the highway, they should be located either opposite each other, or staggered such that the highway service centre on the driver's approach is viewed first and is no more than 500 metres from the other.

Note that Principle 7 would not allow establishment of a highway service centre out-of-town if the highway still passes through that town; however the Principle does not place limits on development having highway service centre functions within towns.

Principle 8 - Uses allowed in a highway service centre: The **only** uses which will be allowed in highway service centres are:

- service stations (which may supply convenience goods catering for the needs of the travelling public);
- emergency vehicle repairs;
- bus/coach terminal facilities (but not depots);
- restaurant facilities (preferably both sit-down and fast food);

- toilet/shower facilities;
- tourist information (but not commercial tourist facilities);
- telephones;
- rest areas (including seating, barbecue and play areas); and
- adequate parking for cars, buses and trucks.

Principle 9 - Access and safety at highway service centres: Access to and from highway service centres should be carefully designed such that highway travel is not slowed or made more dangerous. The following criteria should apply:

- where access is necessary from the far side of the highway, it should only be provided via grade separation or via safely designed public road intersection;
- if it is not possible to safely and efficiently provide vehicular access from the far side of the highway or to duplicate the highway service centre, then the highway design should prevent access from the far side, including pedestrian access;
- any proposal to provide access to a highway service centre from local streets will be assessed on its merits. The principal concerns to be addressed in such circumstances are:
  - the need to avoid the highway service centre access becoming a defacto, unplanned, uncontrolled intersection;
  - the need to avoid the highway service centre becoming an access to other commercial ventures such a shopping centres and motels;
  - the need to provide access for service vehicles (including those needed to restock the fuel tanks and food outlets);
  - the desirability of having highway service centre employees gaining access to highway service centres without the need to use the Pacific Highway; and
  - the desirability or otherwise of using the highway service centre also as a service for the local population.

### **Existing Development**

There are a significant number of existing retail/commercial developments along the Pacific Highway which do not conform with the Principles listed above. Some of these perform highway service centre functions and others do not.

Principle 10: Where existing commercial/retail development does not conform with the Principles listed above, whether or not it performs highway service centre functions, it should not expand beyond its current level of service. (Principle 10 allows expansion or change of a development which currently does not conform with the policy where that expansion or change would make it consistent with the policy; for example, changing an existing service station into a highway service centre which conforms with Principles 7, 8 and 9. Principle 10 does not affect "existing use" opportunities in sections 106-108 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979).