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Background

Tree Management Plan (TMP). The TMP is a document that RMS has developed in response to feedback from the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH). It has been developed in consultation with OEH, Palerang Council and the community as an additional measure in the project to provide a long term strategy for the retention of the avenues of trees on the Kings Highway approaching Braidwood. This Submissions Report details the response to the exhibition of the draft TMP and will be used to finalise the TMP

Preferred option report. This report is being developed to address the road safety concern (fatal crashes involving impact with a tree).

The Kings Highway is a key arterial road connecting the Princes Highway at Batemans Bay in the Eurobodalla Local Government Area in the east to Queanbeyan in the west, passing through the township of Braidwood in Palerang Local Government Area. Near Braidwood, the Kings Highway is an undivided, two-lane, two-way rural road. There are generally broken centre lines with sealed road shoulders which vary from one to one and a half metres in width. A temporary speed limit of 80km/h exists along the northern and eastern approaches to Braidwood with a 50km/h speed limit closer to and through the township. The 80km/h speed zones will be a temporary treatment until a suitable strategy can be implemented to provide protection from the hazards.

Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) has identified a road safety problem along the Kings Highway approaches to Braidwood and has carried out investigations to review the road safety issues in this area. As a consequence of that review, a number of treatments have been identified to improve road safety including the management of the avenue trees on either side of Braidwood. RMS acknowledges the heritage significance and community values associated with the existing roadside trees and in determining the road safety works a Tree Management Plan (TMP) has been developed.

The objectives of the Tree Management Plan are to:

- Conserve the avenue of trees in a manner that retains their cultural heritage values.
- Provide a design for replacement planting and avenue realignment over the longer term as the existing avenue trees reach the end of their life cycle.
- Provide guidance for ongoing maintenance of the existing avenue trees as well as newly planted replacement trees.
- Take account of road safety requirements.

The TMP provides guidelines for the long term management and maintenance of the avenue trees along the sections of the Kings Highway that form the northern and eastern approaches to Braidwood. The TMP includes technical recommendations for managing the existing avenue trees as well as new replacement plantings.

Key values of the TMP include the avenue structure with trees planted at regular spacing on either side of the road together with the seasonal changes that are reflected through variation in leaf colour together with leaf fall that reveals the tree branching form.

A key principle of the TMP is therefore to maintain the distinctive landscape character of the avenues by outlining a strategy for tree replacement to ensure sections of avenue will be formed by symmetrically arranged trees of the same species, age and size (relative to each other).
The diagram below shows the sections of the Kings Highway included in the scope of the Tree Management Plan and the curtilage of the state heritage listing.
Summary

During the submission period of the draft Tree Management Plan (TMP), RMS received many comments supporting the retention of the avenue trees and lowering the speed limit on the approaches to Braidwood along the Kings Highway. These comments reiterated some of the initial feedback that was recorded in the Issues Report (November 2011) and considered in the Preliminary Investigation Report (April 2012) which are both available on the project web site at www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roadprojects.

The comments received will influence the strategy in the Tree Management Plan and help guide the response to the road safety concern.

RMS recognises the avenues of trees on the approaches to Braidwood on the Kings Highway are of significant heritage and cultural value and RMS is committed to maintaining the avenues which mark the approaches to Braidwood, some of which were planted in 1936 to celebrate the 25th year of the reign of King George V.

RMS has been working with the community of Braidwood, Palerang Council and the Office of Environment and Heritage since September 2011 to share and explain the problem and develop treatments which both satisfy community values and provide effective road safety outcomes.

Addressing driver behaviour is an area of particular concern and focus of many programs within RMS and is specifically considered by the Kings Highway Route Safety Review. The “Safe Systems” approach to road safety aims to influence the behaviour of road users but acknowledges that people will inevitably make mistakes.

Engineering responses to roadside hazards near Braidwood complement programs addressing road user behaviour by making the environment more ‘forgiving’ of driver error. Irrespective of the speed travelled, an impact with any large object, including a tree, is likely to result in serious injury or death.

**Even with a reduced speed limit of 80km/h, the risk remains extremely high.**

The primary aim of the TMP is to take a proactive approach by proposing a program to plant new trees in the near future that will provide replacements to maintain the avenues when existing trees reach the end of their life cycle or need to be removed. The TMP also recognises the need for improved road safety outcomes by ensuring any new trees are planted in safer locations.

RMS is developing options including the installation of safety barriers to prevent vehicles which leave the roadway from impacting with hazards as well as provision of emergency stopping bays to allow safe areas for motorists to park off the Kings Highway.

In developing these options, RMS will minimise the amount of trees that will require removal while considering the most appropriate road safety treatment, to address the road safety concern.

In announcing the release of the Kings Highway Route Safety Review on 5 March 2013, the Minister for Roads and Ports recognised there would be a need to remove some trees to improve road safety along the Braidwood section of the Kings Highway.
This Submissions Report has been prepared to document the feedback received during the review period for the draft TMP and to provide responses to the issues raised.

The main feedback received on the TMP included:

1. **Loss of tree avenue effect due to new trees being planted too far away from the road.** In response, it is proposed that new trees will be planted as close as possible to the road (approximately 5.5 metres) which will require a permanent safety barrier with enough space for vehicles to stop safely on the side of the road.

