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Document tendered by
Mr Justin Field MLC
Received by
E. Rogerson
Date: 7 / 6 / 2021
Resolved to publish Yes / No

18 March 2020

Ms Maree Abood
Executive Director, Water Planning
Infrastructure NSW
Hawkesbury Nepean Valley Flood Management Directorate

Email: [redacted]

Dear Ms Abood

Improving flood evacuation capacity in Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley

Given our location as a river city in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley, we have long acknowledged and been mindful of the significant responsibilities we have in understanding and managing the floodplain and the importance of safe, efficient evacuation. It is in relation to this issue that I write today.

We acknowledge the work being done through the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Management Review and associated Risk Management Strategy, which identified the raising of Warragamba Dam as having the highest Net Benefit outcome when compared with other infrastructure options.

Due to its focus on mitigating risk and damage costs of floods, the **Taskforce Options Assessment Report (2019)** did not necessarily outline all benefits of improved road infrastructure such as Castlereagh Connection and the efficiencies in an evacuation scenario, nor the significant day to day congestion savings and connectivity it will provide.

Council's own independent modelling using these parameters suggests the Castlereagh Connection has substantial cost benefit in terms of easing congestion, flood evacuation and freight and travel savings. We agree a Business Case to further substantiate this need is a logical next step and believe that many of the inputs used in the **Options Assessment Report** would be of use in preparing for this.

We would like to request this information be shared with Council to progress our own understanding of a future Castlereagh Connection. This request was included in Council's submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the raising of Warragamba Dam Wall.

The Castlereagh Connection corridor within Penrith and Blacktown LGAs has been earmarked since 1951 and is predominantly in government ownership (around 87%) with long standing acquisition clauses on the remaining part portions.

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Accelerating the Castlereagh Connection will complement any other flood related interventions while also supporting the broader region and connecting with, and maximising the benefits of, existing and planned infrastructure such as Sydney Metro Greater West. It is also very timely to further explore Castlereagh Connection, as investigations into a second crossing of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River nearby are being progressed by Transport for NSW and this work is relevant to future infrastructure investment.

We know the Connection would provide direct road access to the M7 motorway; particularly in the event of a significant flood incident, enabling residents to evacuate more quickly and safely in a significant flood incident. Castlereagh Connection would also be a key asset in the road network and alleviate congestion on other east-west arterials as well as supporting planned north south infrastructure including Sydney Metro Greater West and the Outer Sydney Orbital. It would also service the North West Growth Centre, particularly the residential and employment lands in Marsden Park.

We also have grave concerns about the adequacy of the existing Regional Evacuation Route and its ability to accommodate the estimated 24,000 vehicles needing to evacuate during large to extreme flood events via four local roads which are subject to localised flooding.

We believe a decision to construct the Castlereagh Connection is of critical importance and the costs to build are outweighed by the benefits it provides. We would welcome any support you can provide in progressing the project to a business case, particularly if the Taskforce Options Assessment work is able to provide a foundation.

Yours sincerely

Adam Wilkinson
Engineering Services Manager

Mr Adam Wilkinson
Engineering Services Manager
Penrith City Council
PO Box 60
Penrith NSW 2751

26/05/2020

Dear Mr Wilkinson

Thank you for your correspondence to Infrastructure NSW on 18 March 2020, regarding improving flood evacuation capacity in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley.

I am advised that the NSW Government is planning for the long-term transport needs of Western Sydney by identifying and protecting the Castlereagh Connection corridor to provide for forecast population growth in Western Sydney over the next 50 years.

The motorway is expected to be constructed in stages, however, the timing of any such construction has not yet been determined. While the Castlereagh Connection would support flood evacuation, the cost would be significant and would only be economically viable subject to traffic demand and related to changes to surrounding land uses.

I understand that, while a significant flood event has high impact, given its low probability it is difficult to justify the economic benefit when compared with the high cost of building the Castlereagh Connection. The strategic design has included allowance for immunity to flood events up to and including the 1 in 100 year ARI (Average Recurrence Interval). However, this would be subject to detailed design work at the time of design and construction.

If, through a business case process, the NSW Government considers the Castlereagh Connection is to be cost effective, it would be subject to the same prioritisation mechanism and funding availability as other competing state initiatives.

Transport for NSW has advised that the Castlereagh Connection is currently not prioritised and, therefore, no funds are available to undertake a business case. Should the NSW Government's prioritisation change it would be appropriate to meet and discuss the proposal at that time.

Thank you again for your ongoing interest and concern regarding the flood resilience and flood evacuation capacity of the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley community. If you have any further questions, please contact the project team on or email

Yours sincerely

Maree Abood
Head of Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Risk Management