

## INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

**Organisation:**

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**Telephone:**

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**Subject:**

**Summary**

Submission lodged at conclusion  
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## **Comments to Parliamentary Inquiry into Pacific Highway upgrade.**

Ballina Oct 27<sup>th</sup> 2005.

Dan Ewald.

- I welcome the broader terms of reference for the Parliamentary Inquiry compared to the interactions with the RTA in their community consultations.
- I would like to see more incentives to get freight off the roads and onto rail. This could be a combination of penalty for specified categories of road use, and support for rail use. This opinion is underpinned by concerns over:
  - the danger of mixing heavy freight and dense population areas
  - the environmental benefits of rail over road for freight transport
  - expanding and improving the road network encourages more car and truck use, which in the long term is an unsustainable lifestyle trajectory.
- I believe the decision to allow "B-double" trucks onto the Pacific Highway was a mistake and should be phased out ASAP. I understand there has been Federal funding to develop the New England route as the main road freight corridor, and this should be fully developed as such.
- Local, between coastal towns, freight traffic should be the only road freight on the Pacific Highway, and this should not require "B-double" trucks.
- If, in the short term (until fuel costs make road freight relatively more expensive) the cost of goods were to rise because of a shift to rail freight, I would gladly pay the price in exchange for less trucks on the road, less Green House gas emissions and a more sustainable transport infrastructure.
- Specific comments on the proposed route options for the upgrade from Tintenbar to Ewingsdale are attached.

## ***Comments on proposed route options for upgrade of Pacific Highway from Tintenbar to Ewingsdale.***

I believe the highway upgrade should be based as far as possible on the existing highway route. This is because:

### **One heavy transport corridor is better than two in the same local area. There already is an established transport corridor for the Pacific Highway.**

Each transport corridor causes an environmental impact such as intersecting wildlife corridors, altering ground water and drainage levels and flows, being an entry point for litter and weeds along the roadside.

Each transport corridor bisects the rural community through which it passes. This will tend to disrupt social and community relationships and access to shared facilities, services, and aesthetic values such as views, bushland, parkland etc.

Each corridor will have a detrimental impact on the quality of the landscape through noise, storm water, air pollution, weed dispersal and of course loss of visual amenity of the landscape.

### **People have self-selected to live near the current highway**

The negative impact of the highway development close to residences is very important to those in the vicinity. Those who have chosen to purchase property and live close to the existing highway route have demonstrated their relative tolerance and acceptance of the highway. Accordingly, this is the best measure for which group of people will have the least negative impact from the highway upgrade. The potential of future upgrade of the highway would have been apparent to anyone purchasing property in the area for many decades. Actions speak louder than words.

Conversely, those who have chosen to live further away from the highway have demonstrated their greater potential for negative impact from moving the highway upgrade route.

### **Inappropriate assessment of Community Noise Burden**

The Route Options Display pamphlet released in Oct 05 describes

“the quantitative evaluation of potential noise caused by absolute traffic levels on residential receivers to 300-500m of a route option.”

This is clearly not an appropriate assessment formula. For those who live east of the escarpment such as Figtree Hill and Sanctuary Village (Approx 180 residences), there will be very significant noise impact from the eastern route options (C or D). This would not have been included in the impact assessment as it is more than 500m from the proposed routes.

Given that the highway can be heard (faintly) from Figtree Hill in its current location (approx 2km away), it is easy to predict that the noise levels will be far greater if the eastern route options (C or D) were to be carried out. The noise would not only spread to the residences to the east unimpeded by any hills, but would be reinforced by echoes from the escarpment to the west of route options C and D.

Those residences on the east side of the escarpment would overlook the highway if options C or D (eastern routes) were used. They would also suffer great noise impact even if >500m from the highway.

### **Fog**

The Newrybar valley is often filled with fog that does not cover the ridge and existing highway route. The existing, higher, relatively fog free route of the highway would appear to have important safety advantages.

### **Inappropriate and misleading presentation of the socio-economic and environmental characteristics of route options.**

A table of comparative data rating the socio-economic and environmental characteristics of each route option is provided in the Route Options Display pamphlet.

The data are based on a notional corridor width of 250m which is far wider than the actual corridor would need to be for most of its length. The suggested width of the required road reserve is 50-150m in the same Route Options Display document. Using a notional average corridor width of 100m (more realistic) would make option A (existing route) appear far more attractive compared to the other options. This is because much of the upgraded corridor would use land in the existing corridor compared to the other options being entirely or mostly in a new corridor.

Using a more modest and realistic corridor width in the calculations would decrease the predicted number of dwelling to be acquired in option A. Similarly option A would show relatively less impact on agricultural land, “high constraint vegetation”, wildlife corridors and potential archaeological deposits.

### **Runoff**

Route Options C and D (eastern routes) would drain into the North Creek Wetlands area which has wildlife, conservation and recreation value.

### **Visual impact**

The visual impact of the routes does not appear to have been considered in the options summary document. Clearly creating a second highway corridor greatly degrades the beauty of the area. The eastern route options (C and D) along the low lands would be highly visible (even if screened with vegetation) from all the surrounding residences that naturally tend to be on elevated land.

A well screened (visual and noise screening) upgrade on the existing route would seem to be least likely to be a visual and noise burden.

## **Solutions to sited difficulties with upgrading the existing route (option A)**

### **Newrybar School**

If the proposed upgrade of the existing route will separate Newrybar village from its school, then move the school or build an underpass. This would be a small cost compared to every other issue being considered.

### **Impact on significant farm land**

This has probably been greatly overstated if it is based on a 250m wide corridor as most of the upgraded route will probably be over existing highway. The other routes will by definition affect a greater amount of farm land. The lowlands are also used for nut farming.

### **Impact on Emigrant Creek Catchment**

This currently has to be managed for the existing highway corridor. Presumably the upgrade would require some expansion of an existing strategy and engineering solution to this problem.

### **Comment on community feedback process**

There is insufficient time between the opportunities to discuss details of the route options and the closing date for comments. There are only two days that this is possible outside of normal working hours.