2. **New trees will fail to thrive.** While the draft TMP provided significant detail about procedures for planting and establishment of new trees, this will be enhanced in the final TMP, particularly in relation to the provision of an effective program of watering during the establishment period.

3. **Preference for Pin Oaks.** Some submissions expressed support for the use of Pin Oaks to form the new avenue (north of Braidwood) and there was also support for the use of Golden Poplars. Golden Poplars are considered to be the most appropriate species based on feedback from the community workshop in July 2012 and due to their cultural heritage significance, continuity, form, colour and suitability for the prevailing growing conditions. While it is accepted that Pin Oaks make good avenue trees in the right setting they are not considered appropriate along these sections of Kings Highway at Braidwood due to their broad canopy spread and the limited road reserve width that is available.

4. **Timing of transition from old to new avenue trees.** Two submissions raised a concern that removing old trees when the newly planted trees reach a height of five metres was not adequate. While this height guideline has not been changed it is noted that the TMP also requires new trees to be established and attain an acceptable form. A balance is required to ensure that any new trees are able to develop healthy root systems and characteristic trunk and canopy form without detrimental influence from the existing trees.

5. **Powerlines located immediately north of the urban speed zone of Braidwood.** A conflict with the powerlines north of Braidwood on the eastern side of the highway was raised in two submissions as well as by Essential Energy. There is already an issue in this location where the existing Pin Oaks are growing within the clearance zone of the powerlines and will require pruning and possible removal. In addition, these trees are being pruned by passing vehicles, particularly trucks. Along the western side of the highway south of the Racecourse access road, it is proposed new Golden Poplars will be planted to replace the existing Pin Oaks.
Submissions

1 Feedback received on the Tree Management Plan (TMP)

A total of 63 submissions were received during the response period between 14 December 2012 and 4 March 2013 with a further 10 submissions received after the closing date. These included 62 email responses, two phone calls and nine feedback forms. Fifty five submissions generally addressed issues previously identified in the early stages of the community engagement.

Of the 73 responses, 24 submissions responded directly to the content of the Tree Management Plan (TMP).

The following sections (1.1 – 1.5) document and respond to the submissions that address the content of the TMP.

1.1 Values (Section 1 of the TMP)

The majority of submissions confirmed the values associated with the avenue trees that are expressed in the TMP. Feedback received included:

- Agree that the distinctive landscape character of the avenues must be maintained and form a fitting introduction to the heritage town.
- The true value of the avenue effect cannot be measured in dollars.
- As a bi weekly traveller I see the changing seasonal richness.
- I place great value on the avenue of trees along the Kings Highway, particularly on the northern approach to the village.
- The visual amenity is of great significance and appeal to Braidwood residents, visitors, and the town’s heritage significance.
- Braidwood people love our Poplars.
- Agree that the heritage values of the existing trees are important and worth preserving.
- The Poplar trees on the Kings Highway at Braidwood form a beautiful grand avenue being of heritage value themselves.
- I identify strongly with the values in that the trees are an important feature and form part of the town identity.
- I appreciate that the residents of Braidwood wish to keep the avenues of trees leading into Braidwood from both directions aesthetic reasons.
- Braidwood's historic and beautiful avenue of trees coming into town on both sides.
- … how sad I'd be if the arcade of golden trees leading in to Braidwood was lopped, for each time I pass a Lombardy poplar on an Aussie town's outskirts I give thanks to the fallen soldier.
- The trees have considerable heritage and aesthetic value for the local community.

RMS response:

RMS acknowledges the heritage significance of the avenues of trees along the approaches to Braidwood and their importance to many residents of the township. The TMP sets out a strategy to not only manage the existing road side trees but also a program for long term replacement of the existing trees as they reach the end of their life cycle to ensure that the tree avenues on each side of Braidwood are retained.
1.2 Context (Section 2 of the TMP)

Four submissions commented on the context of the project – generally drawing attention to the heritage listing. Feedback received included:

- The TMP might benefit from additional detail on: The boundary of the NSW Heritage Register listing and the need for Heritage Council approval.
- These trees have been placed under heritage protection.
- My belief is that the trees that are there are historically significant and part of the town's heritage.
- I was surprised that the poplars were planted for King George.

RMS response:

The Office of Environment and Heritage has been consulted by RMS since September 2011 and has provided a submission in relation to the TMP.

Additional information has been included in the TMP about the heritage listing of the avenue trees.

1.3 Objectives (Section 3 of the TMP)

Twelve submissions commented on the objectives of the TMP. Generally, the objectives were supported although two submissions doubted the objectives could be achieved and one submission suggested that the initiative of the TMP was the wrong approach.

- Agree that a long term plan for replacement of trees should be implemented.
- The trees will be cut and juvenile height replacements will be planted out metres wider from the roadway as a poor substitute?
- It is positive to see that there is a long term plan for the replacement of avenues…
- I agree that new trees, but of the same species, ought to be planted for the future.
- Disagree that heritage values can be retained by replacement of existing individual, old trees, with new, young trees, even if they are of the same species.
- RMS should certainly grow clones of these heritage trees in parallel lines of equal density and length behind the existing avenue.
- Fine but only address half the problem.
- However now that I read your management plan I see that the trees are reaching senescence and am glad that moves are afoot to take cuttings which will be placed in safer locations.
- I believe RMS has taken completely the wrong approach.
- We should have developed a Road Verge Management Plan, of which one element is a Tree Management Plan.
- While I applaud your stance of maintaining the look of the treed avenue, …
- I feel it is common benefit to move further back from the traffic flow, but…

RMS response:

No changes to the TMP objectives are considered necessary as a result the above submissions.

