

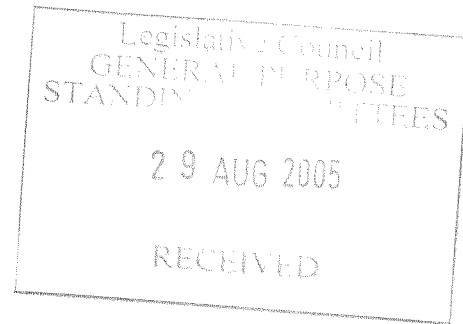
## INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

**Organisation:** Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils Inc  
(NOROC)  
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**Subject:**

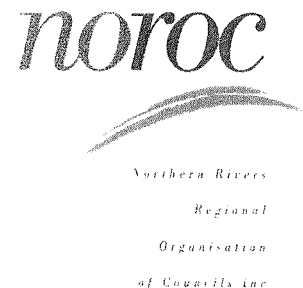
**Summary**



# **Submission to the NSW Legislative Council**

## **Inquiry into Pacific Highway upgrades**

**26 August 2005**



**Action for a Safer Pacific Highway**  
Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils

Ballina•Clarence Valley•Lismore•Kyogle•Richmond Valley•Tweed  
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*Submission to the NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into Pacific Highway upgrades*

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## Executive summary

This submission to the inquiry into Pacific Highway upgrades is made with regard to terms of reference item number 3) *Any other related matters*<sup>1</sup> by the Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils (NOROC).

Firstly, NOROC would like to applaud the NSW Government's commitment to improving and upgrading the Pacific Highway. Both the State and Federal Governments have rightly recognised the significance of the Pacific Highway as Australia's busiest and, perhaps, most vital highway.

Since 1989 when two terrible bus accidents claimed 55 lives and catapulted the condition of the Pacific Highway to national prominence, there has been bipartisan support to improve it. But, sadly, that was more than 15 years ago and the job is only one third finished. In that 15 years more than 600 additional lives have been lost on the Pacific Highway.

The information and statistics presented here are well known to everyone. Both the Federal and State Governments are aware of the costs of road crashes and of the trauma they cause. Governments, the community, business, and Green groups all agree that upgrading the Pacific Highway to dual carriageway will save lives and reduce trauma.

**The purpose of this submission then is to urge and encourage the State Government to accelerate the program of upgrades and improvements. The Member Councils and their communities call on the State Government to ensure that the Pacific Highway is upgraded to a dual carriageway between Newcastle and the Queensland border before 2016.**

As will be made clear in this submission, there are three central reasons for urging the Government to act now. They are:

1. People are dying. The NRMA reports that in the 18 months between January 2003 and June 2004, 70 people died on the Pacific Highway<sup>2</sup>. At the current rate of construction, completion of the highway upgrades is not expected for between 15 and 20 years. During this time an estimated 800 more people will die.

And the costs associated with this carnage aren't just emotional. As Alan Evans, President of NRMA Motoring and Services, noted recently:

*"Road deaths and injuries shock and devastate the community. They cause families untold grief that sometimes lasts a lifetime. They fill up hospital beds and rehabilitation wards. Our coronial and criminal courts are clogged with case after case of people dealing with consequences of being in a crash."<sup>3</sup>*

2. Local towns are being congested and overrun by trucks. In 2004, the former Minister for Roads, Carl Scully was quoted as saying that between 1995 and 2003 traffic on the Pacific Highway had increased by 42 per cent—from 56,000 vehicles per day to 79,000. And as the terms of reference for the present inquiry indicate the NSW freight task is expected to double in 15 to 20 years. Small towns and centres like Bonville, Ulmarra, Woodburn, and Broadwater

<sup>1</sup> The complete Terms of Reference are include at Appendix 1

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings from the NOROC Pacific Highway summit, May 2005. (See Appendix 2)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

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will not cope with this increased traffic. Increased traffic, especially from trucks, pose tremendous risks to these communities as they attempt to go about their daily lives.

3. Local communities are being held back economically. For many of the communities situated along it, the Pacific Highway represents a major element in the promotion of economic activity. The Pacific Highway upgrades will provide greater access to markets by local businesses, they will significantly reduce the travelling time between Newcastle, the Gold Coast and Brisbane, they will increase tourism, and they will generate job growth.

NOROC, therefore, calls upon the NSW State Government to act decisively and accelerate the upgrading of the Pacific Highway. In making this request NOROC is echoing a key recommendation from one of the Government's own senior departments. In its 2004 Pacific Highway Safety Review, the Roads and Traffic Authority recommended that:

“The upgrading of the Pacific Highway to dual carriageway should be expedited, and [that] funding commitments should continue to be sought from the Federal Government.”

It is time for the NSW State Government to act decisively and fix the Pacific Highway now!

## **The Pacific Highway and the North Coast Community**

NOROC represents the interests of the Councils of the Northern Rivers and their associated communities, some 300,000 people. With a rate of growth of around 1.6 per cent per annum, it is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia outside the capital cities. Indeed, New South Wales' Government estimates suggest that by 2025 around one quarter of Australia's population will live between Coffs Harbour in NSW and Harvey Bay in Queensland.

On top of this expanding population is an explosion in tourism. Tourism industry figures estimate that 400,000 people were on holiday between Coffs Harbour and the Gold Coast during Easter 2004. Byron Bay alone receives around 1.7 million visitors each year. These visitors place a tremendous strain on infrastructure. The majority of them arrive in and travel through the region either by car or in buses. At some point nearly all of them will travel along the Pacific Highway. And as well as the visitors who travel the highway there are the local communities who use it every day as they go about the business of their daily lives—going to work, taking the kids to school or to sport, doing the shopping, or going to the movies.

Traffic on the Pacific Highway, then, has increased dramatically in recent years. As noted last year by the former Minister for Roads, Carl Scully, between 1995 and 2003 traffic on the Pacific Highway increased by 42 per cent—from 56,000 vehicles per day to 79,000. All of this traffic is funnelled down a road that still only has one lane in each direction for 44 per cent of its 700km length.

Other frighteningly interesting statistics include:

- it has divided carriageway for just 33 per cent of its length
- safe overtaking is available for only 45 per cent of its length
- it has a 100+km/h speed limit over 79 per cent of its length.
- there are 77 speed limit changes<sup>4</sup>.

In addition, in its 2003 audit the NRMA identified over 220 blackspots between Hexham in the south and the Queensland border in the north. Trees and power poles too close to the road, ditches, and culverts also reduce safety along the highway.

All of this makes the Pacific Highway—one of Australia's busiest—a very dangerous road.

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<sup>4</sup> Proceedings from the NOROC Pacific Highway summit, May 2005. (Appendix 2)

## **Towards a Safer Pacific Highway**

In 1989 two horrific bus crashes claimed the lives of 55 people and brought the condition of the Pacific Highway to national attention. In his findings, the Coroner Kevin Waller said:

“First, foremost and superseding all others, it is recommended that the Pacific Highway be converted into a dual highway between Newcastle and the Queensland border...”

That was more than 15 years ago. Since then more than 600 additional lives have been lost on the highway. And still the job is only one third done.

The importance of establishing the Pacific Highway as a dual carriageway can not be overstated. In its 2004 Pacific Highway Safety Review the RTA reported that of the 44 fatal crashes on the highway in 2003 most occurred on undivided roads. Fifty per cent of all fatal crashes involved head-on collisions.

But according to the NRMA head-on crashes can be reduced by 90 per cent by building divided roads. The NRMA reports that over a three-year period there were 213 head-on crashes on the Pacific Highway. Divided roads would have cut this number to just 21. That's 190 head-on crashes prevented, just like that.

A dramatic example of how effectively divided roads can prevent accidents is the Yelgun to Chinderah expressway. The previous Pacific Highway route through the Burringbar range was a notorious blackspot responsible for numerous deaths. From the opening of the new expressway in August 2002 until the end of 2004 there were only 89 crashes and just one fatality.

A potent ingredient in this highway mix is the involvement of trucks in serious accidents. According to the RTA's Pacific Highway Safety Review trucks, which account for just two per cent of registrations in NSW and around 15 per cent of total motor vehicle travel on the Pacific Highway, are involved in more than 25 per cent of all fatal crashes. As the RTA euphemistically puts it, “heavy trucks are over-represented in fatal crashes.”

As well as the obvious emotional and psychological trauma associated with road accidents there is the enormous financial cost. As the NRMA's Alan Evans notes:

“Apart from the terrible grief and loss these crashes cause our community, road trauma cost Australia \$40million every day, or \$15billion every year. On the Pacific highway, crashes, deaths and injuries cost the community \$215 million between 2001 and 2003.”<sup>5</sup>

At the current rate of construction it will take anything between another 15 and 20 years for the remainder of the Pacific Highway to be upgraded to dual carriageway. Based on current trends we can expect between 600 and 800 people to die on the road during this period at a cost to government and the community of around \$1.5billion.

Surely this is a human and financial cost that we cannot afford to pay. Surely we cannot stand by and let this happen. We know that divided roads save lives. The Government must act now.

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<sup>5</sup> Proceedings from the NOROC Pacific Highway summit, May 2005. (Appendix 2)

## **More than just a road**

If concern for saving lives and preventing injury is the primary motivation for upgrading the Pacific Highway immediately, there are important benefits that will flow to both local communities and the Government.

