

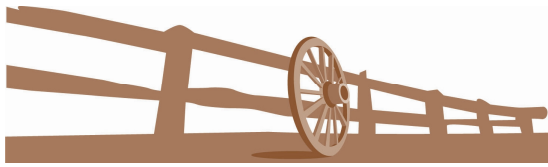
**Submission  
No 11**

**INQUIRY INTO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
IN CENTRAL WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** The Long Paddock

**Date received:** 25/08/2011

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Ms Rachel Simpson  
The Director  
Standing Committee on State Development  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Ms Simpson

**RE: Economic and social development in central western New South Wales**

Please allow me the opportunity to highlight the unsealed section of the Cobb Highway between Ivanhoe and Wilcannia as a major impediment to the further economic and social development of the Central Darling Shire.

In 1999 the Murray, Deniliquin, Conargo, Hay and Central Darling Local Government Areas (LGA's) decided to form and financially support the Long Paddock Committee (LPC). The LPC is made up of ten committee members with each shire having a one council and one community representative. The aim of the LPC was to collectively capture and interpret the regions history and culture via a dynamic touring route (following the Cobb Highway from Echuca Moama in the south to Wilcannia in the north). This in turn would help to foster a robust tourism industry and sustainable communities. The LPC wanted to capitalise on the existing historical interpretation in the area including the Echuca/Moama wharf, The Peppin Heritage Centre at Deniliquin, Shear Outback and the five museums of Hay and the historical township of Wilcannia. The touring route was given the name The Long Paddock (TLP) the colloquial term for the stock routes that ran from Queensland to Victoria across this region and played an integral part in the settlement and development of the region. The touring route follows the Cobb Highway from Echuca -Moama in the south through to Wilcannia in the north.

The LPC undertook extensive consultation with the community, local historical societies and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that the interpretation of local history was authentic. A huge amount of information was collected and was categorised using five main themes: pioneers, indigenous culture, shearing, drovers and transportation. In 2004 the LPC secured funding through the Australian Tourism and Development Program (ATDP) to install forty seven (47) information panels along the Cobb Highway depicting the history of the region in text and images. The panels are placed at sites of historical significance, visitor rest stops and Visitor Information Centers. TLP was the first themed touring route in NSW to use information panels to convey the history and culture of the region to the visiting public.

The panels were launched in October 2006 and are supported by a two CD self drive audio tour. In September 2007, the LPC was again fortunate to receive an additional round of funding from the ATDP to fund the second stage of the project - ARTback sculptures of The Long Paddock. The LPC successfully completed the project in 2009 with the installation of seven unique large scale sculptures that capture the history of the region, as told by the community and interpreted by the artist. ARTback is the only sculptural collection of this scale in NSW. The sculptures are located in each of the shires, covering 610 km of highway and form one cohesive collection. The sculptures add another layer of interpretation for the visitor, inviting them to stop and discover why a nationally significant sculpture is located in the middle of nowhere!

The sculptures provide an unexpected cultural experience for the visitor and capture the history of the region in a new and different way – making it accessible to all ages, levels of literacy and language. Visitors can touch and feel the sculptures and if they wish – read about the inspiration for the artwork on the accompanying information panel.

The LPC offers visitors the chance to immerse themselves in the history of the region. The many levels and different types of interpretation offered by TLP allows visitors to choose the level of information they wish to take away with them, to view the history and culture of the region in a

passive manner or dive right into the history and culture of the region and have a hands on experience.

The project was designed to encourage visitors to head north along the Cobb Highway, exploring the region as they travel to destination such as Broken Hill. Increased visitation and length of stay helps to ensure the economic viability of communities along the Highway.

The LPC is a collaborative community capacity building project dedicated to developing and marketing the Route, using innovative themed interpretation of its pioneering heritage and showcasing the region's natural, cultural and tourism assets. The result is a dynamic touring route which has successfully increased tourism visitation numbers across the region. However the section of Highway between Ivanhoe and Wilcannia, which remains unsealed and dry weather access only has prevent the tourism benefits from reaching the Central Darling Shire.

Since the launch of the touring route in 2006 overwhelming feedback from visitors has been that they will not continue on the Cobb Highway to Ivanhoe through to Wilcannia and beyond because of the condition of the road. It is estimated that over 60% of all visitors to The Long Paddock stands at the Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney Caravan and Camping Shows have stated that they would not take the touring route because of the unsealed section. This impacts not only Ivanhoe and Willcania but also the LGA's to the south who miss out on visitation.

The major tourism segment for this region is the caravan and camping market. While they expose the joys of travelling in the outback, in reality they do not have the confidence to travel on the unsealed part of the highway. The economic downfall for the shire as a result is that visitors will travel and stay in the Hay Shire then instead of following the Cobb Highway through to White Cliffs or Broken Hill, they will take the alternate route using the Kidman Way. In our estimation the towns of Ivanhoe and Wilcannia would loose 15 – 25 000 visitors annually because of the unsealed section of the highway. This would be worth up to \$4 million in lost revenue to the Central Darling Shire and would have a significant impact on the development of a robust tourism industry within the shire. It

would also help to sustain the tourism industry in shires further to the south such as Hay and Conargo.

As a committee we have continued to develop our collateral all the way along the Highway even though it is unsealed. To date we have invested over \$42 000 along northern part of the highway in an attempt to entice visitors to travel north using the Cobb Highway. While there has been a small increase in tourism numbers, these have been found in the off-road 4WD market. This market is very specialised and excludes the large majority of caravaner's found on the road today.

If the Cobb Highway were sealed between Ivanhoe and Wilcannia, then the LPC would commit to further developing the tourism potential of that section of the Highway.

Yours sincerely

Peter McCrabb

President

The Long Paddock Committee

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