The TMP addresses issues that would be part of a conservation management plan and is an approach that was suggested by the Office of Environment and Heritage as appropriate for a heritage listed entity. The TMP is not intended to be RMS’ response to the road safety concerns, but rather to provide guidance for the long term management and replacement of the tree avenues. The TMP forms one of a number of inputs to RMS’ response to the issue of road safety.
1.4 Principles and guidelines (Section 4 of the TMP)

1.4.1 Consistency with road safety

Twenty submissions commented on road safety in relation to the TMP and included varying opinions. Several submissions supported the need to improve road safety while many expressed the opinion that the trees do not present a hazard. Feedback received included:

- Agree that driver safety is important and that there are potential conflicts between tree placement for amenity, and driver safety. The trees also provide a clear signal and ‘wake up call’ to drivers as they come close to the town. I believe that there are as many safety benefits as costs.
- The focus of this discussion is absolutely on road safety. A number of humans have died on this stretch of road. It appears to me that we have developed a solution to re-planting a very dangerous strip of avenue trees, without solving the original problem (road safety).
- I believe that the trees do not present a threat to people driving slowly and carefully.
- I feel it is common benefit to move further back from the traffic flow. Road safety is my main concern.
- I disagree with the RMS that the trees pose a danger to motorists and have to be removed for that reason.
- In the rest of the world, … any accident is blamed on the driver…
- After all the trees don’t jump in front of drivers, do they?
- … the underlying safety issue – crash obstacles too close to the highway.
- I think RMS has lost focus… initially the project was about the hazard created by the trees being too close to the road …
- If there are trees even spaced further apart motorists will still run into them
- If people are going to hit a tree whilst driving, they are going to hit it, whether it’s right near the road or not
- We all need safe roads
- Also, I would like to see ripple strips included.
- Leave the trees and put ripple along the side.
- They (the poplars) are not a road hazard
- The problem is not the trees
- These trees are NOT a road hazard to 99 percent of drivers
- The installation of the profile line marking and the new 50km/hr speed zones have been well received and are making a difference.

RMS response:

The “Safe Systems” approach to road safety (which is adopted by all Australian States and Territories) aims to influence the behaviour of road users but acknowledges that people will inevitably make mistakes.

Engineering responses to roadside hazards near Braidwood complement programs addressing road user behaviour by making the environment more ‘forgiving’ of driver error.

RMS’ approach to road safety along the north and east approaches to Braidwood will be detailed in a preferred option report, which will be publicly available in the second half of 2013.

The approach includes a short term strategy of installing profile line marking and safety barriers to reduce the occurrence and severity of crashes while minimising the removal of existing trees. Due to the closeness of the existing trees to the road in some locations, the installation of safety barriers will result in narrow roadside shoulders, which are
unacceptable in terms of road safety as a long term solution. To compensate for the narrow shoulders, emergency stopping bays are required to provide space for vehicles to stop clear of the travel lanes. To implement this short term treatment, it will be necessary to remove a limited number of trees.

The long term strategy includes implementation of the TMP that will result in the establishment of trees to replicate the existing avenues. The new avenue trees will be located further from the roadway (about 5.5 metres) to allow widening of the road shoulders to improve road safety. This will be after the new trees are tall enough to form an avenue and existing trees can be removed.

1.4.2 Tree avenue structure

Eleven submissions commented on the avenue structure (including locations) proposed in the TMP. Feedback received included:

- The plan might benefit from additional detail on: Why there appear to be ‘gaps’ and no new tree planting is proposed east of the proposed Pear tree row...
- The “mood” of the planting will change due to the increased space between trees.
- On the eastern boundary there is no space behind the present trees to plant replacements.
- Will lose avenue effect by planting so far apart – e.g. in Showground/Racecourse.
- The two braidwood tree corridors are a unique signature BECAUSE of their close proximity to the road.
- They are too far from the side of the road to provide an “avenue” effect.
- Planting at the northern approach should not be inside the showground boundary – it is too far from the road for the tree canopies to create the over-arching canopy effect of the avenue of trees. Moving the trees closer will improve / better replicate the avenue aspects of the tree lines in the long term.
- I think it is ridiculous to think that equivalent heritage/aesthetic/environmental values could be achieved from plantings behind fences. I doubt whether the visions for putting trees on private properties will succeed.
- Has the RMS considered the implications for the powerlines on the eastern side of the road?
- There are power lines on the eastern side of the highway heading toward Canberra and a second tree line cannot be planted.
- [Locations] are fine as they go...

**RMS response:**

There were two main issues raised in relation to the structure/location of proposed new avenues.

The concern raised most often (in all the feedback) was that the avenue effect is lessened when the trees are planted further away from the highway. In response, new trees will be planted as close as possible to the road (approximately 5.5 metres) which will require a permanent safety barrier with enough space for vehicles to stop on the side of the road.

