

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

Organisation:

Name: Mr Chris Shevellar

Date Received: 8/07/2005

Subject:

Summary

**SUBMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY ON PACIFIC HIGHWAY
UPGRADE.**

GENERAL PURPOSE
STANDING COMMITTEES

8 JUL 2005

RECEIVED

SECTION TINTENBAR TO EWINGSDALE

Community Liaison Group

I am a member of the C.L.G. for the above section and can only limit my comments to the above section of Highway under study. I have no knowledge of events south of Ballina.

I represent, on the CLG, a community of about 40 people living within 500m of the existing highway in the section from St. Helena to Sunnycrest Lane. These people suffer road rage attempting right and left turn on and off the highway, sleep disruption, house and crockery shaking and small particle diesel pollution for breathing and tank drinking water.

Our situation is duplicated from Tintenbar to Ewingsdale affecting **300-400 people** in varying degrees. However we have only minimal representation on the CLG.

Banning B-Doubles and interstate freight from the existing highway would be very desirable but wont really help these people's situation now or in the **long term**. in view of anticipated traffic volumes and population increase along the eastern seaboard..

I totally support reported moves by Ministers Anderson and Costa to find a totally new motorway route for freight financed by toll. It will have to be supported by increased Federal funding. A toll and increased funding will have to be implemented as well to upgrade the rest of the Pacific.

Personal

An account of my own personal situation might better explain my interest in the above and my concern at the **delays** experienced so far and, now, likely in the future.

My bedroom is situated 18m from the bitumen at St. Helena adjacent to an **8%** downhill grade and we are exposed to 24 hour compression brake noise as a result....sleep is not possible in this modest timber cottage.

In 1998, we were advised by the then Minister that this dwelling (along with four (4) other dwellings) were required for demolition as part of the St. Helena - Bangalow upgrade (Option B Modified)...we have planned our lives accordingly and have sat pat waiting, waiting. We were advised that these works would be completed in 2004.

In that period we swapped land with our neighbour in an attempt to move further down the hill. House plans, entrance relocation, solicitor, engineer, council fees and survey costs have amounted to \$14,000 so far coupled with various consultations with Council Officers and overworked senior staff from the RTA Grafton Office.

On the 9 June this year we were advised that, as a result of the Submissions Report, the highway would be realigned slightly on the downhill and that this property is no longer required.

As a result of this bombshell, we applied for assistance under the Government Noise Abatement Program and they have promised 'a preliminary investigation' of our site. We looked at what we could do to extend this cottage to relocate bedrooms at the back of the house. Other than build a bomb shelter it seems obvious that nothing can stop medium frequency night time compression brake noise. Moving further down the hill would make little difference..

At the same time building costs have exactly doubled since 1998..

The locals tell us 'you were silly enough to buy on the Highway....you live with it'. We bought here in the 70's because the RTA told us the Pacific Motorway was to go through Coopers Shoot and along the canefields.

So much for any attempt by the RTA for long term planning of their major highway.

This story, or variations of it, are probably common to various residents of the Far North Coast given the history of the area and the settlement pattern which has been allowed to occur along the old meandering highway over 100 years.

Just Terms (Compensation) Act

The problem, as usual, is money..or the lack of it. The provisions of the Just Terms (Compensation) Act are such that no relief is available to those people adjacent to but not in the path of a proposed upgrade nor is any relief given to those who suffer property devalue by its near location or the long term identification of a proposed route. Yet this compensation would, in the big picture, represent a very small percentage of the billions to be spent.

The terms of this Act need to be a subject of scrutiny by this Inquiry.

Expansion of the Study Area

I attended all three Community Information Sessions held at Bangalow, Ewingsdale and Newrybar.with all Halls filled to capacity.

I can assure the Inquiry that the prospect of widening the study area to the east was almost unanimously applauded at all three venues but especially at Newrybar. A reading of the C.I.S Reports will confirm that development.

I also attended the subsequent C.I.S. held at the Broken Head Hall where conversely, the announcement of an expanded study area received a hostile reception. Speakers, understandably, raised issues such as affect on farming land, soft soils, fog, and property devaluation.

B-Doubles

Since New Years Day in the T2E section there have been 3 fatalities and one of them involved a BDouble. Actually there have been far more fatalities on the back roads of both Shires since then..

