

Submission
No 72

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

Organisation:

Name: Mr & Mrs Alan & Anja Morton

Telephone:

Date Received: 19/08/2005

Subject:

Summary

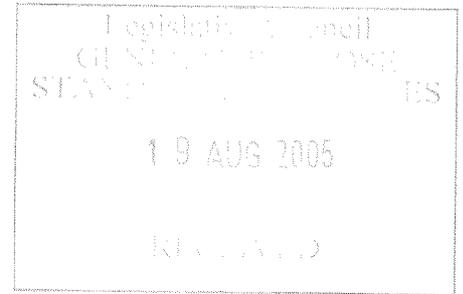
From:
To: <gpscno4@parliament.nsw.gov.au>
Date: Fri, Aug 19, 2005 10:37 am
Subject: Submission to Inquiry into Pacific Highway Upgrades

Dear Sir/Madam

Please accept the attached submission to the Inquiry into Pacific Highway upgrades conducted by the General Purpose Standing Committee no. 4,

Thank you, keep well
Alan and Anja Morton

Anja M Morton PhD (USyd) CA
Lecturer in Accounting
School of Commerce and Management
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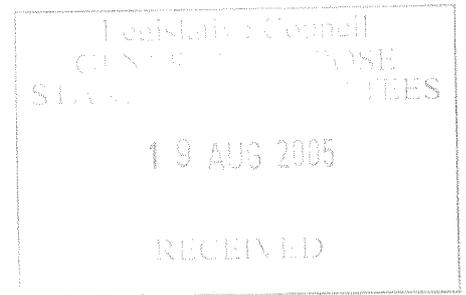


Alan and Anja Morton,

12 August 2005

Submission to:
The General Purpose Standing Committee No.4 (the committee)
Inquiry into Pacific Highway Upgrades

Submission from:
Mr Alan and Dr Anja Morton



1) *Ewingsdale and Tintenbar:*
Specific terms of reference addressed:

a) *Reasons for expanding the highway upgrade study area on the St Helena to Tintenbar section:*

We do not know the reasons for the decision to expand this study area, however, the fact that the RTA have done so is socially and environmentally irresponsible. It seems strange, that after consulting with residents of the original study area, the study area was expanded.

We purchased our property (12.5 acres) less than 2 years ago, paying a price reflecting the fact that no plans for highway upgrades would affect us. Then one morning in April 2005, we wake up to read in the newspaper that we are in danger of losing our dream home. We were, and still are, devastated, frustrated and angry. The RTA adopted an incredibly draconian way of dealing with this issue. RTA representatives are extremely insensitive. At public meetings they have not even acknowledged the anxiety that they have induced on many families and individuals, by expanding the study area, especially in the manner in which they did. They have the power to compulsorily acquire people's homes and that power has gone to their heads, they act as if they are not afraid to use this power, without much sensitivity.

b) *The level of upgrade proposed for this section and the remainder of the Pacific Highway.*

Unlike the righteous Don Page, we do not accept that we have to lose our dream home in order that lives are saved on the Pacific Highway. There are alternatives that have less of an impact on people's right to remain living in their own homes. One such alternative would be to restrict interstate transport to the New England Highway.

Alan and Anja Morton,

However, the main point here is that it is imperative that an all inclusive, realistic and socially just, cost-benefit analysis is carried out when deciding where the national transport route is situated.

We implore the committee to make the decision makers fully aware of all the costs of building a **new** highway (as opposed to upgrading the existing highway) anywhere in the study area. The most significant of these costs is that families and individuals will lose their homes. The attitude of the RTA seems to be that compulsorily acquiring someone's home does not involve a cost other than the purchase price of the property. This purchase price is based on market value. Receiving the market value for our property would leave us well behind on being adequately compensated for the loss of our home. Consider the concept of value-in-use. Our home is worth much more to us than its market selling price, if it wasn't, we would sell it. But we don't want to move, because our property is worth a lot more to us in use.

Thus, the total cost associated with expanding the highway, must include the difference between the market value and the value-in-use of those homes that are compulsorily acquired in the process. Once these costs are included it will become obvious that the costs of expanding the highway far outweigh the benefits. Just because the RTA does not incur these costs is not a valid reason for excluding them from the cost-benefit-analysis for this project, after all it is a social project.

And we have said nothing yet about the cost of the loss of prime agricultural land. Again, this is a cost borne by society and not the RTA, but this fact does not render this an irrelevant cost.

An additional alternative to expanding the highway would be to expect people to learn to drive more safely, which, in most cases, means driving slower. An underlying assumption of the whole Pacific Highway "upgrade" is that infrastructure must be provided that will allow people to drive fast, at least a minimum of 110 kms/hour. It is quite reasonable to question this assumption. Why should we lose our home so that hoons and impatient drivers can satisfy their personal needs to drive fast? Or worse still, why should we lose our home so that transport companies can make more money?

e) The impact of double-Bs on the Pacific Highway:

The impact of double-Bs on the Pacific Highway is significant and it is all negative. On many occasions we have experienced great anxiety when faced with having to share the road with double-Bs. We have been tailgated by these trucks at least eight times in just this year alone. This is a frightening experience.

We understand that the maximum speed limit for all trucks is 100 kms/hour. In speed zones of 110 kms/hour we have never yet observed a truck travel at less than 110 kms/hour. In fact, when we are travelling 110 kms/hours in our car, we are often overtaken by a double-B. And now the RTA is considering providing truck drivers with

Alan and Anja Morton,

further opportunities to travel at least 10 kms/hour above the speed limit. Where's the safety in that?

h) The impact of the New England Highway as a designated national transport route:

Designating the New England Highway as the national transport route is the obvious solution and that is why it is currently already designated as such. Compare the loss of prime agricultural land between here and out west. Compare the impact on communities, the New England Highway passes through less populated areas. Why is there even a question of choice?

j) The significance of the statement by the Minister for Infrastructure Planning and Natural Resources (the Minister) that the Pacific Highway is dedicated as a regional road:

There is little doubt that this statement is of extreme significance and should be realised. To make the Pacific Highway a regional road only is supported by submissions to this committee in relation to its terms of reference e), f) and h). More specifically, its the detrimental impacts of double-B trucks and the mixing of interstate and local traffic and the obvious choice of the new England Highway as the designated national transport route that make the Ministers statement so significant.

Moreover, if the Minister who has been delegated the responsibility for making decisions about road usage is ignored, what is the point of Ministers? It can be assumed that the Minister did not make this statement lightly and felt fully justified in doing so. For this reason, the committee must have access to the reasons behind the Minister's statement.

3) Any other related matter:

The views of transport companies should not be given much weight in this debate. They are motivated purely by greed and have, for a long time already demonstrated their willingness to drive truckies beyond reasonable conditions to make more profit. It is the unreasonable time constraints placed by transport companies on truck drivers, which make the highways a dangerous place for all drivers. Instead of solving the problems of safety caused by the greed of transport companies, by threatening to take our home away from us, legislation that will protect truck drivers from these practices should be introduced.