Another issue raised in two submissions relates to the powerlines on the eastern side of the highway immediately north of Braidwood township boundary. This conflict was also raised by Essential Energy. There is already an issue in this location in relation to the existing Pin Oaks which will soon need pruning to maintain safe clearance from the powerlines. Additionally, the trees are being shaped by passing traffic along the highway. In response, new Golden Poplars in this area (south of the Racecourse access road) can only be planted on the western side of the highway.
The TMP will be amended to locate the proposed new Golden Poplar trees within the highway reserve along the section adjoining the racecourse. This row would be extended to the northern boundary of Braidwood township to replace the avenue of Pin Oaks.

1.4.3 Tree species selection

Eleven submissions addressed the species of trees proposed within the TMP. Several people expressed a preference for Pin Oaks or to retain the existing avenue of Pin Oaks, while other people supported the tree species proposed in the TMP. Feedback received included:

- The plan might benefit from additional detail on: Whether the Garden Club(s) responsible for the 1984 plantings of pin oaks have any attachment to or preference for retaining these or replanting with this species.
- Agree
- Golden Poplar – good selection. I do not agree that Pin Oaks are not a suitable species.
- I cannot believe your consultants would dismiss Pin Oaks as avenue trees. Golden Poplars I believe are not hardy and are difficult to grow without care. Better avenue trees suitable for our climate are: Pin Oaks, Plane trees (many types), Ash species (not golden as it needs a lot of water), many native eucalypts and blackwoods; many oaks, Indian cedars.
- While I like the visual effect of the avenue of trees, as a species I much prefer the Pin Oaks. By comparison, I am not a fan of the Lombardy Poplars.
- Tree species should be the same as currently used. Pin oaks should not be removed - they will maintain to some degree the avenue appearance while other works are taking place.
- Pin Oaks better than Golden Poplars.
- OK.
- The trees selected to replace are suitable.
- Replacement with trees from the same stock is commonsense.
- The existing ones are OK

RMS response:

Golden Poplar is considered to be the most appropriate species based on feedback from the community workshop in July 2012 and consideration of their cultural heritage significance, continuity, form, colour and suitability for the prevailing growing conditions. While RMS agrees that Pin Oaks can form a good avenue in the right setting, they are not considered appropriate as avenue trees along the Kings Highway approaches to Braidwood due to their broad canopy spread and limited road reserve width.

It’s proposed that new Golden Poplars are planted behind the existing Pin Oaks on the western side of the Highway, north of Braidwood and that these new trees be planted slightly further from the road (6.5 metres) so that the Pin Oaks can be retained while the new trees develop.
1.4.4 Planting stock propagation

Five submissions supported the concept of propagation of new trees from the existing Golden Poplars. Feedback received included:

- It is positive that cuttings will be taken this season so as to not waste a year, however this should not reflect that final decisions have already been made while consultation is ongoing.
- While I agree that new trees, but of the same species, ought to be planted for the future, …
- With the future in mind the RMS should certainly grow clones of these heritage trees…
- Replacement with trees from the same stock is commonsense - …
- … I am glad that moves are afoot to take cuttings …

RMS response:
No change to Section 4.4 of the TMP is considered necessary as a result the above submissions.

RMS has taken cuttings from the existing Golden Poplars that line the northern approach of Kings Highway at Braidwood. An industry expert advised that February is the only opportunity to obtain the bud stock suitable for propagation.

1.4.5 Tree planting

Three submissions addressed the issue of tree planting. Feedback received included:

- Competition between the new and existing trees may prove to be an issue. It is important that any “protection” from competition does not adversely impact on the long-term root development of the new trees or de-stabilise the existing trees. Support for the trees should not be necessary. Any structures designed will be to protect trees from physical damage. My general recommendation is to restrict mulch to around 50mm rather than 100 mm and top-up regularly.
- Need to upgrade your tree planting detail… need to consider drainage pipe in backfill to assist watering.
- Recessed plantings put trees in large drain on both sides of road, this is a big mistake as few trees take water logging.

RMS response:
Some minor amendments have been made to Appendix B of the TMP in response to the detailed comments above.

The following section responds to feedback specifically about watering of new trees.

No change to Section 4.5 of the TMP is considered necessary as a result the above submissions.
1.4.6 Maintenance

Eight submissions commented on the maintenance procedures to be followed and the need to ensure that new trees thrive. Feedback received included:

- Watering of the trees is essential and in the past Council who have so many other commitments have not been able to do this.
- The trees will be cut down, the new plantings will fail to thrive in our harsh climate.
- It is positive to see that solid tree guards are proposed to protect the new trees. The management plan should also include the removal of these guards.
- There is a high risk that trees will fail to thrive.
- Need to upgrade your tree planting detail… need to consider drainage pipe in backfill to assist watering.
- Irrigation should occur for around 2 years. Watering trees long-term is not an option. Watering long-term using drippers can be counter-productive as it encourages root systems to develop closer to the stem rather than ranging out into bigger and bigger soil volumes.
- It would appear that maintenance staff … will be integral to achieving successful outcomes.
- Golden Poplars I believe are not hardy and are difficult to grow without care.

