

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

Organisation:

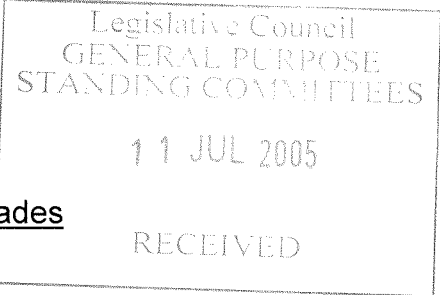
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Subject:

Summary

SUBMISSION



Parliamentary Inquiry Into Pacific Highway Upgrades

It's hard to believe that those elected to office and responsible for putting forward this proposal are so blinkered in their vision. Totally unable to think outside the box, and just wanting to do more of the same and dam the consequences!!!!

We all have a global problem of "global warming" and "global dimming" as a result of our over consumption of fossil fuels. So what do we want to do, build a super highway up the eastern coastal seaboard in order to accommodate and encourage a doubling of the usage on the highway by 2025 with the main focus of freight transportation being by truck. Why??????

The only reason to expand the St Helena to Tintenbar study area as I see it is to create a six lane super highway!!

Are we so short sighted that we want to perpetuate and exacerbate the problem by building a six lane super highway that will encourage the expansion of the trucking industry using fossil fuels over the next x number of years!!!!!! By the time we complete the motorway some fifteen to twenty five years away will fossil fuelled transport still be economically viable? Probably not!!!

There needs to be a complete rethink on the interstate and regional transport system with an emphasis on reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and the trucking industry. In looking at the alternatives available we must have a much longer-term vision. Firstly look to set up an interstate and regional rail network that efficiently moves large volumes of freight as is done in the United States. This may take time and money but major amounts of money can be saved by not building the super highway! Another alternative is to look at the use of sea container freighting from major ports within Australia.

In the short term the road carnage continues and the driving discomfort levels rise with the increased levels of interstate trucks on the road as per the report "Scary Truck Stories" prepared by the Newrybar Landcare Group presented to Don Page the honourable member for Ballina. Immediately we should de-gazette the use of B doubles on the Pacific Highway and over time look to redirect the bulk of the interstate freight back to the Federally designated and funded New England Highway. The New England Highway needs to be upgraded to accommodate the increased volumes and some sort of incentive be created to make it more cost efficient for the trucks to use that route. Alternatively some disincentive be created to discourage heavy trucks from using the Pacific Highway. The route taken all comes down to economics!!!!

Perhaps a mechanism be put in place to charge all truck freight using the Pacific Highway in order to recover the disproportionate cost of "wear and tear" that the trucks create to what is a State funded road. This would act as a disincentive and make it more economically more viable for heavy transport to use the Federally funded New England Highway and let the Federal Government pick up the heavy maintenance cost.

With reduced truck volumes and no B doubles on the Pacific Highway there would be no requirement for a super highway, but rather a dual carriageway with two lanes north and two lanes south by upgrading the existing Pacific highway on its current highway route.

What are the human, economic and environmental costs of expanding the St Helena to Tintenbar highway upgrade study area?

The starting premise should be that motorway is built as far away from the coast as possible. Byron Bay and its surrounding area has some of the few remaining areas of undeveloped coastal land with natural pristine beauty. As such it is now recognised as an international tourist Mecca with the likes of Richard Branson (Virgin Airlines etc.) recognising the marketability of it's natural beauty. How do you build a super six-lane highway not much more than a kilometre or two from the Lennox Head coastline and drive all the vastly increased interstate trucks volumes through this coastal corridor and attempt to maintain and continue to develop this tourist market. It's bad enough to envisage the current levels of traffic but to comprehend the impact when the traffic volumes have doubled by 2025 appears completely untenable and an irreversible waste of our precious coastline.

The tourist come for the pristine environment but what they'll get will be a super highway producing fume pollution and noise pollution that will grow exponentially with the increase in truck volumes over the coming years. The tourist industry and agriculture are the lifeblood of this region and must be protected at all costs in order to preserve the environment and the economic viability of the community.

Australia has some of the noisiest trucks in the world and this must be rectified to reduce noise levels in the transport industry.

Land is a finite resource and as such, once it has been used unwisely there is little hope of it ever being restored to its previously productive and environmentally pristine state. To build in the expanded study area would equate to environmental vandalism !!!!!!! There are vast empty areas to the west serviced by the New England Highway where the interstate truck freight would have a much lower social and environmental impact and at the same time create an economic boost to the economy through that New England Highway corridor. Surely it is far more sensible to direct all non-essential freight as far away as possible from the more densely populated coastal area onto the already Federally designated "heavy vehicle and freight transport route" the New England Highway!!!

With the reduced truck volumes on the regionally designated Pacific Highway there would be minimal impact from mixing the interstate heavy transport and local transport. But should a super highway ever be built in the expanded study area the consequences would be disastrous, and any attempt to create a separate regional road would be futile as local transport will almost always use the shortest possible route no matter what the driver discomfort is!!!

It feels like we are in "world gone mad" with a myopic perspective creating "just more of the same" without making the tough decisions in creating both regional and globally sustainable environment that will see us into the future!!!!

Sender: P Hawkins

Dated 10/7/05