

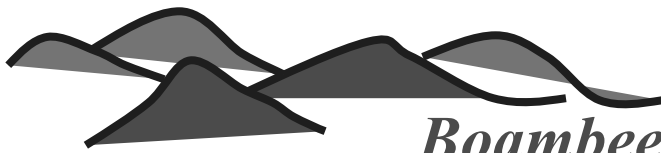
**Submission
No 54**

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES: COFFS HARBOUR

Organisation: Boambee West Residents Association
Name: Ms Marlene Jacobs
Position: Secretary
Telephone:
Date Received: 11/11/2005

Subject:

Summary



Boambee West Residents Association

9th Nov 2005

Submission for : Inquiry into Pacific Highway Upgrade Coffs Harbour

As a member of the Southern Community Focus Groups (CFG), I have represented residents of Boambee West, and have been involved in the Highway Upgrade / Bypass debate since September 2001. During the whole process I have had more difficulties with the Coffs Harbour City Council and local self-interested lobby groups than the RTA, Connell Wagner or Pramax Communications. These residents / lobby groups have over the years repeatedly stated they have the support of the whole community – but this is just not true. Many of those against the upgrade owned properties that were situated on the narrow strip of land between the sea and an existing Pacific Highway which will always be busy and noisy. They were willing to sacrifice the safety of road uses to improve their own lifestyle and financial position.

In Nov. 2001 we set up a display at the local Boambee Primary School and collected over 700 signatures from residents on a petition opposing the Outer and Far Western Corridors, - which was proposed to leave the Pacific Highway near South Boambee Rd; pass through the Middle Boambee Valley and up over into Friday Creek and the Orara Valley before proceeding onto Grafton or Halfway Creek.

Our community had a large attendance at the initial RTA Information sessions and our submissions dominated the first Community Involvement Report. In March 2002, the Steering Committee – representing the RTA, Planning NSW & the Council - ruled out the Outer and Far Western corridors as bypass options.

In October 2002 after the Coffs Harbour City Councils Peer Review, the Steering Committee Chairman, Cr Bill Wood and the Council passed a motion put forward by Cr McKimm to once again assure our residents that the Outer and Far Western corridors were no longer under consideration.

Then in June 2003, at the 3rd of 6 Council Forums in to the Pacific Highway Upgrade, the ‘Western Way’ was introduced which follows roughly the same route as the Far Western corridor. We asked but were not told why it was put back on the agenda and who was responsible for it’s inclusion half way through the Forums - after being previously ruled out – twice before! At the 4th meeting Cr Howe expressed her concern at the return of a western bypass and for the lack of representation of all stakeholders affected by that corridor.

On the 22nd August 2003 Cr Rhoades gave notice of several motions that could see the Councillors once again voting against all of the RTA’s proposed Inner and Highway upgrade options. This would leave just the community-initiated Coastal Ridge Way, which started at Englands Rd and was still under investigation by the RTA or the proposed Far Western (Way) bypass.

So once again we found ourselves back on the Councils agenda with very little time to inform our communities or respond to the growing pressure from some councilors and self-interested groups that had nearly 2 years to develop their arguments and gather support from the Council and the wider community.

Due to the Outer and Far Western corridors being previously ruled out by the RTA and Council, our communities had also been significantly under-represented at the RTA and Council Forum meetings. At one stage it was even suggested that Phil Doyle and myself should give up our positions on the Community Focus Groups because we were no longer involved. This imbalance was also very noticeable at the Forums where out of nearly 100 people only a handful were from the areas affected by the Western Way. No wonder the Strategic Objectives that were an outcome of the forums had a very city or urban emphasis. For example Point 3. *To ensure the impacts of options for upgrading the existing highway through urban areas are fully considered.* We would expect impacts on ALL the bypass options should be fully considered, not just those affecting the urban areas.

It was very clear the residents / lobby groups directly affected by the RTA preferred upgrade options wanted us out of the way so they could get the Council to pass their motions to support a Far Western Option.

