

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

Organisation:

Name: Mr & Mrs Mark & Roxine Gittoes

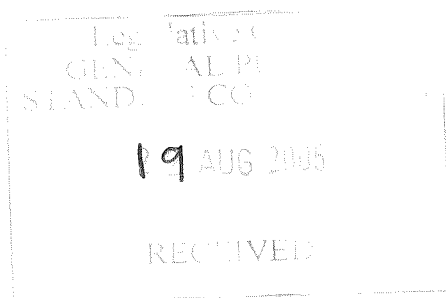
Telephone:

Date Received: 19/08/2005

Subject:

Summary

MARK & ROXINE GITTOES



August 17, 2005

Ms Jenny Gardiner
Committee Chair
Legislative Council's General Purpose
Standing Committee No 4
Pacific Highway Upgrade
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Ms Gardiner

Inquiry into Pacific Highway Upgrades Woodburn to Ballina

We wish to submit the following to the General Purpose Standing Committee No 4 in regard to the Inquiry into Pacific Highway Upgrade – Woodburn to Ballina.

Could you please investigate the inconsistencies and the process by which the RTA have identified the route options as it is obviously not the local communities wishes to pursue such incompatible routes when a far better flood free route is available.

We own 2 properties and lease a 3rd that will be affected by the proposed route options. We grow sugar cane on all 3 properties and have approximately 50 head of beef cattle.

b) i. Impact on prime agricultural land;

- All options will prevent us from growing sugar cane on a scale that is viable. Access will be substantially reduced to all sections of our farms
- Options 1B & 1C greatly reduces the amount of high ground for cattle & wildlife survival during flood
- Increased noise and visual impact on rural land owners in the Langs Hill & Broadwater area
- Highway too close to our residences, within 70 metres
- Consideration should be given to farmland under the Northern Rivers Farmland Protection project, large sections of our farms and our neighbours properties are considered to be Regionally Significant

ii. Impact on flooding in the mid-Richmond area;

- Increase in flooding, we are concerned that flooding levels will be increased due to the levying effect on our farming properties, residences and village communities at Woodburn, Riley's Hill and Broadwater if any of the proposed route options are adopted in Section 1
- Large increases to the duration of floodwaters inundation of fields and residences will be difficult to mitigate if any of the routes in section 1 are adopted.
- When the Richmond River is in major flood it spills east through our property at Langs Hill to the Evans River that is a major natural flood relief for us, the community of Woodburn, Riley's Hill and Broadwater. We fear the routes 1A; 1B and 1C will reduce this natural relief of floodwaters. However if a flood free route through the Broadwater National Park is adopted this would not happen.

iii. Impact on communities at Broadwater and Woodburn;

- Proximity to Woodburn, Langs Hill, Riley's Hill, and Broadwater residents
- Noise & visual impacts on all residents
- Broadwater town expansion as these corridor options pass only metres from housing and an area that is zoned for village expansion and will sever the township from one of the 2 flood free hills in close proximity to the village
- Reduced land value for property in village area, approximately 60 metres to proposed highway corridor.

c) Any other related matters

RTA have blatantly not listened to the communities requests to increase the study area to include Broadwater National park. I personally along with the majority of the community requested the study to include the Broadwater National Park at the first and only round of Community meetings.

told myself and others not to worry about the shape or area defined on maps as the study area, as it will be altered to accommodate the National park area. To this point in time 9 months since the one & only Community meeting there is still no documented evidence to the community of consideration for the only viable option. Flood free through Broadwater National Park.

The impact on Woodburn, Broadwater, Riley's Hill and farmland could be greatly reduced by considering an option through Broadwater National Park as suggested from the 1st community meetings in November 2004. If community consultation had been acknowledged the study area would have been widened to include Broadwater National Park east of Langs Hill through to Broadwater and a route option included in the current options as this suggestion was put forward by a number of people during the Community Meetings at Broadwater and Woodburn in November 2004 by all landowners in the Langs Hill area, representatives elected to the Community Liaison Group, SES flood controllers for the down river area. We followed up in February 2005 with emails to the RTA with no success.

When asked about the National Park flood free option the project manager said there are issues involved in going through Broadwater National Park, what are these issues? We believe there are many more issues by going through flood prone farmland with close proximity to local towns.

Another blatant attempt by the RTA to mitigate concerns from the community about the corridor selections is to reduce the real availability of information, on the surface RTA have & are providing all information to the community however community information has been limited to one initial community meeting, a community liason group sworn to secrecy, a internet site starved of information until the

corridors had been announced and a shop front information office where people meet with RTA representatives one on one.

I commend the RTA for providing the one on one service but it does segregate the community from participating in community decisions, regular community meetings would provide a transparent vehicle to distribute information & status of the project.

Another communication problem was the sworn to secrecy of the community liaison group then the unavailable minutes from these meetings. The minutes became fully available after the corridors were selected.

I believe the CLG spent the night before corridors announcement discussing the proposed route options believing they were providing valuable input to the corridor selection process, when in fact the community pamphlets showing the corridor options were already printed ready for distribution weeks earlier than the CLG members had been anticipating.

Information in the study document while being extremely exhaustive covering most issues, I wonder about the accuracy as some information stated about our properties that I do know the correct answers to are not accurate. This miss information will help the designer, ministers and the RTA to make incorrect decisions regarding the communities and our future.

A few of the incorrect statements relating to out properties are:


1. Flood levels stated for the one in a hundred year flood on my Langs Hill property I believe to be far from accurate
2. It is stated in many sections of how the corridor options of 1B and 1C go east of Langs Hill when in fact these two options pass through Langs Hill on a 45deg angle at only metres from the highest point
3. The study mentions historic brick works site on Langs Hill that nobody has heard about
4. No studies of swamp area that covers approximately 35 acres
5. No reference to increased flooding heights or duration of inundation time caused by up stream changes to the natural flow of floodwater to the Evans River, for the villages of Riley's Hill, Broadwater and Wardell.

When accurate information is assessed I feel the only viable option for section one and 2 that will mitigate a flood disaster to the lower Richmond area is a highway corridor through Broadwater National Park. Please consider a high ground option for this major highway link. That does not ruin our lifestyle and farm viability.

Yours Sincerely

Mark Gittoes 

Roxine Gittoes 

Michael Gittoes 

John Gittoes 