In this same period, in our study section. there have been 31 crashes, most of them in my area and nearly all of them in wet weather

Local requests for speed cameras and 70/80km/h signs on the St. Helena/McLeods Shoot hill death trap and its approaches, have recently been rejected by the General Manager, Road Safety Strategy RTA.

Since the death of a 4 year old toddler a month ago, a temporary 'Speed-Advisory 60k Thank You Sign' at the base of St Helena hill has been extremely effective. Apparently its eventual removal is planned.

B Doubles struggle to handle the 8% incline on this hill occasionally and we have had one incident where the driver had to uncouple his load half way up and make two trips. The same has occurred on the Tintenbar Hill at least once.

Semi trailer breakdowns on the uphill are not uncommon.

Upgrading the Pacific Highway is urgent but it does not pose the long term answer to freight movement.

The Pacific Highway is the last place for through traffic and interstate freight with or without some sort of toll. Meandering caravans, photo opportunists, cattle trucks, locals zipping on and off, a myriad of feeder roads and laneways, and private accesses do not mix with 110km/h cars, semis and B doubles **even after a 4 lane divided Pacific is built.**

Mixing of Interstate Trucks and Local Traffic

Trucks and cars and caravans simply dont mix on both 4 lane divided and the old sections of the highway.

The fault is usually (but not always) on the part of small vehicles who fail to adopt a reasonable speed when no overtaking lane is available to trucks. Also, on old sections,, cars are merging without looking, doing U turns across double lanes, but, above all racing trucks to get past them on overtaking sections, where the truck has to merge back right to the single lane before it runs out of road.

Whilst volumes are less inland, I assume the same road conditions apply.

Its all very well to force the interstate trucks inland but the phenomenal growth predicted for coastal cities and towns from Tweed to Newcastle, all demanding next day service, will require they be serviced at least by semi trailers . The mix with local traffic therefore demands at least 4 lane divided motorway standard....NOW!

In different sections of the FNC the rural residential settlement pattern now, and in the future, is such that **the major users of the existing highway are not the trucks and through traffic but the locals themselves .**

For example, the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale section of highway has 110 residences with direct left and right turn from 91 private accesses straight onto the highway **coupled with 23 feeder roads** also allowing entering traffic to cross right or merge left.

The safety implications are of great concern.

The various "Alliances"

Whilst one can understand the outrage felt by locals whose lifestyles and businesses are threatened by any new greenfields corridor, it is hard to understand how those groups can be drawing lines in the sand when studies are at such an early stage and route options are yet to be developed. Do they know something we dont know?

Would it not be better to wait till studies are released?

It is also hard to fathom how such groups can justify calls at this early stage, for an upgrade along the existing corridor when even a preliminary look at the visual affect of the monolithic concrete structures, viaducts, noise walls, interchanges, pedestrian overpasses, parallel access roads, roundabouts, downhill speed cameras, signs, yellow night lights required **to make this section safer and less noisy**, shows a new greenfield corridor.to be visually and aesthetically more appealing

Widening and upgrading the existing corrdor may well prove to be more of a threat to the beautiful environment here than a new corridor.

The other factor, yet to be looked at, by all of us, is how our local and trunk roads are to connect up with the existing or new corridor.

Conclusion

I am only a local resident who can only look at the local picture ..I dont know whats going on behind the scenes,.the big picture might be something else, but we locals want a **safe**, quiet, highway..... planned not for next year, but for the next 100 years.!

We need no further delay tactics. We need to know whether to stay or go, buy or sell, to plant those trees, to put in that dam, to build those extensions or build a new house.

We need you to:-

- i) find a new greenfield corridor totally separate to the existing corridor
- ii) build on that corridor, a safe, 4 lane divided motorway and make it as level as possible
- iii) retain the old Pacific Highway for its full length, separate to the motorway, available for the locals, tourist scenic and emergency by pass use. Preserve this unique stretch of highway and its views for the future at all costs..
- iv) ensure that ribbon development is totally banned along such greenfield corridor in view of the unique scenic qualities of the entire study area and work with both local Councils to ensure that similar controls are placed on the old corridor
- iv) it will be more expensive .. It wont please everybody.... but we need some vision... At least decide a route, put some lines on a map, and stick to it!

(Signed) Chris Shevellar
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