

## INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

**Organisation:** Department of Primary Industries  
**Name:** Mr Barry Buffier  
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**Date Received:** 5/09/2005

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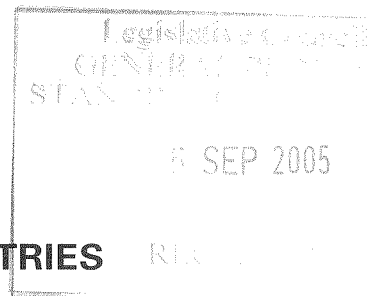
**Subject:**

**Summary**



New South Wales

**DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES**



DA05/539

Ms Tanya Bosch  
Director  
General Purpose Standing Committee No 4  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

26 AUG 2005

BY FAX: 02 9230 3416

Dear Ms Bosch

Thank you for your letter of 8 July 2005 inviting the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) to make a submission to the current inquiry into the impact of the Pacific Highway upgrades between Ewingsdale and Tintenbar, and Ballina and Woodburn. I am aware the upgrade of the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the NSW/Queensland border is a priority infrastructure project of the NSW Government.

DPI is the NSW Government agency responsible for managing the State's agriculture, mining, fisheries and forest resources. Primary industries are very important to regional NSW in providing employment opportunities and driving regional economies. While primary industries will benefit from improved transport efficiencies resulting from the Pacific Highway upgrades, there are a number of issues that I would urge the Committee to consider as part of the current inquiry.

The study areas for the two sections of the Pacific Highway that are the subject of the current inquiry contain some very good quality, high value agricultural lands, identified and mapped as State and Regionally Significant Farmland by the Northern Rivers Farmland Protection Project. These lands support a range of agricultural industries including sugar cane production, cattle grazing, and high value pursuits such as *macadamia* and *coffee* production.

The linear nature and scale of highways present significant issues and potential impacts for agriculture, including:

- Alienation of agricultural land, fragmentation of properties and changes to paddock layout;
- Changes to property access arrangements, particularly heavy machinery movements and internal farm movement of stock, vehicles and equipment;
- Changes to drainage patterns, local flood heights, flooding frequency and flooding duration resulting from changes to hydrology caused by roads and embankments, leading to the need to modify on-farm drainage systems and agricultural activities, such as cropping; and

- Loss of farming land and production as a result of the requirement for buffer zones between some routine agricultural operations, such as chemical spraying, and public roads.

The impact of the various route options on access to current and potential sources of construction materials needs to be considered, along with the potential issue of compensation should the upgrades lead to loss of production from operational quarries. I understand one proposed route for the upgrade of the Pacific Highway between Ballina and Woodburn would take the highway through or close to a number of operating construction material quarries in the Cooks Hill (Broadwater) and Bagotville areas. This could result in significant loss of construction material resources and supply, and raises the potential issue of compensation, which is relevant in considering the relative costs of the various route options. The provision of construction materials for the actual highway upgrades and the resulting impacts on the availability of supplies for other community needs are related matters for consideration.

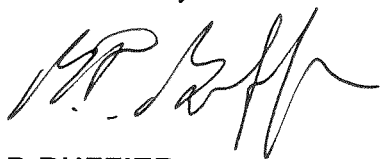
Departmental officers are working directly with the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) and its consultants at the local level to ensure fisheries management and conservation issues are planned for and addressed throughout the process of upgrading the Pacific Highway. The principles that DPI is looking to have incorporated into consideration of upgrade options include:

- Protection of aquatic habitat and fish, especially threatened species;
- Protection of water quality, with management of any potential for discharge of sediment, acid from exposure of Acid Sulfate Soils, and other pollutants into receiving waters;
- Maintaining and where possible improving fish passage in waterways both during construction and following completion of waterway crossings and road infrastructure;
- Ensuring legislative compliance with the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* and other relevant policies and guidelines, including meeting permit and notification requirements for issues such as harm to marine vegetation and dredging or reclamation activities; and
- Maintaining viable aquaculture and commercial fishing industries and quality recreational fishing opportunities both within and downstream of the study areas.

There are no issues relating to forest resources associated with the proposed upgrade of these two sections of the Pacific Highway.

Thank you for the opportunity to raise primary industry interests associated with planning for this important infrastructure project.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B D Buffier', written in a cursive style.

**B D BUFFIER**  
**DIRECTOR-GENERAL**