

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

Organisation: Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources
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Subject:

Summary



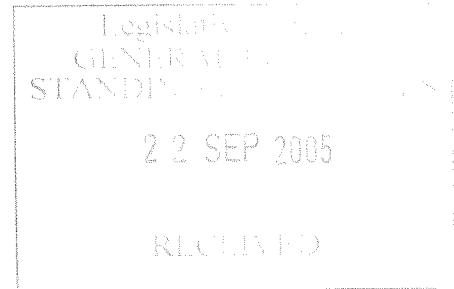
NSW GOVERNMENT

Department of Planning

Office of the Director General

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

DGC05/1453



Dear Sir / Madam

I refer to your invitation to make a contribution to the Inquiry into the Pacific Highway Upgrades. My submission relates to four of the terms of reference points.

Terms of reference 1(c), 1(d) and 2(a)

The Department of Planning has been active in the last two years in identifying and developing policy to protect the best agricultural land that remains in the Far North Coast. The completed work identifies state significant farmland and regionally significant farmland. The principle aim of the policy is to prevent any further urbanisation of the identified farmland.

The Farmland Protection Project Final Recommendations Report recognises that essential public infrastructure will sometimes need to coincide with the mapped farmland. The Report indicates that public infrastructure is permitted on land mapped as state or regionally significant where no feasible alternative is available.

As a matter of policy, state significant farmland is seen as the highest value and most unique agricultural resource that should be preserved for agriculture. Accordingly, the Department supports state significant farmland being considered as a high constraint for public infrastructure provision, and regionally significant farmland being considered as a medium constraint. There is a small area of state significant farmland within the investigation area for the Ewingsdale to Tintenbar sector. There are significant areas of regionally significant farmland in the investigation areas for both sectors.

If the Pacific Highway route does ultimately include significant farmland due to no suitable alternative being available, the Department would recommend that every effort be made to avoid disruption or fragmentation to individual farms. Given the small size of the study areas, it should be possible to assess farm impacts on a property level.

An extract from the Department's Northern Rivers Farmland Protection Project maps is attached to this submission for your reference.

Term of reference 1(j)

I assume that this term of reference arose from use of the word "regional" in then Minister Knowles direction dated 3 August 1998 to North Coast councils about commercial/retail development along the Pacific Highway. A copy of the Direction, made under Section 117 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, is attached for your reference.

The Direction uses the word "regional" in two places, both in Objective 1. Use of the word in Objective 1 had no relationship with the terminologies used by the RTA or the Commonwealth Government in their hierarchies of road classification. Objective 1 clearly refers to the function of the Pacific Highway as both the primary inter- and intra-regional road traffic route. This recognises that the Pacific Highway has roles both between regions and within the region. At the northern end, "between regions" means between States. The Pacific Highway is clearly an interstate highway. Any interpretation of the Section 117 Direction that implies that the then Minister Knowles considered the Pacific Highway to be a "designated regional road" is incorrect.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Westacott', written over a horizontal line.

Jennifer Westacott
Director General

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