Another concern and cause for confusion has been the use of different names for the corridor affecting the Boambee West and Orara valleys. This corridor has previously been known as the **Outer Corridor, Far Western, Western Way** and now has been referred to as a **Western Bypass**. There has also been confusion over the location of the access point of this corridor, with some documents or newspaper articles saying Bonville, Sawtell, Lyons Rd or just refers to Friday Creek. To address these problems we letter dropped our community, including a map that clearly shows the access points for each of the proposed corridors.

We are also concerned of a discrepancy in the minutes of the final Council Forum. At the forum only one person stood and spoke against the 'consensus' which stated, "*the southern access point for the final option should be at Englands Road*" yet the minutes (page 5, 2nd dot point) states the, "*southern access point will be south of Englands Road*". This is a direct contradiction to another consensus point that states, "*Most people at the forum agree the Coastal Ridge Way is the preferred option.*" This option starts at Englands Road.

Cr. McKimm proposed a new western bypass that would depart from the highway at Englands Rd, go across to rise up Red Hill and then proceed 'by the best route to Grafton' or Halfway Creek. If we are to have a western bypass we would support an alternative Western Way starting at Englands Road as proposed by Cr McKimm. Our reasons for supporting such a bypass are attached to this address. It's not just a case of 'not in our back yard' but what is the most realistic or achievable option for Coffs Harbour and NSW.

If the Council does select a 'Western Way' - Englands Road or South Boambee Road - as it's preferred option the RTA will have to undertake the same detailed investigations and community consultation, as they have for the other bypass routes. Given all the concerns and constraints already identified by the RTA and Council Forums for the 'Western Way' it could very easily become the 'Badgery's Way' and postpone not only the identification & final decision on a preferred bypass but also it's construction for years.

This delay will affect all of Coffs Harbour, not just the residents of Boambee West and the Orara Valley. With the rapid growth of the Northern suburbs of Coffs Harbour along with the increased through traffic we need a safe dual carriage way between Coffs and Woolgoolga like the one to the south of the city from the Hospital to Lyons Rd where the new Bonville Bypass will join the Highway.

Yours sincerely

Marlene Jacobs
Secretary of the Boambee West Residents Association

A western bypass that depart from the existing highway at Englands Road would :

- provide quick access to and from the Hospital for ambulances and other emergency services, which a group of local Doctors were calling for earlier this month,
- provide an alternative route in the Coffs Harbour area if the Pacific Highway was blocked by a major accident,
- provide an alternative route for the growing number of long-haul transport vehicles, away from the CBD and Northern suburbs
- carry more traffic and therefore be more viable, as it would allow local traffic from the Southern suburbs & villages west of Coffs Harbour to access the bypass as well as the through traffic,
- maximise the huge expenditure (\$90 m+) already spent to construct the dual carriageway between Lyons Road and Englands Road,
- compliment the proposed local Ring Road distributor system,
- avoid the sensitive water catchment area of the Upper Orara Valley where,
 - an accident involving chemicals or other hazardous materials could be disastrous for the Coffs Harbour water supply,
 - the construction of a bypass could disturb acid and arsenic elements in the Orara valley soil,
 - the build up of general traffic pollution could be washed into the many creeks and rivers, affecting both wildlife and the water supply
- avoid the possible disturbance or destruction of designated habitat corridors, protected windbreaks, endangered flora & fauna, Nature Reserves and State Forests, which would be a difficult obstacle at the EIS stage,
- avoid the fogs, flood plains, multiple rivers and creeks within the narrow Orara valley,
- avoid the destruction of prime agricultural land in the Orara valley and the banana plantations in Middle Boambee which would be affected not only by the physical construction of a bypass but also the cold air that would rush down from Friday Ck,
- and avoid destroying the quiet rural lifestyle of the existing and much sought after rural residential area of Boambee West and the Orara Valley and allow for proper planning in the North Boambee valley.