

**Submission
No 156**

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

Organisation:

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Subject:

Summary

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 4

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Hon Jenny Gardiner MLC (*Chair*)
(*The Nationals*)

Ms Sylvia Hale MLC (*Deputy Chair*)
(*The Greens*)

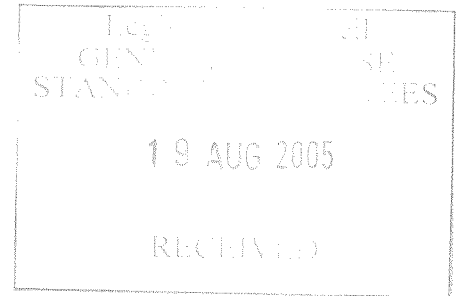
The Hon Jan Burnswoods MLC
(*Australian Labor Party*)

The Hon David Clarke MLC
(*Liberal Party*)

Mr Ian Cohen MLC
(*The Greens*)

The Hon Greg Donnelly MLC
(*Australian Labor Party*)

The Hon Amanda Fazio MLC
(*Australian Labor Party*)



Inquiry into and report on the impact of the proposed upgrades of the Pacific Highway between: Ewingsdale and Tintenbar, with particular regard to the following issues:

1a) “reasons for expanding the highway upgrade study area on the St Helena to Tintenbar section”

I appreciate the opportunity to address the General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4 on the impact of proposed upgrades of the Pacific Highway – specifically item 1 a) on the Ewingsdale to Tintenbar (T2E) upgrade.

1a) “reasons for expanding the highway upgrade study area on the St Helena to Tintenbar section”

EMIGRANT CREEK DAM WATER CATCHMENT

Two matters concern me:

1. Why when the study area between Tintenbar and Ewingsdale was expanded a Parliamentary Inquiry was called?
2. The need to resolve the route for the new highway as soon as possible

When the original study area was announced an RTA official was asked the questions:

- “Why was it necessary to route the upgrade through the drinking water catchment of Ballina Shire residents?”
- “Since the Ballina Bypass upgrade route headed east (to what is now the new study area) before it climbed the escarpment, why not continue the route further north along the coastal plain?”

The answer to both these questions was:

- “Because the Ballina Bypass had to rejoin the old highway somewhere.”

And that “somewhere” was appoint where there was no option other than to route the new highway through the entire length of the Emigrant Creek catchment.

This situation was *prima facie* unfair for watercatchments residents as they were not included in the community consultation process for the Ballina Bypass upgrade with **regard to where the bypass ended.**

In addition Ballina residents were not informed, that because the Ballina Bypass ended where it did, there was no option but to run the next section of the upgrade through their drinking water catchment. **They were not informed and were not given the opportunity to comment.**

And to make matters worse, the RTA, in considering a route through the catchment, would have little scope to give Emigrant Creek Dam and the feeder watercourses a wide

berth because of its smallness – covering less than 2,000 hectares on a grid roughly 6kmlong by 3 km wide.

It is probable that the RTA did not know when it completed the Ballina Bypass plans that the entire Emigrant Creek watercatchment falls under Zone 7(C) of the Ballina Shire Council. This land is deemed – environment protection water catchment. **Its prime objective is to prevent any development that could adversely affect the quality or quantity of the urban water supply.**

Ballina Shire Council would have or should have, known the ramifications of ending the Bypass at the front door of the watercatchment. The question should be asked “what advice if any, did it give the RTA with regard to this aspect?”

Given the choice of avoiding the watercatchment, and all other things being equal, a reasonable and objective person would not choose to take any risk of polluting the drinking water of 25,000 plus Ballina Shire residents. Not now. Not in the future when the risks are unknown.

Having considered the information supplied by water catchment residents and its own investigations, the RTA made its decision to expand the investigation area. And it should be congratulated for having the wisdom to widen the base of its route selection not only on the present competing restraints but also having regard for long-term ramifications.

Information supplied by: Ian Cooke