RMS response:

While the draft TMP provided significant detail about planting and establishment of new trees it has been enhanced, particularly in respect of ensuring adequate watering. The TMP details the requirement for watering, particularly during the establishment period. An irrigation system is being considered as well as the option of watering by tanker, to ensure that appropriate water is provided to newly planted trees.

The TMP specifies a process of deep ripping of the areas to be planted and soil testing and improvements in order to create optimal growing conditions for the newly planted trees.

It is proposed that RMS will be responsible for establishment of the new avenues during the first two years and that this work will be carried out under a contract to meet the performance requirements defined in the TMP.

1.4.7 Community involvement

One submission suggested that the local high school could be involved in growing the new trees. Feedback received included:

- Why not encourage the local High School Students to grow the trees on their Ag Farm?

RMS response:

The performance guidelines included in the TMP are based on industry best practice being employed to ensure the successful establishment of the new trees. RMS proposes that this work will be carried out under a contract with a commitment to using the highest quality tree stock and consistent planting and maintenance procedures.
1.4.8 Tree removal

Ten submissions responding to the TMP made comments related to the removal of the existing trees – mostly opposing planned removal. Additionally, 29 other submissions supported the concept of retaining the existing trees although these were not commenting on the replacement strategy presented in the TMP. Feedback specifically responding to the TMP included:

- The plan might benefit from additional detail on: The meaning of replacing trees ‘in groups’. The plan might benefit from additional detail on: The anticipated timing of achieving 5m tall new trees…
- Disagree that the present trees should be removed when new trees grow up unless they are rotten.
- … the trees will be cut and juvenile height replacements will be planted out metres wider from the roadway as a poor substitute?
- Removal of existing successful trees is a total retrograde step.
- Why risk taking them out and then having no trees grow later.
- It will take a long period of time for replacement trees to reach an appropriate size and shape. Removing existing plants once new plantings reach a minimum height of 5m is insufficient. Tree canopies will not yet be impacting each other, so removal of old trees will not benefit the new trees.
- I do not agree with their removal at this time.
- Until the younger trees are 10 metres high the older trees must not be felled.
- While I applaud your stance of maintaining the look of the treed avenue, I disagree that the existing should be removed.
- It is quite illogical to opt for tree removal.

RMS response:

One of the objectives of the TMP is to conserve the existing avenue character by planting replacements so that when the existing trees reach the end of their life cycle or are removed to meet road safety standards, the tree avenue character will be retained. The TMP also responds to the need for improved road safety outcomes by ensuring that any new replacement trees are planted in locations that meet road safety standards.

In addition to specifying a minimum height of new trees the TMP also requires replacement avenue trees to be well established and attain an acceptable height and form before removal of the trees they are replacing.
1.4.9 Implementation program

Nine submissions responded to the section in the TMP dealing with the implementation – mostly concerned with the associated costs. Feedback received included:

- The plan might benefit from additional detail on the anticipated timing of achieving 5m tall new trees and whether maintenance staff have been or will be briefed on the plan.
- Any supply contract should include regular reports.
- On the eastern boundary there is no space behind the present trees to plant replacements.
- The proposals in the TMP for replacement of the trees seem to be the most expensive available.
- I am worried that this will add a substantial additional, unfunded burden on Palerang Council.
- It will be a lot cheaper to put up a few new signs rather than wasting so much money on a secondary tree line.
- Make it 80 and save all that $.
- I am extremely disappointed about the waste of tax payers money spend on the Draft Tree Management Plan. I am also concerned about the amount of money suggested to ‘fix’ the tree problem.
- Who is going to pay? How much? Who has the final say?

RMS response:

Many of the comments related to implementation of the TMP expressed concern about the costs involved and in some cases the costs compared to implementing a speed zone change.

The TMP is not intended to provide the RMS response to the road safety concerns (which will be addressed in the preferred option report), but rather to provide a plan for conserving and replacing the avenues while taking into account the required road safety works. The TMP has been developed as an additional measure for the community for the retention avenue trees.

Even with a reduced speed limit of 80km/h, the risk of death or serious injury remains extremely high and RMS considers that additional safeguards are required to reduce the severity of accidents on this section of the Kings Highway.

RMS will seek funding to include the establishment of new avenues as part of the overall road safety response.
1.5 **General comments/ issues**

Six submissions included various comments relating to the content and development of the TMP that are not covered by the preceding sections. Feedback received included:

- I still need you to consider fencing – wire rope. Speed restrictions with cameras to slow motorists.
- Sorry to miss the next meeting although I am sure the decisions are made, erroneous and backward as they are.
- I disagree that all the options have been considered.
- RMS should place a fence barrier between the road and the trees.
- The danger of RMS sitting back and thinking nothing more needs to be done because work has been done with the trees.
- We should have developed a Road Verge Management Plan, of which one element is a Tree Management Plan. Even a cursory discussion, with approximate costing (+/- 100%) would allow a more balanced view of the problem at hand.

**RMS response:**

While the TMP provides guidance for the long term future of the tree avenues it only forms one of a number of inputs to the RMS response to the road safety issues associated with the Kings Highway at Braidwood.