The Pacific Highway is the principal freight route for goods along the eastern seaboard. And while NOROC would also like to see the development and growth of rail to move more freight we recognise that around two thirds of freight is still transported by road. For many communities along its length, the Pacific Highway represents the major access they have to markets.

A better, divided Pacific Highway will not only be safer for all, it will be more efficient. It will improve access to markets on the Gold Coast and Brisbane in the north, and Sydney and Newcastle in the south. Better access to markets means better business and increased economic activity.

Talk of a more 'efficient' highway isn't just hype. The upgrades that have been completed so far have already yielded results. From 1995 to 2004 upgrades and bypasses on the highway have resulted in travel time savings of between 70 and 90 minutes. Improving the remaining two-thirds of the Pacific Highway will yield even greater time savings.

In addition to better access to markets and reduced travel times, the construction process itself will lead to economic spin-offs. It is estimated that upgrading the highway will result in the creation of more than 1,000 jobs. These jobs will mostly be in regional communities.

## **Funding the highway—the need for political will**

The information and statistics presented in this submission are well known to everyone. Both the Federal and State Governments are fully aware of the costs of road crashes and of the trauma they cause. Governments know the impact of crashes and road fatalities on the health budget, the police budget, the courts, welfare and rehabilitation services, counselling services, and insurance premiums.

Governments, the community, business, and Green groups all accept that upgrading the Pacific Highway to dual carriageway will save lives and reduce trauma. Everyone knows what must be done. Everyone is united in this fundamental goal. Consensus on this one point alone should be enough to persuade governments at both the state and federal level to act. But all the agreement and goodwill in the world won't fix the highway.

At present, all that stands in the way of making this dream a reality is the lack of political will to commit the necessary resources to complete the task quickly.

We all know it will cost money, a lot of money. What NOROC is arguing is that it will cost the Government and the community a lot more in the long run if it is not done now. As mentioned above, there are costs of not acting now. Part of the problem is the language that nearly everyone uses. We speak of the 'cost' of upgrading the highway when we should be speaking of an investment in the highway. The NRMA, for example, has noted that fixing road blackspots delivers a cost benefit ratio of 1:14 for every dollar invested<sup>6</sup>. That's \$14 saved for every \$1 invested.

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So the question remains: how do we fund the highway upgrades? There are a host of options of which Governments are only too well aware. The Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson recently floated the idea of a toll to raise the necessary funds. The idea of shadow tolling has also been raised—where the toll is repaid by the government to the private company that builds it. Indeed, the private sector has suggested that with private sector involvement the Pacific Highway upgrade could be completed in just seven years. And as we have seen in Sydney, the State Government has been very willing to work with the private sector on road building.

Then there are things like infrastructure bonds and other Government investment schemes. The sale of Government assets (like Telstra) at both the state and federal level also presents opportunities for raising funds. The sale of the Government's final share of Telstra in particular is expected to yield up to \$30billion. Just 10 per cent of the proceeds from the sale of Telstra, together with the continued commitment from the State Government, will pay for the entire upgrade of the highway now.

And if all else fails, the government can borrow or run a deficit budget. It makes no sense to champion the benefits of a 'balanced budget' if people continue to die on our roads. Spending on infrastructure has been going backwards in Australia for many as Governments at all levels seek to retire debt. But there is a point beyond which we cannot afford to go, and we have reached that point now with the Pacific Highway

As mentioned, these ideas are all well known. Governments know how to fund projects they are determined to implement. After the Port Arthur shooting the Federal Government found the funds for the gun buy back. Currently, despite belt tightening in NSW the Government recently announced a \$2billion plan to build a desalination plant. These are worthy aims. The point is they took political will. And what can be more worthy than saving between 600 and 800 lives over the next 15 to 20 years. The upgrade of the Pacific Highway is a most worthy cause. It is what the people of NSW need and desire.

We acknowledge that some issues associated with the upgrades remain to be resolved. But the Government currently has a tremendous opportunity afforded to it by this united support to deliver an invaluable service to the State. It must not be squandered. Failure to fix the highway now is an insult to those that died in the bus crashes in 1989 as well as to every other person who was lost a loved one on that road.

**NOROC, then, calls upon the NSW Government to commit the necessary funds to complete the upgrade of the Pacific Highway to dual carriageway within the next ten years. It also calls upon the State Government to continue to consult with the Federal Government to seek additional funding support.**

The upgrade of the Pacific Highway is an issue that is above politics. It is an issue of profound public concern, particularly to those communities that live along it. In closing, NOROC would like to say it would welcome the opportunity to address the standing committee on the issues raised in this submission and answer any questions the committee may pose.

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<sup>6</sup> Proceedings from the NOROC Pacific Highway summit, May 2005. (Appendix 2)

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Terms of Reference**

- 1) Ewingsdale and Tintenbar, with particular regard to the following issues:
  - a) Reasons for expanding the highway upgrade study area on the St Helena to Tintenbar section
  - b) The level of upgrade proposed for this section and the remainder of the Pacific Highway
  - c) The impact of the highway upgrade on prime agricultural land
  - d) The potential impact of the upgraded highway on prime agricultural land in the expanded study area
  - e) The impacts of B-doubles on the Pacific Highway
  - f) The impacts of interstate heavy transport on the Pacific Highway and of the mixing of interstate and local transport
  - g) The impacts of interstate truck transport on the New England Highway
  - h) The significance of the New England Highway as a designated national transport route
  - i) Existing or proposed strategic transport plans that seek to deal with the forecast doubling by 2025 of the NSW freight task
  - j) The significance of statements by the Minister for Infrastructure Planning and Natural Resources that the Pacific Highway is dedicated as a regional road; and
- 2) Ballina and Woodburn, with particular regard to the following issues:
  - a) Impact on prime agricultural land
  - b) Impact on flooding in the mid-Richmond area
  - c) Impact on communities at Broadwater and Woodburn, and
- 3) Any other related matters

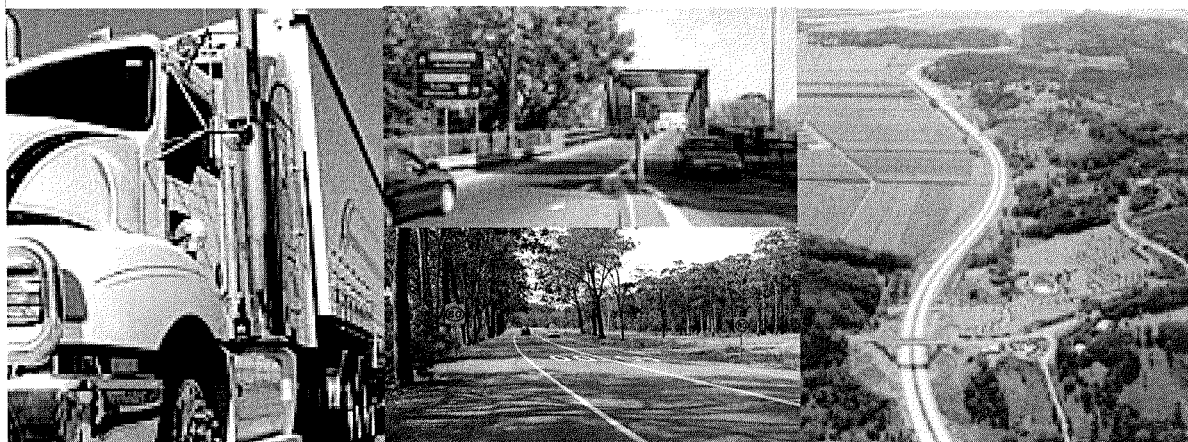
## Appendix 2

We have attached one document to this submission by way of background and supporting information. It is the *Proceedings from the NOROC Pacific Highway summit* held at Ballina in May this year.

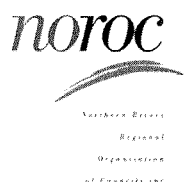
Present at the summit were representatives of the majority of councils along the Pacific Highway together with state and federal politicians, several of who addressed the summit. One of the summit's keynote speakers was Alan Evans, president of NRMA Motoring and Services.

A key outcome of the summit was the establishment of a Pacific Highway Upgrade taskforce. The taskforce currently includes representatives from nearly all councils along the length of the highway, the NRMA, business representatives, and local politicians.

The principal aim of the taskforce is to continue to agitate for additional funding from both state and federal governments to upgrade the Pacific Highway to dual carriageway within 10 years.



**Pacific Highway Summit  
Friday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2005 Ballina  
Proceedings**



***Action for a Safer Pacific Highway***

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## **A Message from the President of NOROC**

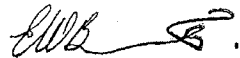
I extend a warm welcome to you all – especially those who have travelled a great distance to be here.

Highways are to today's communities what rivers were to previous generations – we travel along them, our communities are joined together by them, our important trade and cargo now travels on them.

But in our Pacific Highway, that river has developed problems.

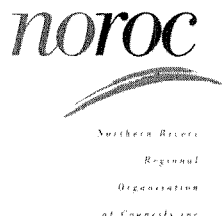
Despite years of promises, Highway One is still unsafe, and the vision to complete dual carriageway between Newcastle and the Queensland border seems as much a dream as ever.

