

Submission
No 42

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES: COFFS HARBOUR

Organisation: Urunga Public School P & C Association
Name: Ms Cathy Jarrett
Position: President
Telephone:
Date Received: 9/11/2005

Subject:

Summary

R.cd GPSC 9/11/05

Urunga Public School**P. and C. Association***Participate and Communicate*

President:

Secretary:

Treasurer:

Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4.
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney
2000

Dear Sir,

RE: Enquiry, Pacific Highway from Woolgoolga to Coffs Harbour.

Subsidised Bus Passes for Primary Children going from Yellow Rock Road to Urunga Primary School.

We wish to express our serious concerns for the safety of the children of this community who attend our local school.

Our very young and (at risk) children have been denied bus passes to travel to school. This, they must now do by walking alongside the Pacific Highway and crossing the bridge over the Kalang River, which supports a massive traffic flow, which includes thousands of semi trucks and heavy vehicles use this highway per day.

In September 2002, notice was received from the NSW Department of Transport advising that subsidised bus passes for our littlies in year 3 and above will be withdrawn. In November 2002, Urunga Public School P&C, King Bros Bus Service (now Busways) and parents all voiced their heartfelt concerns at this decision. Our local member Andrew Stoner advised worried parents to make representation supporting our concerns to the Appeals Panel.

January 2003, letters were received informing families that their appeals had been unsuccessful, with the reason given that "following an extensive survey", the Authority found a suitable walkway from Vernon Crescent to the bridge that met the SSTS guidelines. They stated that the pedestrian walkway across the bridge is higher than the normal kerb and guttering and that pedestrians have an adequate view of vehicles approaching from both directions. Furthermore, the Authority advised that the stanchion on the bridge is of a metal barrier structure including the handrails, which is an accepted code of bridge structure used throughout the state. The panel also noted that the Authority had advised in its view, the designated route to school provides adequate

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safety from vehicular traffic and other "safety hazards". **WE STRONGLY DISAGREE WITH THEIR FINDINGS !!** and wish to rebut these findings in the strongest possible way.

The "suitable walkway" includes these children traversing a secluded and dark underpass to gain access to the bridge. The same underpass that has "undesirables" loitering around and has, in recent times, been an area where a serious assault took place on an adult. What protection is there for children as young as seven and a half? Who's looking after this nation's future?

Next the pedestrian walkway. What good is "an adequate" view of vehicles approaching from both directions to these littlies? Where do they run to if they believe a car or a B - Double is a risk? Do they jump over the rail and fall fifteen metres into the Kalang River? How do they decide at 7 or 8 years old, what is a "risk"?

The handrail !! None at all between the children and some of the worst traffic on the very dangerous Pacific Highway. Great to have one between them and the river below, just a pity that it can't keep them safe from falling in if something goes wrong.

Finally lets talk about the word "adequate". The reason so many people are so concerned is that "adequate" cannot protect our children. Someone needs to do this and we need help to do this.

It is ridiculous to think that as a result of this decision, the bus may travel to school with empty seats while children walk to school along an unsafe, dangerous route!

Is the cost to this Government so great that there is a need to put these children at risk?

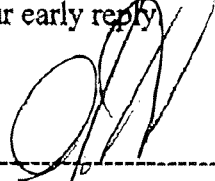
In to-days world where safety of employees has become such a vigorously enforced issue, and where harsh penalties are metered out, how ironic that a Government Department would deem this situation as safe for children as young as 7 and 8 years old.

This is an extremely dangerous situation and we hope and pray that commonsense prevails before any of us have to attend a funeral for one of our children.

We need help to address this unacceptable situation. "We are not asking for a new bridge." Would it not be more economical to issue Bus Passes to all children in the Yellow Rock area.

Please, help us protect our future. We look forward to your early reply

Yours Truly,



Cathy Jarrett

(president)

