

Submission
No 180

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

Organisation:

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Subject:

Summary

17 AUG 2005

We would like to see the current plans put on hold until a well planned study is completed involving all forms of transportation. With fuel running out more efficient ways of transport should be included.

With expected increases in coastal population, transport systems should be steered away from the coast and constructed further to the west. For example following the Summerland Way or the New England highway.

In the immediate future the Pacific Highway should be urgently upgraded to 2 lanes each way following its present route, with close attention to known danger areas, and interstate trucks put back on the New England Highway.

1)

a) The original study area was exceedingly small in comparison to other study areas (eg Grafton area), we cannot understand why the expanded area was not included in the original study area. The total area under study should have been large enough to the east AND the west (possibly as far west

as the Summerland Way and the New England Highway) to not have needed expanding.

b) At first we believed that an upgrade of the original highway in this area meant improvements following the general route to that which already existed, something which we all expected and wanted for safety reasons.

Somewhere along the way it became apparent that a new highway with limited local access was what was really being planned. A road that is divided and with 3 lanes both ways is more than an upgrade, it is a whole new road!

c) The latter is a huge area to remove from prime agricultural land, it would destroy it! This is a very agriculturally productive area and during the recent drought remained largely unaffected. With the future feeding of Australians in mind surely we can't afford to lose ANY of this land.

Not only that, a large amount of the area is water catchment for Emigrant Creek which feeds Emigrant Creek dam and thus Ballina/ Lennox Head water supply!! There are springs, wildlife and areas of rainforest on its banks and should be saved and nurtured for its water generating capacity.

d) In the expanded area at least there is not such prime land. It is similar to the land through which the Yelgun to Chinderah section is built.

e) The impact of B doubles on the highway is horrific. We have lived here for 28 years and have seen a gradual increase in all traffic over these years but since B doubles were allowed it has become dangerous, difficult, noisy and frightening to live nearby and drive on the highway. The attitude of most B- double and semi drivers leaves one in no doubt about their objectives—get there ASAP with very little regard for the safety or well being of other road users.

f) The Government and the RTA are not looking to the future. The whole planning process should be put on hold and a long term plan for transport should be settled on first. This should include investigating Rail and Sea transport. Baby boomers have just started retiring, we constantly

hear that the coastal population will increase dramatically, tourism is increasing. This population growth is not compatible with heavy interstate transport of any kind. In twenty years time with this increase in population, an equally large increase in tourists and possibly an even larger increase in trucks this area will be horrendous for noise, safety and accidents. At least keep the majority of trucks out of the area, this will not only help the residents but the tourists and the truck drivers.

g)

h)The New England Highway should be used as designated even if some money has to be found for improvements.Trucks should be moved there immediately with close regulation and policing. Federal Government money could be diverted from the Pacific Highway to the New England Highway to speed up its upgrade.

i)It is highly significant that the Minister has stated that the Pacific Highway is a regional road—it is

and should be used accordingly. This means regional traffic and tourists visiting the area not interstate heavy transport trucks!

3)We have two concerns about the way the RTA has handled this process.Firstly, they decided to expand the area of study. In doing so the complete Community Liason Group was dismantled and a new one elected. There would seem to be no reason for this. All that was needed was a number of new community members to be elected from the new area and the already elected members from the original area remain. It seems as if they wanted to get rid of some of the original members and this was a good way to do it.

Secondly they have called on the members (who represent the wider community) to submit to secrecy on what has been said and what has been seen (eg lines on maps) at CLG meetings!!! This is supposed to be a democracy but all it does is engender suspicion and fear in our minds.

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