The Preliminary Investigation Report (April 2012) which is available on the RMS project web site at www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roadprojects addresses the initial community feedback in relation to the road safety issues and proposes engineering treatments that are relevant to that feedback taking in to account their feasibility and effectiveness.

RMS is developing options including the installation of safety barriers to prevent vehicles which leave the roadway from impacting with hazards as well as provision of emergency stopping bays to allow a safe area for motorists to park off the Kings Highway.

In developing these options, RMS will minimise the number of trees that need to be removed.
2 Feedback received on other issues (not part of the TMP)

The following sections (2.1 – 2.10) document and respond to the submissions that address issues not specifically related to the content of the TMP.

2.1 Community ignored

Nine of the 73 submissions felt RMS ignored the community’s opinions, values and ideas. Feedback received included:

- The location of the speed limit change is nowhere near the location of the trees.
- I am concerned that RMS seems to be ignoring the Braidwood community’s preference to retain the existing trees, and instead lower the speed limit through the avenue of trees.
- The strategy is flawed and I do not understand why you have spent so much money ignoring what those of us who live on the highway know to be true.
- It is very evident that the RMS is NOT listening to us.
- Listen to the community. The intransigence of the RMS on this matter is incredible considering the length of time this has been discussed.
- If the RMS listened properly to the people of Braidwood … then the solution could have been resolved already.
- Community consultation did in fact argue for a reduced speed of 80km/h along that stretch.
- Please listen to the community and reason and put up some new signs – 80km/h in the tree section.
- If you had listened to the people it was a simple solution.

RMS response:

Some of the submissions reiterated initial feedback that was recorded in the Issues Report (November 2011) and considered in the Preliminary Investigation Report (April 2012) which are both available on the RMS project web site at www.rms.nsw.gow.au/roadprojects

The responses below provide more detail than what was included in the Preliminary Investigations Report.

2.2 Speed

Fifty of the 73 submissions implied/assumed that speed is the main factor associated with crashes on the Kings Highway and requested a speed limit reduction as an alternative to any changes affecting the avenues of trees. Feedback received included:

- I still need you to consider speed restrictions with cameras to slow motorists.
- … point to point cameras, or speed humps should certainly be investigated first.
- Considering that the showground and racecourse have driveways entering the highway in this section, a reduced speed limit would make entry and exit from these public facilities safer.
- Why not lower the speed limit to 80km/hr or less at the beginning of these Poplar Avenues? This is a perfectly achievable, sensible, environmentally-friendly and community-welcomed approach to this issue, as well as an opportunity for visitors to furthermore appreciate the beautiful town and it’s surroundings.
- No mention of drivers who speed.
- I cannot understand why RMS has not reduced the speed limit along this stretch of road to 80 km/hr?
- Reducing the speed limit to 70 kph from the Showground into town should stop most idiots from killing themselves.
• Community consultation did in fact argue for a reduced speed of 80km/h along that stretch.
• Please listen to the community and reason and put up some new signs – 80km/h in the tree section.
• The speed limit approaching Braidwood on the Northern approach, should see the speed limit reduced to 80, 60 or 50km per hour…
• The obvious course of action (if safety is an issue) is to lower the speed limit to 80km/h.
• The speed limit should be reduced to 60kmh where the avenue commences.
• The speed limit from Deloraine Road (near the showground) should be reduced to 80km/h. None of the locals can comprehend why a speed limit of 80km/h from the showground can’t be implemented.
• Slow the motorists. In addition to slowing 100km to 80km further north – for example to the north of the Colombo Rd intersection, then slowing to 50km (maybe 60km) at the existing overtaking lane.
• At least trial a lower speed limit. Install rumble bars (the half way ones which motorcycle riders can ride around) across the road to slow approaches.
• I don’t understand though why the speed limit isn’t currently reduced to 80.
• Why has the RMS failed to take note of the speed limit along the avenue of trees? Reduction to 80kms per hour from Deloraine Lane to the now 50km zone would make all the difference. Likewise on the eastern side of town.
• I favour slowing down the traffic to decrease the hazard potential.
• The obvious and simplest approach is to have a sensible transition speed limit for the approaches coupled with some “rumble strips” at each transition.
• Instead of killing the trees, why not keep the drivers and their cars ON THE ROAD by reducing the speed limit on the approaches to Braidwood. Speeding and tail-gating is almost the norm for drivers between Canberra and the coast.
• Speed limits must be imposed from Deloraine Lane to Station St – 80kph.

RMS response:
The serious crashes in the immediate vicinity of Braidwood over the past several years have generally been fatigue and not been speed related.

RMS, on behalf of the Centre for Road Safety, reduced the 100km/h speed limit on the Kings Highway either side of Braidwood to 80km/h on 30 April 2013. This can be a temporary treatment until a suitable strategy can be implemented to provide protection from the hazards.

Irrespective of the speed travelled, an impact with any large object, including a tree, is likely to result in serious injuries or deaths. Even with a reduced speed limit of 80km/h, the risk of death or serious injury still remains extremely high.