I hope today's Pacific Highway Summit can begin an outcry that can join all our communities that share the Pacific Highway in one unified purpose: to obtain more funding for upgrading the Pacific Highway to a safe dual carriageway as quickly as possible.



## Joint Statement

The following statement was agreed to by NOROC and the NRMA following the Summit.



## NOROC and the NRMA today issued the following statement of agreement:

That both organisations:

CONVEY to governments the fundamental impact and importance of the Pacific Highway on the communities through which it passes.

NOTE the significant and increasing importance of the Pacific Highway as a major transport route for business, industry and tourism.

RECOGNISE the increasing anxiety within the community about the safety of travelling on the Pacific Highway.

DEPLORE the appalling and unacceptably high loss of human life caused in vehicle accidents on the Pacific Highway

and as a consequence:

CALL for **immediate additional funding** from both the State and Federal Governments to ensure that the Pacific Highway is upgraded to a **dual carriageway** between Newcastle and the Queensland border before 2016.

And in furtherance of the above agree to:

FORM a taskforce of local councils, the NRMA, business and tourism groups to lobby governments to achieve **greater funding** for the Pacific Highway immediately and to complete the upgrading to dual carriageway before 2016.

## Opening Address

Cr Ernie Bennett, President  
Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils.

Welcoming people to the Northern Rivers – to our hinterland and Coast – is something our communities are very experienced at. Indeed, we could be too good at it. Others in tourism in particular will tell you how we are in danger in being 'loved to death'.

The population of the Northern Rivers is approximately 300,000 people – that's the size of a small state. And indeed the NSW Government has estimated that 25% of Australia's population will be living between Coffs harbour and Harvey Bay by the year 2025.

Across the border – as our guest the Mayor of Gold Coast Council, Ron Clarke will tell you – South East Queensland is planning for a population in excess of three million people. Only last week the Queensland Premier Mr Beattie announced \$24.5 billion would be spent on transport projects alone in South East Queensland over the next 25 years – including \$500m for a rail line to Coolangatta.

The picture emerging is one of more and more people coming to this end of the Pacific Highway – and I am sure that our fellow Councils from down south are all feeling the affects of the 'seachange' phenomena. I'm not sure whether we owe the ABC thanks for the popular TV show of the same name – or whether we should send them the bill!

The latest tourism industry figures estimated that 400,000 people were on holiday between Coffs Harbour and the Gold Coast during Easter 2004. Think on that for a moment – 400,000 additional mouths to feed, 400,000 additional consumers of our infrastructure.

Allowing for the slightly larger footprint – it still means that it is possible to say that our population doubles during holiday periods. And not just for a few days – for weeks at a time. That's some big welcome mat we put out!

And how do these visitors get here? Mostly by car and bus – driving on our roads – and one road in particular – the Pacific Highway. If they get here by air – and remember all our airports have dramatically increased their passenger numbers... how do they get about? Again – by driving on our roads. How are the fed and clothed and housed? – by trucks driving on our roads!

Of course our region is also at the Northern end of the Pacific Highway – 800 kilometres from Newcastle in the South to the Queensland border. And the amount of traffic moving along the highway is dramatically increasing.

As Brisbane grows, as the Gold Coast grows, and South East Queensland grows, as our own cities and towns grow, so the traffic pressure also increases. Our welcome mat is starting to sound very well trodden!

Add into this the daily lives of our own people – a normal day of getting up in the morning, getting the kids to school, getting to work, getting everyone home safely again. Many, many families are affected directly or indirectly by the traffic on the Pacific Highway. And sadly the highway is becoming known for one characteristic more than others. It's not safe. Families don't like driving on it. Mums don't like driving on the Pacific Highway to get their kids to and from school. Dads don't like running errands to the hardware shop for instance and having to mix a weekend errand with the non-stop drama of driving on the Pacific Highway.

Let's think of this problem a bit more closely. Here's just one example: Not long ago an elderly man at Tintenbar who had lived there all his life, pulled out onto the Pacific Highway and was involved in a collision. Gone. Just like that. One minute before he had brought some goods at the Tintenbar store. Two minutes later he was involved in an accident. It was the middle of the morning. It was a fine summer's day. But the same piece of road was not big enough for him and the interstate traffic. And his tragic story is repeated up and down the length of the highway.

In fact, as Alan Evans here will tell you later this morning, the NRMA has some very alarming and sobering figures on the death and casualty rates on the Pacific Highway. I will be as interested as any in the audience to hear the detail of the NRMA's work.

How can we as local Mayors, as local representatives, play a part in reducing this road toll? In the last ten years, 430 people killed! If the road toll was caused by terrorism, or crime – there would be a public outcry. I think we have reached that time – it is time for a public outcry. And I hope that this Pacific Highway Summit can be the beginning of that outcry.

Now I welcome you as president of NOROC – the Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils. I am also mayor of Kyogle and I have lived in the Northern Rivers all my life. Let me tell you a thing or two about what it's like to live here.

I've already mentioned that as a community we are welcoming – sometimes to a fault. And our friendliness is for all to see. But we are **not** NIMBYs by and large. We are **not** about saying to the rest of Australia 'Keep out' – we have our slice of paradise – everyone else 'stay clear'. We are **not** about victimising any one particular group. And I believe for example truck drivers are getting a very bad time at the moment – they are being made scapegoats for a problem that is not their making. Blaming truck drivers lets governments off the hook. Let's remember that better roads are safer roads. Safer roads can cope with trucks.

That's where the issue lies – how do we get governments at both the Federal and State levels to recognise that more money is needed on the Pacific Highway and to commit to spending it NOW.

25 years is the current estimate for making the Pacific Highway dual carriageway. That is simply too long. Even 15 years is too long. Our communities want action now – we want a safer Pacific Highway within 10 years. That's what our communities are saying. And yet we sometimes feel we are the seventh state of Australia...too far from Sydney to be on the radar, but not part of Queensland. The Pacific Highway is a real problem for governments and it needs fixing. It is already a symbol of neglect. It is a daily living example of danger.

I hope every Council and every community up and down the highway will pick up this issue and run with it. I encourage the media to get behind it as a community service.

In fact, later this morning, I will be pleased to announce that the Councils in this area through NOROC, have agreed in principle to join with the NRMA to form a taskforce to keep this issue alive. It will be a broad church – no political affiliations – the more the merrier. We want to keep this issue in front of governments so that the money is found and the necessary work is done as quickly as possible, without excuses and without delay.

That's what it means to be a welcoming community – to keep on putting out that welcome mat, and very importantly, it's a way that we can respond meaningfully to the tragedy that is occurring on our roads. Four hundred and thirty people dead in ten years. Many many more families scarred for life? Everybody knows somebody who has been affected by tragedy. It's not good enough. We have to better than that!

## Program

09:00	Welcome	Cr Ernie Bennet, NOROC President
09:10	The AusLink Programme	The Hon. Ian Causley MP, Federal National Member for Page, Deputy speaker of House of Represent atives
09:35	Response	Cr Ernie Bennett, NOROC
09:40	Question time	Facilitated by Ms Isabel Perdriau, NOROC
09:50	Funding a safe Pacific Highway	Mr Alan Evans, President NRMA Motoring & Services
10:15	Response	Cr Ernie Bennett, NOROC
10:20	Question time	Facilitated by Ms Isabel Perdriau, NOROC
10:30	Morning Tea	
11:00	Local Government and the future of the Pacific Highway	His Worship the Mayor Ron Clarke, Gold Coast City Council
11:25	Response	Cr Ernie Bennett, NOROC
11:30	Question time	Facilitated by Ms Isabel Perdriau, NOROC
11:40	Making the Pacific Highway a NSW Infrastructure Priority	Mr Don Page, MP Member for Ballina, Deputy Leader NSW Nationals, Shadow Minister for North Coast
11:55	Response	Cr Ernie Bennett, NOROC
12:00	Question time	Facilitated by Ms Isabel Perdriau, NOROC
12:05	Regional Economic Development and Transport Infrastructu re	Ms Ms Katrina Luckie, Executive Director, Northern Rivers Regional Development Board
12:20	Response	Cr Ernie Bennett, NOROC
12:25	Question Time	Facilitated by Ms Isabel Perdriau, NOROC
12:30	Lunch	
13:00	Mayors' Perspectives	Facilitated discussion on the future priorities of the Pacific Hwy
14:30	Outcomes of discussion and communiqué	Facilitated by Mr Russell Kelly, NOROC
15:00	Afternoon tea and close	

