Proposed Albion Park Rail bypass - flood focus group meeting 4

The fourth flood focus group meeting for the proposed Albion Park Rail bypass was held on Monday 28 September 2015 at the Centenary Hall, Albion Park.

Summary

At this meeting feedback on the Flood Assessment Report from Shellharbour City Council (SCC) and the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) was presented to the group and discussed. Paul Vecovski (PV) highlighted that Wollongong Council was approached for feedback and did not provide this by the due date. PV outlined the project aims and objectives and what is achievable with the proposed bypass and explained the Flood Assessment Report would be on the web as part of the EIS display later this year. There was explanation that the flood objectives for the project were based on other RMS road projects of a similar nature including Pacific Highway projects.

Shellharbour City Council and OEH comments are in the attached presentation.

The feedback was first presented from Shellharbour City Council; it is important to note the feedback was only provided on geographic areas administered by Council.

A summary of Shellharbour City Council comments and community questions are:

Project flood objectives

Flood impact objectives on Agricultural Lands – Community expressed concern of flood level increases of 400mm in an isolated area for a 1 in 100 year flood event. Community questioned the impact the increase of flood water would have to homes and PV said flooding would not have impacts on homes even in 1 in 100 year flood event apart from those that are identified in the Flood Assessment Report.

In response Owen de Jong, Hyder Cardno Joint Venture explained the recent storms experienced in the area were a 2 – 5 year storm event.

Access to Albion Park in a 100yr ARI event – Community members expressed concern over limits to access for Albion Park. PV advised that local road improvements were not within this project’s scope, however there are small gains that are achieved e.g. the flood immunity is improved on Tongarra Road through the construction of an earth mound to divert flood waters
to an eastern tributary of Frazers Creek. Concerns were expressed over the low point on Tongarra Road and Frazers Creek.

Potential Dam Safety Committee Prescribed Dams including Green Meadows Basin – What is the classification of the dam? And what are the risks of increasing dam capacity? Shellharbour Council and Owen de Jong explained it is a balance of increasing the dam capacity versus the potential risks of it breaking. The NSW Dam Safety Committee (DSC) would not allow such risks.

Reserve downstream of Green Meadows Basin. Community questions surrounding reserve downstream of basin and who is responsible for ongoing maintenance – PV explained that infrastructure within road corridor was RMS responsibility and outside of this is Council responsibility.

Basin upstream of Oak Flats interchange - RMS works don’t preclude this and it could still be carried out at a later date by Council.

Taylor Road – There will be negative impacts on the already vulnerable area of Taylor Road from a council perspective and concerns were expressed about modelling. Owen de Jong explained the direct impacts to Taylor Road would not change substantially and in some storm events there would be improvements.

2013 BOM rainfall Data – PV highlighted 1987 data was used as there are ongoing issues with the 2013 rainfall data and once the Council’s flood model for the Macquarie Rivulet is available early next year they will reassess the flood modelling during the next stage of the projects development. The 1987 data forms part of the current guidelines.

Community question on when SCC flood model will be completed – SCC responded that design modelling has happened, draft reports are being prepared and SCC will have on public exhibition in the New Year. The SCC model data will be used as a part of the detailed design.

Noise barriers, jersey kerbs, landscaping – PV highlighted in some areas noise barriers have been scaled back to minimise impact on flooding. All other items such as noise barriers, jersey kerbs and landscaping have been included in the flood assessment.

Assessment of construction impacts – Owen de Jong explained modelling would occur again during detailed design where construction impacts would be assessed.

A summary of OEH comments and community questions are:

General comments – construction impacts

500 year average occurrences used as base model was questioned and reporting highlighted as an area to improve.

No consideration of freeboard in the modelling is a concern and OEH doesn’t accept the 1 in 100 year immunity reporting. PV said RMS will take this on board and will make the reporting of flood immunity clearer. Owen de Jong noted that some discrepancy may have been accounted
for through calibration of the models to historic storm events. Acknowledged there will always be uncertainty.

Macquarie Rivulet Catchment – Two properties are negatively impacted by the proposed APRB and doubt is expressed over modelling and the lack of account for wind and small variables.

Duck Creek Catchment – Increases do not affect existing residential dwellings – however there is a considerable increase in inundation within a private property. It was noted that impacts are primarily associated with the use of Wollongong City Council’s culvert blockage policy adopted for this catchment.

Horsley Creek Catchment - The current basin will be redesigned to the same capacity that it currently holds. This work will be carried out in consultation with the NSW Dam Safety Committee and Shellharbour City Council.

Community question if wave and wind action is taken into account in modelling – Owen de Jong replied it isn’t taken into these models.

Community questions why we didn’t carry out 100, 200 year and 500 year modelling to better assess climate change implications – PV highlighted we have carried out modelling for 100, 200 and 500 year storm events as proxies as per Secretary’s Environmental Assessment Requirements

Community questions whether motorists would be advised when flooding occurred – PV highlighted variable message boards (VMS’s) are being provided as part of the broader incident management planning including flooding

General comments regarding construction – PV highlighted detailed plans will be available at detailed design stage

PV highlighted that Wollongong Council is currently reviewing their blockage policy.

PV highlighted EIS on display late October/early November – further opportunity for wider community to provide comments/submissions

Community question on when construction will start – Roads and Maritime is targeting project approval in 2016 and NSW Government has committed funding to start construction by early 2019

Community questions surrounding Tripoli Way – PV highlighted this is a Shellharbour City Council project and RMS is working with Council. Adam from SCC highlighted Council has a long term commitment to building this and it has been in Council’s LEP for about 20 years.

**Next steps**

Roads and Maritime outlined that the EIS has been sent to the Department of Planning and is expected to be exhibited in late 2015 when further community feedback will be sought

Denise Wilson thanked the group and advised feedback survey would be sent out to get members input into process.
Community members advised the FFG process had been helpful in communicating information and having discussions with the project team.