2.3 Value of trees & preservation
Ten submissions responding to the TMP made comments related to the removal of the existing trees – mostly opposing planned removal. Additionally, 29 other submissions supported the concept of retaining the existing trees although these were not commenting on the replacement strategy presented in the TMP. Feedback not specifically responding to the TMP included:

• I would like to see the trees remain as it takes years for them to grow.
• The tree lane is something I have always associated with Braidwood.
• Short and sweet, keep the trees!
• I have NEVER had a problem with the Braidwood poplars and would strongly advise AGAINST cutting them down.
• … the trees should be retained as is …
As a resident of Canberra, who has for 69 years frequently travelled through Braidwood, I am writing to request that the poplar trees, both sides of Braidwood, are retained. The poplar trees are highly valued by large number of people from both the Braidwood and Canberra regions and are an integral part of Braidwood.

I cannot express my horror that these landmark trees will be destroyed because speeding drivers run into them.

Save the Braidwood Poplars.

It would be a real shame if anything was to happen to the trees along the highway in the Braidwood area.

NO to removal of trees.

I would like to offer a suggestion as to how to save these beautiful trees.

They are an iconic part of our local landscape and as I am sure you appreciate, are much loved and valued by our community.

RMS response:

Similar comments received in the past have influenced the strategy in the TMP and will help guide the response to the road safety concern. RMS recognises the avenues of trees on the approaches to Braidwood on the Kings Highway are of significant heritage and cultural value and RMS is committed to maintaining the tree avenues which mark the approaches to Braidwood, some of which were planted in 1936 to celebrate the 25th year of the reign of King George V.

2.4 Driver behaviour

Twenty five submissions addressed driver behaviour as an issue on the Kings Highway. Feedback received included:

… it is a good road but the problem is it is used as a fun park for leisure and pleasure traffic …

The only problem is drivers.

DRIVER ERROR is the reason for these deaths. SPEEDING, DRIVER FATIGUE -from having a late night the night before. LACK OF CONCENTRATION

Speeding drivers should be the ones made to alter their behaviours …

I do not agree that these trees represent a danger to motorists, especially those that are driving in a safe and sensible manner.

The trees do not create a hazard for people who drive at less than 80kmh and STAY ON THE ROAD!

In the rest of the world, there are long avenues of trees lining the roads and any accident is blamed on the driver as trees so not move of their own volition.

The trees don’t kill anyone, fatal idiocy resides behind the wheel.

After all the trees don’t jump in front of the drivers, do they?

If the RMS proposes cutting down these poplars to prevent dopey drivers crashing into them …

The TREES are not at fault, it is driver behaviour.

Need to be part of a wider strategy to curb irresponsible drivers.

Changing people’s behaviour has not worked … in the interests of road safety we should try something else.

Unfortunately Braidwood’s beautiful avenues of trees have been hit by cars travelling at high speeds with Driver’s at fault. The RMS need to make those Drivers rushing too and from the coast responsible.

To destroy these magnificent trees to protect the reckless seems perverse. I suggest managing the humans rather than penalising the trees.

RMS should address the appalling standard of driving on the Kings Highway. Speeding and tail-gating is almost the norm for drivers between Canberra and the coast.
RMS response:
Addressing driver behaviour is an area of particular concern and focus of many programs within RMS and is specifically considered by the Kings Highway Route Safety Review. The "Safe Systems" approach to road safety aims to influence the behaviour of road users but acknowledges that people will inevitably make mistakes.

Engineering responses to roadside hazards near Braidwood complement programs addressing road user behaviour by making the environment more 'forgiving' of driver error.

2.5 Similar situations exist in other locations

Sixteen submissions raised the issue that similar situations exist in other locations. Feedback received included:

- From my experience travelling the Kings Highway, there are many areas on the side of the road that have crosses where people have left the road. Are you then going to cut down all trees along all Highways????
- WHAT NEXT? Cutting out the side of the mountain on the Clyde because cars crash n people get killed running into that as well.
- There are other towns which have avenues of poplars or planted trees along the approaches – Berridale would be a good example.
- There are far more dangerous areas on the Kings Highway that should receive attention, particularly caused by the lack safe overtaking lanes.
- The Kings avenue is a notoriously dangerous stretch of highway, with many fatal road accidents occurring along its length, but these accidents are by no means limited entirely to this beautiful avenue of trees.
- if the answer to an accident is to cut a tree down every time an accident occurs, then Australia will be treeless and de-foliaged in swift short time.
- Are we to remove every tree along all of the highways in Australia.
- Why attack our trees when there are so many other hazards on the length of the highway?
- So many other towns have similar avenues of trees which do not seem to be being persecuted in the same way.
- All along our highways there are objects such as trees and rocks and rock cuttings which pose similar threats.
- I think that there are other danger spots that could be addressed as well.
- If the RMS proposes cutting down these poplars to prevent dopey drivers crashing into them then it MUST ALSO propose cutting all trees back to the same distance from all State roads.
- There are many areas out of Braidwood that have large trees very close to the edges of roads. I just don’t understand WHY these poplar trees have been targeted for removal.
- So many roads have trees close to the edge causing potential accidents.
- Where will this stop: will you ultimately remove all trees on roadsides throughout NSW to reduce the road toll?