## Attendance

Mr David	Andrews	Director Engineering Services	Clarence Valley Council
Cr Ernest	Bennett	President/Mayor	NOROC/Kyogle Council
Mr Barry	Booth	Proprietor and Licensee	LJ Hooker Coffs Harbour
Mr Ken	Boyle	Councillor	Clarence Valley Council
Ms Katie	Brassil	Executive Officer	Hunter Economic Development Corporation Ballina Shire Council + Ballina Bypass Action Group
Cr Alan	Brown	Councillor	Kempsey Shire Council
Mr Allan	Burgess	General Manager	Northern Cooperative Meat Co Ltd
Mr Gary	Burridge	General Manager	Ballina Shire Council
Cr Sharon	Cadwalder	Councillor	Member For Clarence
Mr Steve	Cansdell	MP	Member For Page
Mr Ian	Causley	MP	Gold Coast City Council
Cr Ron	Clarke	Mayor	Richmond Valley Council
Cr Charles	Cox	Mayor	Lismore City Council
Cr Jenny	Dowell	Councillor	NRMA Motoring & Services
Mr Alan	Evans	President	Ballina Shire Council
Mr Gary	Faulks	Acting General Manager	Kempsey Shire Council
Mr Keith	Finnie	Director Shire Services	NRMA Motoring & Services
Mr Nic	Frankham	Media	Member for Lismore
Mr Thomas	George	MP	Lismore City Council
Cr John	Hampton	Councillor	Great Lakes Council
Mr Ron	Hartley	Director Of Engineering	Kempsey Shire Council
Cr Janet	Hayes	Mayor	Roads & Traffic Authority-Pacific Hwy Office
Mr Bob	Higgins	General Manager	Ballina Shire Council
Cr Margaret	Howes	Councillor	Northern Cooperative Meat Co Ltd
Mr Gary	Inger	Company Secretary	NOROC
Mr Russell	Kelly	Campaign Manager	Lismore City Council
Cr Merv	King	Mayor	Byron Shire Council
Cr John	Lazarus	Councillor	NRRDB
Ms Katrina	Luckie	Executive Director	NRMA Motoring & Services
Ms Wendy	Machin	Director	Byron Shire Council
Cr Jan	Mangleston	Councillor	NOROC
Ms Lorraíne	Mathieson	Project Officer	NRMA Motoring & Services
		Policy Specialist Traffic & Roads	Coffs Harbour City Council
Ms Lisa	McGill	Councillor	Richmond Valley Council
Cr Rod	McKelvey	Director, Works	NRMA
Mr Gary	Murphy	Far North Coast Regional Manager	Lismore City Council
Mr Mario	Napoli	General Manager	Member For Ballina
Mr Paul	O'Sullivan	MP	NOROC
Mr Don	Page	Executive Coordinator	Ballina Shire Council
Ms Isabel	Perdriau	Councillor	Ballina Shire Council/NOROC
Cr Alan	Rich	Mayor/Deputy President	Coffs Harbour City Council
Cr Phillip	Silver	Councillor	Byron Shire Council
Cr George	Stulle	Councillor	Clarence Valley Council
Cr Tom	Tabart	Councillor	Northern Cooperative Meat Co Ltd
Cr Ian	Tiley	Mayor	Northern Cooperative Meat Co Ltd
Mr Stephen	Wills	Supervisor Shipping Dept	
Mr Dennis	Wyatt	Marketing Manager	

## The AusLink Programme

The Hon Ian Causley MP

Federal National Member for Page, Deputy Speaker of House of Representatives

AusLink is the Australian government's new national approach to improving planning, decision-making and funding of key land transport infrastructure. The AusLink initiative was outlined in the government's White Paper *AusLink: Building our National Transport Future* – released in June 2004. AusLink is designed to respond to the major challenges that Australia's land transport infrastructure faces over the next 20 years and beyond. Freight and passenger volumes will rise. User requirements will become more varied and complex. International competitive pressures will demand continuing improvements in productivity and reliability of logistics chains.

In short, AusLink moves away from the traditional approach to land transport investment, instead it will focus on investment needs of nationally important transport corridors and finding the best solution to transport requirements irrespective of transport mode.

The Federal Government will support AusLink with an unprecedented level of investment.

In the five year period to 2008-09:

- ✎ \$8.1 billion will be provided for investment on roads and railways on the National network;
- ✎ \$1.6 billion will be provided to meet transport needs at the regional and local level;
- ✎ A further \$180 million is being provided for the Black Spot Program.

AusLink has the following core components:

- ✎ A defined national network of important road and rail infrastructure links and their intermodal connections;
- ✎ The National Land Transport Plan which outlines the government's approach to improving and integrating the National Network;
- ✎ A single funding regime for road and rail projects; and
- ✎ Separate funding for regional and local transport projects including the continuation of the Roads to Recovery Program.

The AusLink National Land Transport Network – announced in the AusLink White Paper – moves beyond the previous separately planned and funded national rail and road networks and ad hoc rail/road intermodal developments to a single integrated network.

The network includes:

- ✎ The former National Highway system including its connections through urban area, the major interstate rail network,
- ✎ Other nationally important interstate and interregional transport links, and
- ✎ In particular links to ports and airports.

The AusLink National Network was determined after:

- ✎ analysis of freight volumes and passenger flows.
- ✎ Consideration of the population and economic importance of the centres being linked, and
- ✎ Extensive consultation with State and local government, industry and the community.

The Pacific Highway between Hexham and Brisbane is included in the new AusLink National Network.

#### National Land Transport Plan

The Australian Government, through AusLink, has established a National Land Transport Plan which set out the road and rail infrastructure projects that it is going to fund over the next five years, and how much will be invested in each project.

This is the first time that Australian Government transport infrastructure funding will be guided and underpinned by an announced five-year National Plan.

The five-year plan focuses on the highest priority projects that provide economic and social benefits from a national perspective. The five-year commitment gives certainty to States, local government and the transport and construction industries.

The National Land Transport Plan is based on clear strategic directions established by the Government to determine project priorities for the five years from 2004/05 to 2008/09.

At the project level, the program provides for substantial investment in Australia's most important land transport links.

Major projects announced in the AusLink White Paper to which the Australian Government will contribute include:

- ✎ \$765 million for further duplication and upgrading of the Pacific Highway in NSW and the construction of the Tugun Bypass in Queensland. This includes \$165 million to complete the current \$600 million (indexed) Pacific Highway upgrading program which ends in June 2006, \$480 million for works in the period July 2006 to June 2009 and \$120 million for Tugun.
- ✎ The Government's aim is to duplicate the Pacific Highway by 2016 in partnership with NSW.
- ✎ About \$1 billion for rail and intermodal infrastructure, including rail links to ports, to improve transit times, operational efficiency and service reliability.
- ✎ \$450 million of this amount will be spent on improving the Sydney to Brisbane Railway.

This ongoing investment in the Newell and New England Highways will help to maintain their attractiveness to the long distance transport industry and keep as much freight on those routes as possible.

Project costs will be shared with the State Government, 50/50 agreement has been requested. Bilateral government agreements with states – funding for key projects must be delivered between Federal and State Governments by 30 June.

Future priorities:

- ✍ Sydney – Brisbane corridor will be commenced by end of 2005.
- ✍ Roads to Recovery will be extended for another four years.
- ✍ New Roads to Recovery will be contingent on legislation.
- ✍ Councils will continue receiving funding as currently, with same guidelines.
- ✍ Continuation of Black Spot Program – \$45 million until 2008.
- ✍ Road crashes cost \$15 billion per annum.

Tolls are an option to fund the completion of the Pacific Highway – over \$5.5 billion is required. The options with the State Government will be provided with a toll free alternative, or exemptions for locals.

The Australian Government will also contribute towards the cost of maintaining road links on the National Network.

While the National Land Transport Network will be the focus of the Government's planning and funding responsibility, this does not mean that it has full financial responsibility for all projects on the network.

The government has indicated its intention to invest in those projects that are of national priority and have sustainable national benefits. The government has a clear expectation that States and Territories will invest in those projects on the National Network, which provide benefits at the State level. This means that project costs will be shared with State governments. In the case of the Pacific Highway, the Australian Government is seeking a 50/50 agreement with NSW.

Detailed project funding arrangements are one of a number of matters that will be covered in bilateral agreements between the Australian government and the States. The Australian government is currently negotiating these agreements to ensure that funding for key projects is delivered. It is anticipated the States will sign these agreements before 30 June.

#### AusLink Future Planning

The government intends that the identification of longer-term investment priorities will be undertaken in close consultation with the States. This will occur through the development of planning strategies for each corridor on the National Land Transport Network.

The priorities identified by these corridor strategies will be the basis for the development of subsequent versions of the National Land Transport Plan.

The development of corridor strategies will be based on rigorous studies, which will examine:

- ✍ The role of the corridor
- ✍ The current condition of its road and rail links
- ✍ Future demand and the factors likely to be driving it
- ✍ Where the critical impediments and bottlenecks are likely to occur, and
- ✍ What the overall investment requirements and priorities are likely to be.

The process of developing corridor strategies, in conjunction with State governments had begun in earnest, focussing initially on four pilot studies. These are:

- ✍ Brisbane – Cairns
- ✍ Sydney – Melbourne
- ✍ Perth – Adelaide
- ✍ Adelaide urban corridors

It is expected that the development of a Sydney – Brisbane corridor strategy will be among the next group to be commenced, before the end of this year.

#### Regional and Local

Under AusLink, the government will also build on the substantial support already provided for local roads under the initial roads to Recovery Program, which concludes 30 June.

The Roads to Recovery Programme will be extended for a further four years from 1 July 2005. Commencement of the new Roads to Recovery Programme on this date will be contingent on the passage of AusLink legislation. The Bill was into Parliament late last year but has been referred to an inquiry by the Senate Legislation Committee for Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport. It is due 12 May 2005.

