

Landsborough to Nambour Rail project

November 2011

REPORT
SUMMARY

The Coordinator-General has released his report on the environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Landsborough to Nambour Rail project.

While a detailed design for the proposal has not yet been finalised, the Coordinator-General recommends the project proceed, subject to the proponent's commitments. The Coordinator-General concludes that the project would provide efficient and timely passenger rail services; and deliver improved freight transportation and productivity.

This document summarises the main issues covered in the Coordinator-General's report on the EIS. For a full copy of the report, visit www.deedi.qld.gov.au

What happens now?

This report will be provided to the project proponent, the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR), and the Sunshine Coast Regional Council (SCRC). TMR will continue working with SCRC, and other stakeholders, to finalise the details of the project's construction and operation.

The project

The project proponent, the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR), proposes to construct a double-track railway, along a predominantly new route within a corridor that could provide for up to

two additional tracks, if required in the future. TMR proposes to upgrade, realign and duplicate approximately 22 kilometres of the existing North Coast Line (NCL), between Landsborough and Nambour on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland.

The upgrade aims to improve service frequency, operating speeds and reliability of trains and deliver modern, efficient rail infrastructure to cater for increasing demand for transport services due to population and freight transport growth.

The capital cost of the project is estimated at \$1.7 billion and it is expected to create up to 659 jobs over a six-year construction period. This is a long-term planning project with the objective of securing the corridor in advance of future phases of its implementation. TMR proposes the project be operational by 2031, subject to whole-of-government priorities and funding availability. As such, the timeframes for detailed design and construction staging are currently undefined, and will depend on government's future infrastructure delivery priorities.

Environmental effects

Nature conservation

The project traverses significant areas of remnant vegetation and areas supporting a diverse range of terrestrial fauna, including some species of conservation significance. The highest potential

impact would be within the southern section of the proposed route, from Landsborough to Palmwoods.

It will not be possible to avoid all areas identified as valuable habitat, nor avoid crossing waterways and riparian and in-stream habitat. TMR has committed to a policy of no net loss of biodiversity in the region. This includes building fauna-friendly features where possible and providing offsets for native vegetation clearing and other biodiversity impacts. TMR also proposes to address potential impacts within a number of special management areas (SMAs) that have environmental, social, economic or cultural significance. In particular, these include waterways, national parks, tunnels and townships that have been identified to ensure the conservation of the natural environment and protection/enhancement of social values.

Property and land use

The proposed rail corridor passes through established townships and rural areas and involves significant changes of alignment in several locations.

The project would cause some unavoidable impacts on communities due to the resumption of property, construction impacts and potential changes to the demographics of the affected towns. The Coordinator-General considers direct property impacts would be addressed appropriately and in a timely manner in accordance with government policies relating to land acquisition.

The proponent has committed to establishing a joint project planning working group with the SCRC to consider land-use planning matters affected by the project and to further refine specific management actions within town centres and other SMAs.

Landscape and visual amenity

The EIS indicated that large sections of the project area are considered to have a high scenic amenity profile and concluded that, overall, the visual impact would be moderately adverse. Outside of urban areas, the corridor could have relatively high visual impacts in sections where extensive vegetation clearing and/or new bridge crossings are required.

TMR's mitigation measures include using landscaping to provide screening; designing structures to minimise visual impact; and developing visual design guidelines in conjunction with affected communities.

Roads

Project construction would directly impact local communities due to changes to the road network, construction traffic and altered noise conditions. Further assessment would be required, as part of the detailed design of the project, to determine construction vehicle movements and their effects on the local road network over the various stages of the works.

Grade-separated crossings at Landsborough and Mooloolah are proposed. TMR is unable to commit to specific timings for these works; however, it has committed to continue engaging with SCRC and community representatives prior to the detailed design, to determine need and timing.

Noise and vibration

Residual noise and vibration impacts are expected to be manageable, although moderate impacts are predicted in some places. While the project will bring about an increased number and frequency of trains, which would increase operational noise, other aspects of the project (such as the improved track grade and alignment) would help to reduce noise levels.