

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

Organisation:

Name: Mr Colin Lewis

Telephone:

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Subject:

Summary

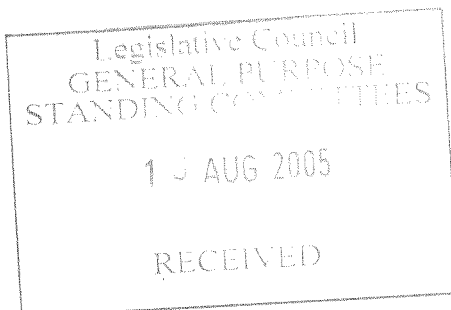
FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

<u>TO</u> : Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into Pacific Highway Upgrades - T2E	<u>FROM</u> : Colin W. Lewis
<u>FAX. NO</u> : (02) 9230 3416	<u>PHONE/FAX</u> :
<u>DATE</u> : 18.08.2005	<u>TOTAL PAGES</u> : 5.

I am including with this cover sheet my Submission (4 pages) to your Parliamentary Committee regarding the Inquiry into the Pacific Highway Upgrades, with particular reference to the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale section.

As I do not have access to Email or a computer, I have not been able to check any specific requirements of your committee, or details such as 'terms of reference', so I offer this as my sincere contribution, asking for your understanding and tolerance where required.

With sincere thanks,



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Colin Lewis".

Colin Lewis

SUBMISSION: Inquiry into Pacific Highway Upgrades

Submitted by:

Address:

Phone/Fax:

SUMMARY OR BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SUBMISSION

Reason for Pacific Highway Upgrades

How near to the Objectives are we

Why has so little been achieved

Why we shouldn't rely on a single highway

Are we now committed to following this same program

Where else can this surplus traffic go

How can this be achieved

SUBMISSION IN DETAIL

REASON FOR PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

Following the horrendous bus crashes on the Pacific Highway near Grafton in the 1990s, the NSW Public was promised such tragedies would be eliminated by the fast-tracking of "a four-lane divided highway between Hexham and the Queensland border". That's it - No mention of trucks, freight, transport costs, times, fuel. The taxpayers, residents, highway users etc. were sold on one objective and one objective only: safety; this safety to be achieved by separating opposing traffic and allowing safe overtaking.

HOW FAR ADVANCED ARE WE TOWARD ACHIEVING THIS OBJECTIVE ?

Today, some 15 years down the track, we have approximately 30% of the highway divided and 4-lane, while under the current funding it will be at least another 15 years before the remainder could possibly be completed.

WHY IS THIS SO AND WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO PUT US IN THIS POSITION?

I suggest that this has little to do with the actual shortage of funds, but a lot to do with the hijacking of the whole concept of the highway upgrade by the trucking and heavy transport lobby which has seen this as a once-only opportunity to achieve a tax-payer funded and totally subsidised, cheaper alternative to the official, designated and federally funded heavy transport long distance corridor of Highway No. 1, the New England Highway.

SO WHAT IS SO WRONG WITH DESIGNING AND BUILDING THE ONE HIGHWAY TO CATER FOR ALL TRANSPORT NEEDS ?

This confusion of Objectives has been a recipe for disaster for the following 3 reasons:-

1. A divided 4-lane highway could well have been achieved already using a combination of federal funding for black spots and state funding for 2 extra lanes where required, had the sole objective remained increased safety for existing highway users. This would have necessitated lesser speed limits in some areas of difficult terrain and where constraints such as existing communities and developments dictated such restriction, but remember, improved safety was the sole promise and purpose of the whole original concept.
2. Because a very small proportion of the old highway was simply unsuitable for this relatively inexpensive duplication and separation process (such as the Burringbar Range), a completely new section was designed and built to the current highest (and most expensive) Motorway standards of the time. Justification for this was that it had to be a completely new route anyway and had minimal effect on existing communities. Although an apparent (though cripplingly expensive) success, this Yelgun-Chinderah section has proved disastrous for almost all of the remainder of the Pacific Highway for 2 reasons:- (a) The long-haulage heavy trucking industry which had previously sought and wrongfully been granted by most councils, access rights to the Pacific Highway for larger, heavier and faster trucks such as B Doubles, but which had not found it viable to use them north of about Grafton because of road limitations (primarily the Burringbar Range section), suddenly switched its whole focus from the designated heavy transport corridor of the New England Highway, to the already disastrously overloaded and congested Pacific Highway; (b) The RTA (flushed with the 'success' of this Yelgun/Chinderah section), and now heavily pressurised by the heavy long/haulage trucking lobby, made the decision to increase all future design objectives to the highest currently possible motorway standards (even stricter than Yelgun/Chinderah), requiring all vehicles up to the largest B Doubles to be able to maintain continuous speeds of 110 kph regardless of terrain or communities travelled through. The result of this totally unrealistic (even unnecessary) idealism has been the pricing of the remaining upgrades out of the state government's financial reach for the foreseeable future and the proposed future destruction of both environment and community through which these now mega-lane motorways are planned to pass.
3. Experience world-wide has demonstrated that the mixing of completely different types of transport (such as local, long-haulage heavy freight, tourist, business, pleasure etc.) on a single road system, no matter how well-designed and built, is a recipe for disaster. In fact, the greater the number of lanes, the higher the permitted speeds, the bigger the volume and variety of vehicles, and the more diverse the purposes for which the road is being used, the greater the potential for serious accidents.