In all, the Government is allocating \$1.45 billion for roads to Recovery over the five-year period to 2008/09.

All councils will receive funding allocations for expenditure on the construction and maintenance of local roads on much the same basis as the current Programs formula approach. The funds will be paid directly to every local council, as they are under the current Program, and under similar guidelines. This will provide funding certainty and will help all councils to keep up service levels across their local road systems.

The AusLink legislation will also provide for the continuation of the Black Spot Program, which is a critically important part of the government's road safety strategy. The government has currently committed \$45 million per annum to continue the Black Spot Program in the period up to 2007/08.

The Black Spot Program has proven highly cost effective in targeting those road locations where crashes are occurring.

Road crashes cost Australia \$15 billion every year. Black Spot projects save the community many times the cost of the relatively minor road improvements that are undertaken.

Continuing improvements in the productivity and reliability of our transport networks will be essential to maintaining Australia's growth and standard of living.

The AusLink Program provides the basis for the government to invest to address those challenges.

#### The Pacific Highway and Tolls

There has been some recent discussion in the media on proposals to adopt tolling as a means to funding an accelerated construction Program to complete the duplication of the Pacific Highway.

AusLink requires that consideration be given to the potential for private sector involvement in the ownership, financing and operation of projects.

This is particularly the case with the Pacific Highway where the cost of completing the duplication and a number of important safety upgrades has been quoted at over \$5.5 billion in 2003 dollars, with the actual cash allocation required over the construction time likely to be far greater than this.

We are currently working with NSW to investigate the funding options for the Pacific Highway. However, any tolling proposals for the Pacific Highway will be based on the provision of un-tolled alternative routes or toll exemptions for local traffic.

We are working within NSW to finalise the AusLink bilateral agreement, complete the route selection work and planning required to put in place a program of works to complete the duplication of the Pacific Highway by the AusLink objective of 2016.

The Australian Government is keen to make the Pacific Highway the best road possible and also providing \$450 million to upgrading works on the Sydney to Brisbane rail line to improve its capacity to attract freight and reduce the growth in the number of trucks of the Pacific Highway.

This investment will be supported by significant investment within the Sydney area to improve efficiency and reduce train travel times.

## **Funding a Safe Pacific Highway**

Mr Alan Evans

President NRMA Motoring & Services

NRMA Board director and north coast regular, Wendy Machin and I are honoured to be here today representing NRMA Motoring & Services.

For 85 years, the NRMA has been the motorists' champion. We represent two million motorists who live and work in NSW and the ACT.

More broadly, we speak out on behalf of all motorists – more than four million in NSW alone. We champion their rights, needs and interests and we are delighted to be here today to share our views on the Pacific Highway.

In 85 years, the NRMA has gained a lot of expertise about roads. I want to share some of that expertise with you today.

Today, I am going to give you NRMA's perspective on:

- What needs to be done to fix the Pacific Highway.
- What governments are currently spending.
- How much needs to be further invested to get it finished.
- How this kind of money can be raised.

But first, I want to talk a bit about the reality facing communities throughout NSW. The reality of road deaths. Too many motorists and their families die in NSW every year on our roads. Most of them are NRMA members.

Many die on the Pacific Highway and on surrounding roads in this region. We had another tragic reminder on Wednesday with that fatal crash at St Helena.

In the 18 months to June last year, 70 people were killed on the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border. In the 10 years to 2002, there were more than 10,000 crashes on this road alone.

Road deaths cut across all ages, social and cultural backgrounds.

- Young men and women.
- Drivers with decades of experience and their passengers.
- Truck drivers and motorcycle riders.
- Pedestrians and cyclists.
- Older people. Little children.

Road deaths and injuries shock and devastate the community. They cause families untold grief that sometimes lasts a lifetime. They fill up hospital beds and rehabilitation wards. Our coronial and criminal courts are clogged with case after case of people dealing with the consequences of being in a crash.

Across Australia, by tomorrow morning:

- Five people will die.
- 550 people will be injured
- 5,000 crashes will occur

Let me quote from a letter published in the *Daily Telegraph* one year ago today. It's from a man named Peter Lyon and he wrote:

*"We lost our brother and niece on the Pacific Highway in 1999 as a result of a runaway semi-trailer.*

*My sister-in-law is still struggling through the legal proceedings and my two nephews continue to be affected by the trauma of the horrific ordeal.*

*Each time I drive down the Highway to Sydney, my heart and prayers go out to all the victims and their families as I pass the endless trail of roadside crosses."*

In 1989, the Pacific Highway's poor safety record was given national attention when two bus crashes killed 55 people. The Coroner investigating those two crashes, Kevin Waller, said in his findings in 1990:

*"First, foremost and superseding all others, it is recommended that the Pacific Highway be converted into a dual highway between Newcastle and the Queensland border....."*

That was 15 years ago. The job is only one third finished.

We're here today because we're still waiting for the Pacific Highway to be fixed and we need to find ways to fast track the upgrade.

Apart from the terrible grief and loss these crashes cause our community, road trauma costs Australia \$40 million every day – or \$15 billion every year. On the Pacific Highway, crashes, deaths and injuries cost the community \$215 million between 2001 and 2003.

Clearly, if you reduce road trauma, you save lots of money. As a community, we have been told that crashes are caused by drivers.

Crashes, we are told, are solely the fault of drivers who speed, lose control in the wet, drive drunk or fall asleep behind the wheel. We are told that these are the factors behind the deaths of our loved ones, families, colleagues and friends.

We are told it's the drivers who are responsible for the road toll. Drivers killing other drivers. Last year, 521 people died on roads in NSW. That's 10 buses packed with people.

Everyone in this room agrees that we have to stop this continuing tragedy. We also know that in many respects the community is numb to the road toll.

States compete against each other to have the lowest holiday road toll. It has become a scoring contest. I can't help but feel that government officials, police and the community find themselves privately relieved when other states fare worse on the roads at Christmas, Easter or on long weekends.

When we turn on the news we see cars smashed beyond recognition. With police tape, ambulance officers and blankets across windscreens to shield us from the grisly scene inside the car.

Many of us forget where these deaths and injuries occurred. Those crashes we see happen on highways, country roads or local streets. On roads.

The community has been brainwashed into taking the whole blame for road deaths.

In our own national research, when we ask people: "What causes deaths and injuries on our roads?" we're emphatically told, "It's the other drivers". Drivers killing other drivers.

We know that seatbelts save lives. We know that speeding, drink driving and fatigue are major causes of crashes. It is a fact that people make mistakes, on average one in 500 decisions made is a mistake.

Good road infrastructure has the potential to minimise the results of driver error. But many of us have forgotten that if you build a safer road that less people will be killed or injured.

Think back if you can to what roads were like before they were sealed. Bumpy, dirt roads with no shoulders and no line markings. Dangerous, particularly when it rained.

In this day and age, no one - no matter where they live - should have to rely on roads that are unsafe to get to work, home or to take the kids to school.

When was the last time you heard the Government telling the community that by building a divided road, head-on crashes can be slashed by up to 90 per cent?

On the Pacific Highway, there were 213 head-on crashes over a three-year period. Divide the Pacific Highway and this figure could reduce to only 21 head-ons. More than 190 head-on crashes prevented - just like that.

Nine in ten head-on collisions prevented through simple engineering. But engineering comes at a cost. A cost government often says it can't afford. Or - in the Pacific Highway's case - governments of all persuasions have committed to fix the road, but over many, many years.

In a moment, I'll take you through where government funding is at.

But first, a little overview of where we've come from. Work to fix the Pacific Highway has been underway for 10 years. In that time, more than \$2 billion has been spent. One third of the road has been upgraded in that time. We've got more than 430 kilometres to go.

It's fair to say that the State and federal governments have worked hard to get this far. Since the upgrade began the percentage of four-lane divided sections on the Pacific Highway has risen by 24 per cent.

Planning has been accelerated on many of the key projects - to get them off the drawing board and underway. Even so, we're looking down the barrel to somewhere around the year 2025 before it's completed.

Twenty years on current spending before it's finished. That's just unacceptable.

Around \$220 million per year is being invested now. AusLink kicks in a further \$100 million per year from next year. Ian, can you please convey once again our gratitude to John Anderson, to Ian Campbell and to your parliamentary colleagues for this extra funding.

The State Government has committed to continuing its investment of \$160 million per year. Under AusLink, the Federal Government's commitment will increase to \$160 million per year.

So together, with State and Federal funding, \$320 million a year will be invested annually from next year. But we're told the upgrade is still about 20 years off.

Cost estimates to finish the Pacific Highway rank as high as \$5 billion. On those timeframes, it appears that the cost may be even higher.

So let's look at what is raised in budget terms from motorists. And let's look at what we get back.

The amount drivers pay in petrol tax alone is extraordinary. The money paid in fuel taxes far exceeds Federal Government expenditure on road building.

Currently the Federal Government collects about \$12 billion from road users and returns \$2 billion to roads. The Federal Government's AusLink package allocation of \$2.5 billion to NSW and ACT roads over five years is welcome but still falls short of what is needed.

Here in NSW, State revenue from motor vehicle taxes and charges in 2004-05 is projected to be more than \$2 billion. Taking inflation into account, in real terms NSW own account funding fell by \$31 million from 2003-04 to 2004-05. Despite the \$2.9 billion state budget for NSW roads in 2004-05, the majority will fund the continuation or management of projects already underway.

