

Submission
No 53

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES: COFFS HARBOUR

Organisation:

Name: Mr John Fielding OAM

Telephone:

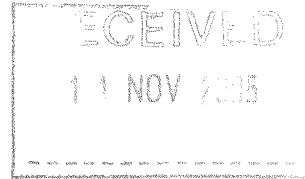
Date Received: 11/11/2005

Subject:

Summary

John Fielding OAM
Commander RAN(R'td)

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No 4
Parliament House, SYDNEY.
Dear Sir,



Pacific Highway problems submission.

1 As a regular user of the Pacific Highway from Woolgoolga to Sydney since 1952 I feel I can speak with some authority on the problems that beset this Highway and in particular the length Kew to Grafton.

2 Firstly let me make it quite clear where the major problem lies. Far too many drivers are just not capable of driving safely on our roads even if the speed limit was dropped to 0 km/h! They have inbuilt, uncorrectable problems such as slow reaction times, poor space perception and measurably low intelligence. They have correctable problems such as a lack of the technical knowledge of braking, surface adhesion and most importantly attitude. Who or what causes the problem? The RTA and the politicians who are too afraid to impose road license conditions because the politicians think they will lose votes. One cynic said to me "Dead motorist don't vote"; surely one day politicians of either persuasion must concern themselves with the moral issues involved.

3 Without doubt much of the problem lies with the RTA and here with the Coffs Harbour Council. A summary of some the problems are: -

- a. Increasingly poor road marking by the RTA. Lengths where overtaking is perfectly safe is now prevented causing frustration and ultimately bad temper on the part of the driver, particularly those who make a living from the road. There are any number of road sections between Woolgoolga and Coffs that are stupidly marked.
- b. The proliferation of road side signs. Coming into Woolgoolga from the north a completely unnecessary school 40 kph sign nestles amongst a number of other signs. It is totally useless and merely serves as a revenue collector. Older people with whom I work and advise (I'm 71 but there are a lot older!) repeatedly tell me how they are now so confused with sign posting that all they worry about is driving safely, as well they should.
- c. The increase in heavy transport. I don't know the answer – except a three x 2-lane highway, so no comment!
- d. Lack of synchronization of traffic lights when travelling through a town.
- e. Interference by enthusiastic amateurs (Coffs Council) with lane marking, median strip construction and recently the boast by a rather stupid council officer that he had forced the speed limit in one area to be reduced from 100 to 80kph. Drivers are then not required to hone their skills; these are the drivers who take ten seconds to go when the lights go green.

f. I understand that the 'Road Rules' are now almost 100% national. However this is of little use when it is obvious that the standard of testing varies from State to State. In Woolgoolga we are terrified of Queensland drivers – licence tests need to be national.

4 I fully appreciate that this inquiry is into the proposed upgrade of the Pacific Highway between Coffs Harbour and Woolgoolga and that 'c' is really the only relevant comment. Nevertheless the basic principles need to be applied and unless driving skills and road management by the RTA are improved new roads are a waste of time.

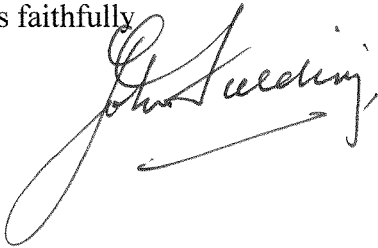
5. Specific comments on the Coffs – Woolgoolga section are: -

a. Coffs Harbour must be bypassed

b. Woolgoolga must be bypassed using the furthest inland route. There has been enough bad planning by the RTA and Coffs Council; it is obvious that in 25 years time the Coffs – Woolgoolga strip will be one unfortunate urban sprawl and it is not acceptable to have poorly tuned diesel trucks spewing unburned fuel over the local population. Indeed it is never acceptable but the tuning problem will never go away. There are numerous other considerations – noise, threat to the slower driving, aged population etc.

I wish you well in your deliberations.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Seeding". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.