

Submission
No 90

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

Organisation:

Name: Ms Margaret Oldham

Telephone:

Date Received: 18/08/2005

Subject:

Summary

From: Jenny Gardiner
To: Glenda Baker; Steven Reynolds
Date: 18/08/05 16:15:03
Subject: Fwd: Inquiry into Pacific Highway Upgrades

08/18/05 3:45 pm >>>

Dear Ms Gardiner

Attached please find a submission to General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4 as above.

Margaret Oldham

The Hon Jennifer Ann Gardiner, MLC
Chairperson
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4
Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000

18 August 2005

Dear Ms Gardiner,

I wish to submit the following points for consideration by your committee.

1. The study area for the proposed upgrade of the Ewingsdale to Tintenbar section of the Pacific Highway was expanded without general community consultation. It appears to the residents of the area that the RTA responded to the loud voice and expensive and inaccurate newspaper advertising (Ballina Advocate, Thurs 25 May 2005 as one example) of one interested party. When 300 residents formed the community organization CEPS (Coastal Environment Protection Society) in an effort to convince the RTA and the Government to return the study area to its original location along the existing highway corridor, their concerns, when presented to the Parliament by Ian Cohen, MLC, were treated with contempt by the then Minister for Roads, Michael Costa (see Hansard 6 May 2005, 9 June 2005). Ninety (90) people were present at the last CEPS meeting on 10 August and numbers of this order have been present at all previous meetings.
2. The water quality of the Emigrant Creek Catchment area is one of the major reasons given for moving the study area to the east. This completely disregards the fact that all Board members of Rous Water supported 'the alignment of the upgraded highway be situated no closer to Emigrant Creek Dam than it already is at present' (p.4, Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Rous Water, Wednesday, 18 May, 2005)? In the Negis Consulting Report for Rous Water, July 11, 2001, Drinking Water Quality Risk Assessment Review, - Emigrant Creek, it is clearly stated that road run off ranks very low in the list of the most significant risks contributing to unacceptable water quality. In a Chairman's minute to the meeting on 18 May, _____ stated that the problems with water quality in the catchment area came from the farms, first and foremost ie with respect to soil erosion and run off and the use of pesticides and herbicides. The second most concerning issue was with blue-

green algae outbreaks and thirdly, with the run off from the highway. He stated categorically that the water treatment plant currently being installed would cater for all these problems as long as the highway was engineered properly. The role of Rous Water was not to dictate where the highway should go. Their role was concerned with the water quality and stressed that the new filtration plant would cope.

3. The level of upgrade proposed for this section seems to be way beyond that required for the Pacific Highway to operate as the North Coast's primary inter and intra regional road traffic route. That is, as stated by the then Minister Planning and Infrastructure Craig Knowles, the purpose of the Pacific Highway. It seems the level of upgrade is not linked to the stated purpose of the highway but to the needs of heavy transport, namely B-doubles, which should never have been gazetted to use this road. At times I have counted between 36 and 48 heavy transports (mostly B-doubles) in 10 minutes, travelling at night on a 10km stretch of the currently two lane highway. Apart from the obvious danger from this mix of heavy freight and cars, the noise levels have risen intolerably.
4. The answer is two-fold, upgrade the highway on the existing highway to accommodate increasing local and tourist traffic and remove the heavy transport at once back to the New England Highway which is the National Highway. There will then be a need to upgrade the New England or build a dedicated superhighway/tollway for road freight, but preferably **put the interstate freight back on rail and sea.**
5. The highly productive, high quality agricultural land on the volcanic soils of an area that is less susceptible to drought than most of NSW is facing enormous pressure from population growth and tourism to further add the impact of highway development when there is an already gazetted "highway upgrade" zone is ludicrous.
6. I would like you to address the question of confidentiality imposed upon members of the Community Consultative Committee. These people represent the stakeholders in the Pacific Highway upgrade process but are prohibited from reporting to these stakeholders. This makes it difficult for the community to respond in any logical way to perceived developments which are based on rumour and innuendo. This can only lead to mass hysteria which can be a great waste of time and energy by all parties. Please let common sense prevail and let our representatives consult.

I thank you in anticipation for your consideration of these points.

Yours faithfully,

Margaret Oldham