

Submission
No 17

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES: COFFS HARBOUR

Organisation:

Name: Mrs Beverly Miles

Telephone:

Date Received: 3/11/2005

Subject:

Summary

Beverley & Peter Miles

31st October 2005

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir,

I refer to the article in the Advocate requesting submissions of personal incidents that have occurred on the Pacific Highway.

We moved from Sydney 4 years ago and in the last 6 months, even the locals that have lived here for 30 years, have noticed the increased amount of trucks, semis etc. that are now on the Pacific Highway, especially between Urunga and Coffs.

I personally had 2 very frightening near fatal accidents as listed below:

1. Two weeks after moving, my husband Peter had a heart attack and was in Coffs hospital. I was not only travelling to see him during the day but also at night. I will digress by advising although we are in our 60s. we have lived in Sydney for over 60 years and we are used to heavy traffic and consider ourselves to be good responsible drivers.

I have never ever been so frightened driving back home on my own from the hospital (a 20mins. trip south of Coffs) on a road I really did not know. The amount of trucks, semis etc. driving 2inches from my tail was frightening and only because I pulled off the road on occasions and let them have the road, did I save myself from any accidents. We decided I was only to go to the hospital during the day.

2. My most frightening experience in my whole life (and I have driven stock cars in my youth) was 2 months ago when I was in a car with a family consisting of a mother in her 30s., 7yro and 5yo boys and 3yro twins. I do voluntary work with this family and we were out on a picnic at Nambucca Heads.

It started to rain and we quickly got in the car which is no mean feat with 4 children under 7. When driving on the Pacific Highway after coming from the Nambucca t/o it started to absolutely pour down and at the same time, the windscreen wipers decided to pack it in.

At the same time, this huge cattle semi came up so close behind us and started to toot all the time at us as we were trying to find somewhere to pull over and were slowing down. All this time with him tooting there was no way he was able to see our left hand blinker.

You can imagine how frightening this was for the mum with this huge truck tooting us right on our bumper bar and nowhere to go not to mention the pouring rain.

Finally we started to pull over and just as we did, the truck came through on our left off the Pacific Highway knocking down bushes etc. and taking out the left hand mirror **STILL TOOTING AT US. How this truck driver did not hit us and throw us into oncoming traffic is a miracle.**

When we stopped, still shaking and angry, as this family and myself could have been completely wiped out and no one would have known the reason, I rang the Coffs Harbour police station and reported this incident. I was able to give them the description and the first three numbers on the plate (this was all I could see as it was pouring and we had no windscreen wipers). My description was a semi transporting cattle, with a red canvas covering and the time and where we were, which gave them ample information to wait for this truck when it got to Coffs. They even had time to catch the driver at Urunga, as when we got there, there was a police car stopped on the side. When I told him what had happened, and had he heard from Coffs police, not only had he not, but he was not in the slightest bit interested.

A month later, after me again contacting Coffs police, nothing had been done and they didn't even have my report – so much for asking us to report drivers, which are being irresponsible.

So you can see from the above, although this is only 1 complaint, how many other similar incidents have happened without anything being done.

My one suggestion would be for Andrew Fraser, or some independent person (I will if requested) to actually have turns sitting on the side of the Pacific Highway at different intervals and mark down these trucks, which cause the most fatal accidents to try and have something done and get these drivers off our roads. So many stories have been written about when these drivers after smashing and killing other people, often are not registered.

It is not only the state of the Pacific Highway but it is more that the trucks, semis etc. are blatantly ignoring safety particularly from Urunga to Coffs. We could have been a statistic and no one would have known the reason and the semi would have gone on his merry way again.

I look forward to the end result of these submissions which should have 3 parts:

(1) the upgrade of Pacific Highway (2) taking the freight from the trucks and putting it on rail (3) make sure irresponsible and dangerous truck & semi drivers are taken off the road

Yours sincerely,



Beverley Miles

c.c. Andrew Fraser