The cost of upgrading the highway ranges between \$8 - 25 million per kilometre depending on the soils, terrain and other factors. So there's a lot of money required to build the Pacific Highway.

And it looks like there's a long while to wait under current funding arrangements. Why shouldn't we accept this timetable?

First of all, people are dying. Second, local towns are congested and overrun by trucks. Third, local economies are being held back. Fourth, the NSW and national economies are suffering from the trucking industry's inability to meet freight demand safely and efficiently.

Last October, the previous Minister for Roads, Carl Scully, was quoted as saying that between 1995 and 2003, traffic on the Pacific Highway had increased by 42 per cent - from 56,000 vehicles per day to 79,000.

This will only continue in future years. Nationally, the freight task will double in the next 15 years. We need to start building roads now for the future.

So, as the motorists' champion, the NRMA is playing our part. Last year, we began a concerted campaign to upgrade the Pacific Highway as part of our SAFER ROADS SAVE LIVES campaign.

The Safer Roads campaign works to address the hazards and dangers on our roads that continue to put lives at risk. Everything we do to make roads safer pays enormous dividends.

For example, fixing road blackspots delivers a cost benefit ratio of 1:14 for every dollar invested. That's what we're talking about here - an investment. Safer also means more efficient.

Better and safer roads in non-metropolitan areas strengthen regional economies, create jobs and increase income for communities. Investing in roads delivers major savings to government, particularly in health.

Australia has a National Road Safety Strategy (NRSS) - it's a blueprint for saving lives and reducing injuries. The Strategy has been agreed by the Commonwealth and all State and Territory Governments.

The strategy shows that if we improve driver behaviour, improve the safety of the roads, improve the safety of vehicles and adopt smarter technology, we will as many as 700 lives nationally every year.

What may surprise you is that the majority of these savings comes through investing in roads, 332 lives. That's 47 per cent of the total number of lives saved. Almost half.

So it's pretty clear: safer roads save lives. A safe road system warns and informs the user, guides, controls, protects and forgives the user. The Pacific Highway can't claim to be any of these things.

What's the state of the highway now? The Pacific Highway services a rapidly growing population as well as local and interstate freight carriers and coach operators. At one of its busiest points, Coffs Harbour, the Pacific Highway is travelled by an average of around 25,000 vehicles per day.

The Pacific Highway - one of the nation's most heavily used highways - has only one lane in each direction for 44 per cent of its length.

But it's not all bad news. Between 1995 and 2003 the upgrade delivered a 24% increase in divided carriageway and an 18% decrease in two lane sections.

The crash rate - which measures the number of crashes against the number of cars on the road and how far they travel - dropped 33 per cent. That's a good thing. The fatality rate fell 23%. Also good.

In our 2003 audit of the Pacific Highway we were able to determine that between Hexham and the Queensland border:

- 33% is divided carriageway
- 44% has only two lanes
- 79% has a speed limit of 100+km/h
- 77 speed limit changes
- Safe overtaking is available for only 45%

The upgrade has delivered economic benefits. From 1995 to 2004 the upgrade delivered travel time savings of 70 minutes for light vehicles.

Since the opening of the Yelgun to Chinderah section there has been a shift in freight movements from daytime to night-time. But these time savings and shifts have created their own problems.

Noise is a big concern for some communities up and down the coast. As we know, B-doubles are now allowed on the highway. Some towns are simply not built for B-doubles - and their presence creates a lot of problems for traffic, amenity and safety.

NRMA's 2003 Audit identified over 220 blackspots/lengths between Hexham and the Queensland border.

Almost half of all crashes were off-path on-curve or off-path on-straight - which basically means people running off the road and hitting things.

By removing specific hazards - like trees, ditches, culverts and power poles - we could potentially reduce 60-80% of these crashes.

As I said earlier, there were 213 head on collisions in a three year stretch. Duplicating the highway could reduce this figure by 90%.

Combine the removal of hazards with divided dual carriageway and you would have yourself a pretty safe, efficient Pacific Highway.

So, how do we get there without having to wait 20 years? The Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, recently floated the possibility of tolling to get the necessary money to complete the road.

The Minister also raised the prospect of shadow tolling - that's where the toll is repaid by the Government to the private company that builds the road.

The private sector chimed in and estimated that with private sector involvement the Pacific Highway upgrade could be complete in 7 years.

Tolling is only one option. There are a host of ways that the finance can be raised.

Debt financing is one - where the government borrows the money to pay for infrastructure.

Governments have been resistant to debt for some time. The Carr Government actually has a law on the books, which requires it to retire all government debt by 2020. However, the State Government has recently borrowed to fund rail upgrades so perhaps its dislike of debt is easing.

Partnerships with the private sector are another way. The NSW Government has no problem working with the private sector on road building. Every motorway under construction in Sydney is being funded by the private sector.

Infrastructure bonds can also be used for roads - where funds for infrastructure are raised from private investors, who get an ongoing return on their investment - much like a fixed term deposit.

There is a beacon on the horizon in the shape of Telstra. With continued government funding of the upgrade, if you were to say shave 10 per cent off the proceeds from the sale of Telstra, the highway would be paid for. It's food for thought.

So the debate about how to accelerate the Pacific Highway is ramping up at last. NRMA is pleased that this debate is finally happening.

Now that the government is talking openly about how to solve the problem, it's up to us to help push the debate forward. What will stop progress - or at worst - set it back, will be disunity.

I'd like to give you an example of communities working together to get results. One of the other roads crying out for funding is the other half of Highway One - the Princes Highway.

The Princes has never had the benefit of a State and Federal agreement - like the Pacific. It is not a major freight route like the Pacific. It has lower traffic

volumes than the Pacific. Fewer people live along it. So, it has faced an uphill battle for funding.

With the Federal Government blaming the State and the State crying poor, things were looking pretty crook for the communities along the South Coast. So they got together and did something about it.

In September 2003, a coalition was formed: PHOCUS - the Princes Highway Upgrade Taskforce.

- Every council from Wollongong to the Border joined up.
- NRMA Motoring & Services came on board.
- The Illawarra Business Chamber.
- The NSW Road Transport Association, representing the trucking industry.
- TTF Australia, the Tourism Taskforce is also part of the group.
- The South Coast Labour Council also joined PHOCUS.

Together, they agreed on priorities for the Princes Highway and a timeframe for completing them.

PHOCUS heralds the first time all of the councils have joined together on an issue after many years of unproductive disagreement and competing local interests. They are united in their purpose.

The key to PHOCUS's success has been its unity - it has presented a united front to government and it has opened its door to business and industry to help its campaign.

For a highway that requires only \$1 billion to fix, PHOCUS has already achieved some significant wins since its formation, squeezing \$30 million more out of the State Government.

Even more significantly, PHOCUS achieved bi-partisan support from both federal parties during the election to commit \$20 million in blackspot funding. This commitment included \$5 million to upgrade a small bridge in a little town called Pambula.

The bridge is prone to flooding and communities end up cut off from each other. It's narrow and outdated. The fact that PHOCUS lobbied for and got funding for the Pambula River Bridge is significant.

Why? Because the bridge was one of the key projects presented by PHOCUS as a whole, united group - even though fixing it will directly benefit only one council at the southern-most end of the highway.

That's just what the Pacific Highway needs. A group who can speak as one. I am told by my friends at NOROC that if all 26 councils from Newcastle to Queensland joined together that you would represent one million citizens. That's a powerful group to start with.

Add in chambers of commerce, industry, tourism and trucking groups and you have a formidable group.

There's only one missing ingredient: the "consumers" - drivers. That's where the NRMA comes in. Together, we are a force to be reckoned with.

NRMA members live in 85 per cent of homes in your local government areas. We probably have more members than you have ratepayers. State-wide, we represent two million motorists. And we want to help.

I am delighted to be able to announce that NRMA will accept NOROC's invitation to join the Pacific Highway Taskforce. This is great opportunity for the Councils to work together to get governments to deliver for our people.

We hope that the councils from the southern stretch of the highway will join us. I understand that the local media is keen to be part of the Taskforce. That's fantastic.

There is a lot of work to be done. One of the key things is an agreed list of priorities for the upgrade of the highway. Working together on an agreed priority list makes it very hard for both the State and Federal government to divided and conquer - by playing each council off against one another.

We need to take a good hard look at the funding options - and continue to lead the community debate about how to pay for the upgrade of the Pacific Highway.

NRMA will lend whatever weight and resources we have available to help a united taskforce achieve its objectives.

Nationally, NRMA has been working with our sister motoring clubs like the Royal Automobile Club of Queensland on a national Safer Roads campaign.

I would now like to play for you a short video, which highlights many of the issues I have raised here today. If we work together, we can get the Pacific Highway finished and fixed once and for all.