RMS response:
The recently announced Kings Highway Route Safety Review (5 March 2013) identifies that 28% of fatal crashes (in the five years 2007 to 2011 over 117 kilometres from just south of Bungendore to immediately north of Batemans Bay) occurred immediately either side of Braidwood.
Although it is recognised that there are many other locations on the NSW State road network and Kings Highway where there are hazards close to the road, the crash data identifies a concentration of crashes around Braidwood. This suggests a particular complex combination of factors that apply to the two sections of road either side of Braidwood.

2.6 Project costs

Ten submissions suggested the options being considered are a waste of money. Feedback received included:

- The strategy is flawed and I do not understand why you have spent so much money ignoring what those of us who live on the highway know to be true.
- I am worried that this will add a substantial additional, unfunded burden on Palerang Council. The tree management strategy will cost many thousands of dollars to implement, and presumably the actions need to be taken by Council. Is the RMS proposing a dedicated state government fund for these costs?
- It will be a lot cheaper to put up a few new signs rather than wasting so much money on a secondary tree line.
- I am extremely disappointed about the waste of tax payers money spend on the Draft Tree Management Plan. I am also concerned about the amount of money suggested to ‘fix’ the tree problem.
- An 80 zone from the start of the avenue of trees at least on the Bungendore side of town seems to be the least expensive and most sensible idea.
- How much has this project cost? How much will it cost estimated 2 million.
- … put up some new signs - 80km/h in the tree section … Give it 12 months trial before spending any more money.
- I am writing in protest about the ridiculous waste of time and money that has been going on about the so called plan to move our beautiful trees along the entrances into our town.
- This community consultation and proposed treatment of Braidwood's historic poplar avenues are a complete waste of taxpayers money.
- You are spending thousands of tax payers money when if you had listened to the people it was a simple solution. “Lower the Speed Limit”.
- Please instruct Roads and Maritime Services to cease wasting tax payers money with Reports like the ‘fictitious’ “Tree Management Plan: Kings Highway Braidwood”.

RMS response:

RMS is seeking to implement an effective response that addresses the type of crashes that have occurred in the past while also considering community values and minimising tree removal. RMS values the community and stakeholder feedback in developing suitably balanced options to improve road safety on the approaches to Braidwood. RMS has been working hard since 2011 to achieve this balanced outcome that addresses the road safety issue (fatal crashes involving impact with a tree) and to maintain the avenues of trees.
2.7 Overtaking lanes

Five submissions raised issues with overtaking facilities on the Kings Highway as a contributing factor to recent crashes. Feedback received included:

- Reduce the length of overtaking lane coming into Braidwood from the north.
- Redesign the overtaking lanes north of Deloraine Lane.
- The reason why the stretch of road either side of Braidwood is dangerous is not because of poplars it is because there are insufficient overtaking lanes on the entire highway. If for example there were overtaking lanes just prior to the poplars there would not be the pent up desire to overtake, which will mean safer driving and fewer accidents.
- The eastern side would benefit from an overtaking lane prior to the poplars and a speed limit reduction afterwards – located about 1 km east of “Mona”.
- Why isn’t there an overtaking area out of town from Deloraine Rd.

**RMS response:**

Changes to overtaking facilities on the Kings Highway is not considered to have a significant direct effect on the conditions that have led to recent serious crashes near Braidwood and the focus is on treatments that will have a more direct and effective impact on reducing the occurrence and seriousness of ‘run-off-road’ crashes within the tree avenues.

The Kings Highway Route Safety Review which considered the full length of the highway includes a recommendation to review provisions for overtaking.

2.8 Bypass

Five submissions raised the issue of a bypass with one of those submissions expressing a view that it would be a devastating action. Feedback received included:

- The RMS should plan to bypass the Kings Highway around Braidwood.
- There is an urgent need for a ring road.
- Where is the heavy vehicle bypass
- I think a bypass around Braidwood would be a better thing
- It would be equally devastating if the road was altered and the town was by-passed.

**RMS response:**

RMS has discounted the option of building a bypass as a feasible short term option to address the specific road safety concern on the Kings Highway approaches to Braidwood.
2.9 ANZAC Anniversary

One submission linked the Lombardy poplars with memorials for WWI soldiers and although supporting of the TMP objectives did not want to see trees removed before the ANZAC Anniversary in 2015. The submission received included:

- Each time I pass a Lombardy poplar on an Aussie town’s outskirts I give thanks to the fallen soldier lost on Flanders fields or Gallipoli in WWI. Especially coming up to the 100th anniversary of Gallipoli in 1915, I'd hate to see them lopped. Here's hoping that trees aren't lopped before ANZAC Day 2015.

**RMS response:**

The avenue of poplars on the northern approach to Braidwood was planted in 1936 to celebrate the 25th year of King George V’s reign and short term treatments that are being considered by RMS are aimed at minimising the removal of existing trees.

2.10 Other issues

A small number of other issues not directly related to the TMP were raised by individual submissions. These included:

- Where is the painted roundabout Wallace St – Lacelles St
- The appalling signage in my view is the prime culprit of road traffic deaths in this place in this area.
- The road on the west side of Braidwood would benefit by extra turning lanes opposite the entrances to the racecourse and showgrounds.

**RMS response:**

Palerang Council and RMS have developed a traffic study report for Braidwood (and Bungendore) which can be found at the RMS project website.

Improvements to the access at the Racecourse and Showground are being developed as part of the short term road safety option.