

**Submission
No 83**

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

Organisation:

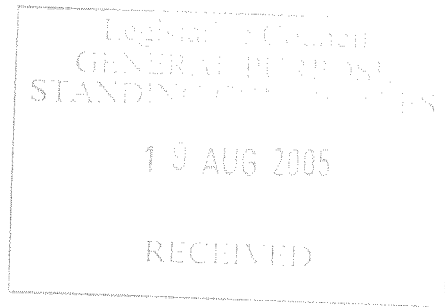
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Date Received: 19/08/2005

Subject:

Summary



18 August 2005

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

By Email: gpscno4@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sirs

WOODBURN TO BALLINA HIGHWAY UPGRADE

I am writing in the context of one who returned “home” 5 months ago after living for 4 years in Sydney. For most of my 51 years “home” has been on the north coast of NSW surrounded by the mountains, the sea and the bush. During this time, whether good or bad, we have prospered and progressed – you can’t stop progress. But progress at what price, as little by little, year after year, the bush has been cleared. Once diverse communities of flora and fauna have gradually been lost to development and will never be recovered. Yet, here on the Wardell heathland we have the most diverse area containing the last of the lower Richmond flood plain ecosystems which are still relatively intact. We have old growth forests which have not been disturbed for hundreds of years. The wildflowers which grow in this area are amazing. The system supports not only a large bird population but koalas and other endangered species. Environmental scientists are in awe of this area, Ballina Shire Council have zoned it Environmentally Protected, the National Parks and Wildlife Service proposed a part of it be gazetted a Nature Reserve. Yet what is proposed to cut right through the middle of the heathland but a 4-6 lane highway.

If any of routes 2A, 2B, 2C or 2D proceed, the balance of the ecosystem in this unique area will be ***lost forever***. No amount of mitigation work will be sufficient to replace what has been created naturally over many thousands of years.

You don’t have to be a scientist to appreciate the wonder of what is virtually in our own backyard. At a recent meeting attended by over 200 local people which included the young, the old, newcomers to the area, people who have lived in the area for generations,

families, greenies and farmers to name a few, all were passionate about 'our bush' and the need to preserve it. Many local people are involved in projects to enhance the environment creating habitat and corridors for native animals and birds.

I have first hand experience of a regeneration project. My partner has spent countless hours and resources over the last seven years restoring his land adjacent to the proposed routes 2A, 2B and 2C to increase the natural animal corridors which exist in close proximity to his property. If the highway is built on the heathland the whole area becomes unviable. Besides the environmental vandalism, what a waste of the \$40,000 he was granted by the State Government to assist with this task!

During the time I lived in Sydney I was often astounded at a majority of people's lack of knowledge and misconceptions about the natural environment. This is understandable for people who live in a built environment. What concerns me is that people who are making the decision on the highway upgrade are also from this same built environment. They have not listened to the members of the Community Liaison Group who represent our community and have continually brought to their attention such issues as the amplified noise of traffic to our homes which will be brought about by the natural amphitheatre of the Blackwall Range, the dramatic increase in air pollution brought about by this same effect, the effect of dioxins from fuel emissions becoming water soluble and polluting our rainwater tanks contaminating our water quality, and local flooding and weather conditions. Indeed as indicated in their documents because we are such a small community the consultants planning the highway seem to think that an interesting green and scenic route for the motorist is more important than our concerns for our way of life.

While I have no dispute that the Pacific Highway needs to be upgraded, I fail to see why the study area swings so far (a distance of 4 kilometres) from the present highway. The western Routes 2A, 2B and 2C are longer by a kilometre or more than the eastern Route 2F and the present Pacific Highway. Clearly, by choosing any of these western routes, the amount of greenhouse gases increase, there is an increase in fuel (a fast diminishing resource) usage not to mention increased cost of wear and tear on vehicles and actual increased cost of maintenance of the road itself.

It is ironic that this area which was once part of the Big Scrub and which was systematically cleared in the last century is still fighting to survive in the 21st century. If we can't do any better than this God help us!

Yours faithfully

Christine Roberts