## Local Government and the Future of the Pacific Highway

His Worship the Mayor  
Ron Clarke  
Gold Coast City Council

We should be planning well ahead, looking at least at triple lanes both ways. The Pacific Highway is taking 60,000 vehicles per day, it has the capacity for 120,000. We will be using 110,000 by 2026, when an extra 200,000 inhabitants will live in South East Queensland. Expansion is anticipated to the north. Planning is underway for traffic management for this growth. South East Queensland infrastructure planning will devote \$2 billion extra for future expansion, and without the 10c petrol tax! Queensland is doing an excellent job in this regard. Gold Coast City Council has a budget of \$830 million this year, \$55 million is devoted to road infrastructure, and \$10 million to public transport. The Pacific Highway is really a bypass of the Gold Coast. We are planning for the rail system to be built to Coolangatta within ten years, and potentially to link with the NSW rail, which is no longer there, but it should link to Tweed at least, in spite of that.

Gold Coast City Council and the Queensland Government have prepared comprehensive planning schemes, transport plans and infrastructure plans to guide the growth of the city and the region over the coming 20 to 30 years.

The Gold Coast City Council Living City Planning Scheme can take Gold Coast from 500,000 permanent residents now to about 1 million+. The Draft Regional Plan for South East Queensland predicts the Gold Coast will have a population of about 800,000 by 2026. The more roads, the safer they are. Despite this, there will still be traffic jams, as people seek the quickest, easiest routes.

There is an Integrated Regional Transport Plan for South East Queensland and a Gold Coast City Transport Plan. They each cover planning for all modes and all aspects of transport, including road, public transport (bus, light rail, heavy rail etc), cycling and walking, airports, freight etc.

There is now a Regional Infrastructure Plan (developed by the Queensland Government) that details massive spending on transport infrastructure over the next 20 years, to meet the growing needs of the city and the region.

Road will be preferred to rail while it is faster, but the problems with parking need to be weighed up by the commuter. Public transport will only work when cars become inconvenient. The more you look after drivers, the worse the traffic problem will become.

### What role does the Pacific Highway play in South East Queensland?

In South East Queensland, the road is called the Pacific Motorway, indicating its importance in the road hierarchy. It is a freeway standard, access-controlled route, with one remaining deficient section from Stewart Road to

the Queensland/NSW Border - this will be replaced by the \$360m Tugun Bypass in the next three years or so.

The Queensland Government has also announced the further \$500m upgrading of the Motorway from Stewart Road to Nerang to a six-lane standard, including upgraded interchanges as required. This work is to be completed within the next ten years.

The Motorway is the main interstate link between Queensland and New South Wales, and provides an inter-regional link between South East Queensland and Northern NSW.

It is also a major urban freeway for movements within Gold Coast City. Gold Coast City is so large that there are other arterial roads that provide for long-distance and higher-speed movements between the north and south of the city, so the Motorway does not need to meet this entire role within the city.

As the City grows, these functions are continuing to grow and to be separately provided, but the Motorway will always need to be part of the traffic system for some movements within the City.

How do the Gold Coast Council and the Queensland Government tackle transport planning issues?

- ✍ There are very close working links between the Gold Coast City Council and the State Transport Agencies - Main Roads and Queensland Transport.
- ✍ We have joint traffic operations, share maintenance responsibilities, undertake joint planning studies, and we are moving to a closer joint development agreement to improve some strategic links in the city.
- ✍ This means the city and the State will jointly fund the development of some state road infrastructure.
- ✍ Gold Coast City Council is also moving to provide financial support to some public transport operations in the city.
- ✍ Most significant town planning decisions and major developments include State agency conditions as part of the Council approval process.

What is happening with rail and air links? How does this affect the Pacific Highway?

- ✍ The Queensland Government has announced its intention to extend the Gold Coast railway line to a new terminus at Gold Coast/Coolangatta Airport, with completion of this in the period 2016 to 2026.

- ✍ The railway will be extended from its current terminus at Robina to Reedy Creek in the next four years, and to Elanora within the next ten years. There are also other improvements currently being made to the railway to increase its capacity and reduce travelling times to Brisbane.
- ✍ Gold Coast Airport has gained approval for a new master plan, which includes an extension to the length of the runway. This will permit larger/heavier aircraft to use the airport, and also permit more direct international flights to destinations in Asia (such as Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore etc.) and the Pacific region (New Zealand cities, Noumea, Fiji etc).
- ✍ Importantly, because of these frequent/direct/ long-distance services, the airport serves not just Gold Coast City, but a much more extensive region including northern New South Wales, and regional towns with small local airports.
- ✍ The construction of the Tugun Bypass will remove the interstate and inter-regional traffic from the Gold Coast Highway at the airport, providing improved local traffic conditions at the airport to help cater for the growing passenger numbers.

#### How is shipping contributing to Pacific Highway traffic?

- ✍ Gold Coast City Council is not aware of any significant changes in freight movements on the Motorway resulting from shipping changes.
- ✍ However, we know of a progressive shift of interstate heavy haulage from the New England Highway to the Pacific Highway, as improvements to the Pacific Highway over the years have begun to make it an attractive alternative for trucks.

#### Background information – population growth

- ✍ Current population approximately : 487,000
- ✍ Increased by 42% over past 10 years
- ✍ Expected to exceed 700,000 by 2021, fastest growing region in Australia
- ✍ 2.9% growth last year – approx. 13,000 new people
- ✍ Australian average growth rate 1.2%
- ✍ Gold Coast City Council is second largest in Australia by budget - current budget \$693.3 million

## **Making the Pacific Highway a NSW Infrastructure Priority**

Mr Don Page MP

Deputy Leader Nationals, Shadow Minister for the North Coast

I urge you to think about the Pacific Highway in context. There was no land transport strategy in Australia until recently, and this is because we haven't thought the issues through on a national perspective. AusLink, even with the additional expenditure, won't solve the problem in time. The current rail system can only carry seventeen percent of the total freight load of Australia, and will still only carry thirty percent of total freight over next 10 – 15 years. A doubled freight load is anticipated, due to commercial dictates of just-in-time delivery, which must be fast, reduces storage costs for distributions, and uses trucks as de facto inventory storage.

The Pacific Highway must be upgraded because there have been too many deaths. Eighty five percent of deaths/injuries are on sections that aren't upgraded. Fifty percent are head-on crashes. A dual carriageway will reduce the risk by ninety percent, regardless of what we do with trucks.

Bernard Salt, a demographer with KPMG, describes the current population changes as the third Australian culture shift. The first was the rural shift, as people took up farming, the second was the suburban shift, as people moved to the cities for work, and the third shift is the "seachange" shift to the coast. 80% of the population live in the eastern corridor.

The Pacific Highway needs to be upgraded from a coastal perspective. If you exclude interstate heavy traffic, the majority of traffic on the highway is local or inter regional, not interstate. We need to separate local traffic from through traffic. Why do we have interstate traffic passing through local communities - we've never thought the whole thing through. If we build better roads, this will attract more trucks. We need to develop a strategy for handling interstate heavy vehicles especially as only 1/3 of the Pacific Highway is dual carriageway. The New England Highway is the interstate corridor but trucks have been using the Pacific since 2002.

Some statistics: heavy vehicles comprise thirteen percent of traffic on the Highway and are involved in thirty percent of fatalities; trucks are at fault in 1/3 of cases. Trucks mixing with local traffic are likely to lead to fatal accidents.

We aren't thinking in a Whole of Government approach, but agency by agency. If the current rate of accidents continues, it will cost \$280 million in the next ten years in terms of medical, social costs. Federal and State Governments are contributing a total of \$220 million. The Federal Government have indicated they will increase their annual contribution from \$60 million to \$160 million per annum. We need State Government to put in another \$100 million per annum. This would double the level of existing funding, which will halve the time taken to complete the duplication of the highway. This is not perfect, but is much better than the current prediction of 20 years. If you do the math, this adds up to less expense than the cost to the NSW taxpayer per annum in accident costs, i.e. road funding would be \$260

million p.a. – but over time they would save \$280 million p.a. in medical and other costs related to accidents. Fewer accidents lead to less health costs. A fresh approach is needed.

Also we need to fund the projects that already have planning approval and we need a transport infrastructure plan for northern NSW. Queensland has real plans for infrastructure upgrades. We need a comprehensive transport plan that includes shipping. If tolls are to work, they must have bipartisan support. The volume of traffic is much less in rural areas than the city, so tolls will have to be very high to justify that method of cost recovery. Debt financing is a good option for important infrastructure like the Pacific Highway. Zero debt is counter-productive. There has been very little investment on country infrastructure.