ARE WE NOW COMMITTED TO THE COMPLETION OF THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES TO THIS EXCESSIVE MOTORWAY STANDARD BOTH BECAUSE OF THE INVESTMENT ALREADY MADE AND IN ORDER TO SATISFY THE NEEDS OF THE FUTURE?

I will argue no to both these suggestions for the following reasons:-

1. The motorway standard sections completed, such as Yelgun/Chinderah, and planned, such as Brunswick Heads/Ewingsdale, were needed because of their strategic position between Brisbane/Gold Coast and Byron Bay and their totally unsatisfactory state prior to their replacement - regardless of their hijacking by the interstate heavy transport industry.
2. The same is not true of the next sections; in fact from Ewingsdale to Grafton, it has been estimated that at least 70% of the truck traffic and 50% of the car traffic would not use this section of road at all, were a more direct route available from Brisbane (see'2' next page)
3. Without this unnecessary, unwanted and unwanted traffic, a relatively minor upgrade to 4-lane divided road standard, subject to lower speed limits where terrain and existing community development dictates, could be planned, designed and constructed in a far shorter time, at far less cost, and with far less destruction of local community, amenity and environment. It should be noted here that even though the existing communities such as ours, are currently served by and rely almost completely on the Pacific Highway for access to and from our properties, this proposed Pacific Motorway replacement, although being planned to split our community in two by physically dividing it down the middle, will, by not providing for any interchanges at all between Tintenbar and Ewingsdale, deny us any access at all to it, thus greatly overloading our very undeveloped rural road network while totally destroying our whole rural amenity. Thus we pay the ultimate price for absolutely no benefit to us.

SO WHERE DOES THIS EXCESS TRAFFIC THAT DOES NOT NEED TO BE HERE, THAT DOES NOT WANT TO BE HERE, AND THAT SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE, GO ?

1. **The New England Highway.** This is the designated heavy transport corridor, nominated and funded by the Federal Government as part of the National Highway No. 1 network, and until the Chinderah/Yelgun section of the Pacific Highway was completed some two years ago, utilised almost exclusively by the long-distance heavy haulage industry operating between Brisbane and Sydney. Unlike the grossly overloaded coastal Pacific, there was little conflict with cars, tourist and local traffic, while local communities not only welcomed, but in many cases, depended for their very survival and existence on the business generated by the passing truck traffic and resulting road maintenance spending.

2. **The Summerland Way/Ken Pethers' proposed Wiangaree-Christmas Creek diversion/Mt.Lindesay Highway-Beaudesert and Ipswich.** This particular route has the potential to offer savings of some 50 km in distance over the next shortest option, and, like the New England route, far from competing with existing through and local traffic, would be complementary with and welcomed by local communities for it's resultant economic benefits.
3. **Rail and ship transport.** Although totally outside the scope of this enquiry, long term these vital and critical transport options should be factored in to any overall freight movement planning. To totally ignore them in any detailed consideration of future highway planning, construction and usage, is unbelievable and unacceptable.

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS CHANGE IN PATTERN OF USAGE AND SO OPTIMISE RESOURCE ALLOCATION, MAXIMISE SAFETY AND MINIMISE SOCIAL DISRUPTION ?

1. Put an immediate hold on design and construction of totally unjustified and prohibitively expensive (both in economic, environmental and social cost), motorway standard upgrades to, or replacements of, the existing Pacific Highway.
2. By correct application of 'user pays' principle, allocate true total costs of building and maintaining motorway standard long distance heavy haulage routes. This could require permits, special licensing, tolls and other disincentives to counteract the artificial relative advantage now enjoyed by the opportunistic interstate Pacific Highway truck users. Again, strictly enforced lower speed limits at least through communities and developed areas, apart from huge safety and noise reduction benefits, would encourage heavy transport to use alternative specific truck routes.
3. Encourage the return to the New England Highway by Federal Government funded upgrading and improved maintenance, and the future requirement for long distance heavy haulage vehicles (especially B Doubles) to use New England rather than Pacific Highways.
4. Immediately establish a forum of NSW, Queensland and Federal Government expert representatives, to investigate the Summerland Way/Pethers Richmond Gap Diversion/Mt. Lindesay route as an adjunct and alternative to the Pacific Highway between Grafton and Brisbane. This could be fast-tracked and, especially if funded as a toll road for which it would be eminently suitable, could dramatically reduce pressure on the Pacific both time and cost wise, as well as solving the social and environmental dilemmas created by currently proposed upgrades. **I am absolutely convinced that this final point is the most vital of my whole submission, and would strongly urge you to investigate it in detail.**