## Regional Economic Development and Transport Infrastructure

Ms Katrina Luckie

Executive Director, Northern Rivers Regional Development Board

### Benefits of highway upgrade

✍ Reduced travel time	70-90 mins
✍ Lower operating costs	\$2.5 - \$3.4 billion short term - long term
✍ Reduced accidents	80% less fatalities
✍ Construction and flow on	>\$285 million
✍ Employment	720 - 1,620 jobs
✍ Improve market access	enhance global competitiveness
✍ Reduce local traffic conflict	increase tourism
✍ Bypasses	improve town amenity
	support economic objectives

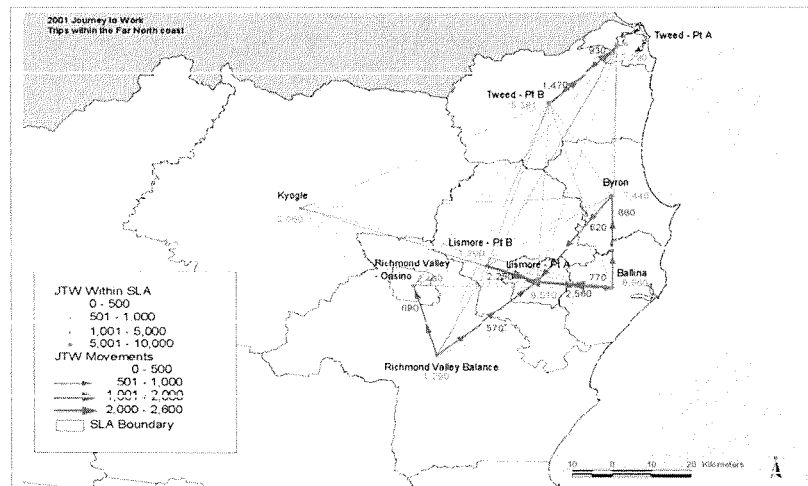
### Economic Development

- ✍ Business and industry
- ✍ Employment
- ✍ Exports and imports
- ✍ Investment
- ✍ Infrastructure
- ✍ Leadership
- ✍ Brand

### Pacific Highway

- ✍ Newcastle north population = 470,000
- ✍ Tourist peaks population doubles
- ✍ Gold Coast population = 400,000
- ✍ Population growth

### Journey to Work Data



**Costs**

- ✎ Land acquisition/sterilisation
- ✎ Business relocation
- ✎ Industry viability
- ✎ Highway-dependent businesses
- ✎ Access to industrial areas (eg Macksville)
- ✎ Intersection upgrades borne by businesses
- ✎ Lack of certainty for investment

**Freight**

- ✎ Northern Rivers 1990:
  - 6.1 M tonnes through freight (40% rail, 60% road)
  - 3.1 M tonnes within region (100% road)
- ✎ DIPNR 2005:
  - 91% road freight
  - 42% within region
- ✎ B-double access
- ✎ Access to ports – Brisbane, Yamba Newcastle
- ✎ Intermodal logistics
- ✎ Freight loading costs
- ✎ Flooding

**Local Economic Development Outcomes**

- ✎ Orientation towards South East Queensland/Sydney economy
- ✎ Removal of heavy vehicles
- ✎ Encourage commuter and tourist movement
- ✎ Reduced accidents
- ✎ Less stressful driving conditions

**Business Dependent on Highway Trade**

- ✎ Threat to business viability due to highway relocation
- ✎ Reduction in employment 0.4 – 0.8%
- ✎ Average turnover related to highway 30% (eg Murwillumbah)
- ✎ Business closure or relocation
- ✎ Commercial Retail Policy

**Northern Rivers Industry Needs/Issues**

- ✎ Forestry – port and export access
- ✎ Horticulture, herbs – highway, couriers, air
- ✎ Meat and dairy – ports, back-load space
- ✎ Sugar – back-load space
- ✎ Aquaculture – market access
- ✎ Education – air, public transport
- ✎ Tourism – amenity, access

**Case Study: Billinudgel – Chinderah EIS (1994)**

- ✎ Construction expenditure
  - \$196 M
  - \$60 M on local labour and materials
  - 180-300 jobs over 3 years
  - Direct local income \$20 M
- ✎ Overall impacts
  - \$100 M increase in net income
  - \$7.6 M annual net income

**Summary of Impacts – Increased Income (\$M PV)**

Source of Impacts	Capital Impacts		Annual Impacts	
	Primary	Total	Primary	Total
Motorway construction	20	25		
Residential land values	27	34		
Housing development	35	43		
Extra household spending			3.0	3.8
Additional tourism			3.0	3.8
Sugar industry			-0.2	-0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>7.3</b>

**Key Considerations**

- ✎ Certainty for business investment
- ✎ Access to ports
- ✎ Inland through-freight movement
- ✎ Cross-border integrated transport plan
- ✎ Infrastructure investment
- ✎ NSW Country Road Safety Summit

## **Mayors' Perspectives**

### **Facilitated discussion on the future priorities of the Pacific Highway**

#### **Cr Janet Hayes, Mayor Kempsey Shire Council:**

I hope this Summit isn't about party politics, but about communities. It is implicit that our community is affected by road accidents and the sociological and intellectual cost of road accidents. Our issues in Kempsey are similar to others – B-doubles going through towns that aren't designed for it. We need a cultural shift to do something about this issue. Let's not lay blame, we don't care who funds it, as long as the Highway gets upgraded. We have to find a way to do that as quickly as possible. The Mid Coast Group of Councils will meet 1 June, and I expect that they will support this task force. It must be one in, all in.

Hastings Council will support the Pacific Highway Taskforce.

#### **Cr Merv King, Mayor Lismore City Council:**

We aren't on the highway but traffic is diverted through Lismore when there are accidents on the highway, and that happens all too often. Lismore supports the concept of the Taskforce. My biggest drive is to start a crusade to move the Queensland border south of Lismore. Queensland has a better class of roads than NSW. Roads are one of the greatest issues/expenses we have.

Lismore City Council will support the Pacific Highway Taskforce.

#### **Cr Charlie Cox, Mayor Richmond Valley Council:**

We have bad roads because there is no agreement between political parties – a similar problem with railway. Economics need to be discussed as well, but safety is paramount. Our Council is greatly affected by B-doubles going through in convoys – you can't hear, and the buildings actually shake. Sometimes Woodburn and Broadwater residents cannot turn off the highway into their houses, the volume of traffic is so great. A bypass is probably the answer – highways should not go through towns at all. The issue with planning is that a preferred route is proposed, but there can be a lot of resistance from community consultation. The proposed Taskforce is the only way to progress the issue with any real impact. We need to be represented by all Councils from Queensland to Newcastle.

Richmond Valley Council will support the Pacific Highway Taskforce.

#### **Cr Philip Silver, Mayor Ballina Shire Council:**

Roads are a regional issue as is the rail. It's amazing how many sections of the highway are planned and ready to go, but the funding has not been forthcoming. This issue is about the entire highway, not just single sections. A partnership with NRMA is a great opportunity to force, cajole, plead and threaten governments to stop squabbling, and get on with the project. Our opportunity is to force State and Federal Governments to come to the party and perform.

Ballina Shire Council will support the Pacific Highway Taskforce.

**Mr Alan Evans NRMA:**

There is an obvious desire and commitment to develop and support a Taskforce. It is crucial to gain support from as many Councils as possible from Tweed to Newcastle.

We are happy to balance issues between the Pacific and Princes Highways. The NRMA is prepared to put time and money into the Taskforce. The Pacific Highway is the crucial road that must be tackled. Getting business people involved is important in the lobby exercise, and also the media. Full economic impact study should be performed as to the current state, and the future state of the Highway, as well as social impact on communities.

**Cr Ernie Bennett, Mayor Kyogle Shire Council:**

Kyogle Shire Council will support the Pacific Highway Taskforce.

Messages of support were received from Tweed Shire Council Mayor, Warren Polglase.

Tweed Shire Council will support the Pacific Highway Taskforce.

NOTE: This session was limited to Mayors of participating Councils. Some individual Councillors from Byron Shire Council stated that they did not support the Pacific Highway Taskforce.

Messages of support were received from the following Editors: the Daily News, the Northern Star, the Grafton Examiner and the Coffs Harbour Advocate, representing the APN Newspaper Group.

The APN Group will support the Pacific Highway Taskforce.

## Appendix

- 1        **NOROC Media Release**  
         Councils, NRMA Form Pacific Highway Taskforce

# MEDIA RELEASE

**Embargoed: 6 May 2005**



*Northern Rivers*

## **COUNCILS, NRMA FORM PACIFIC HIGHWAY TASKFORCE**

*Regional*

*Organisation*

*of Councils inc*

The NRMA and local councils have formed a new taskforce to push for the fast-tracking of the Pacific Highway to a safer dual carriageway within 10 years.

Formed at the Pacific Highway Summit in Ballina today, the Taskforce has been created to ask both the State and Federal Governments to commit more money for the Pacific Highway in order to dramatically improve its safety.

NOROC President, Cr Ernie Bennett, said the Pacific Highway Taskforce initially covered the NRMA and NOROC Councils including Ballina, Clarence Valley, Lismore, Kyogle, Richmond Valley and the Tweed and over the coming months would be expanded to the entire length of the Pacific Highway.

"This is a hot issue – the future of the Pacific Highway is the number one priority for so many communities. It is the most dangerous road in NSW – and our communities have had enough."

"Its safety has to be dramatically improved by spending additional money immediately to upgrade it to dual carriageway. The construction schedules also have to be brought forward to achieve the improvements within ten years."

NRMA President, Mr Alan Evans, said NRMA was delighted to accept NOROC's invitation to join the taskforce.

"NRMA will lend all available weight and resources we have to the taskforce," Mr Evans said.

"We are keen to involve business, industry, tourism and economic groups in the Pacific Highway Taskforce.

"NRMA has already had considerable success working with a united group of councils and business leaders to get the Princes Highway upgraded."

"We look forward to continuing our work with the communities on the North Coast to get the Pacific Highway fixed once and for all."

Details of the task force will be worked out over the coming weeks but could include delegations to Sydney and Canberra, local advertising campaigns, community consultation and public awareness events.