

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES: COFFS HARBOUR

Organisation: Owners Corporation, Sapphire Beachfront Apartments
Name: Mr R. James Browne
Position: Chairman
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Date Received: 7/11/2005

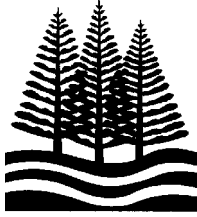
Subject:

Summary

The Sapphire Strangulation is a stretch of the Pacific Highway unique in New South Wales. This is a two lane stretch of highway passing through a cutting with no provision for pedestrian or cycle access. It is the only means of reasonable local access between the coastal strip of NSW to the North of the Strangulation and the coastal strip of NSW to the South of the Strangulation. A mother pushing a pram the 500 mtrs or so from the Sapphire Apartments to her local convenience store is cleared by no more than 1 meter by B-Double Trucks doing 100 kph in a 100kph zone. The chances of getting through this cutting without being passed by a speeding truck are very low.

This stretch of Highway is the result of very poor initial design. No allowance has been made for the high density residential development that is now in place or the increase in physical size, volume and noise level of vehicle traffic.

If not addressed in designing the new highway alignment this past folly will be magnified and set in concrete for the foreseeable future.



SAPPHIRE BEACHFRONT APARTMENTS Executive Committee

6th November 2005

TO: The Hon. Jenny Gardiner MLC
Committee Chair
General Purpose Standing Committee No 4.
Inquiry into Pacific Highway Upgrades

Addressing the Sapphire Strangulation Sapphire to Woolgoolga - Pacific Highway Upgrade Project. SAPPHIRE TO MOONEE SECTION

We have been advised that the Terms of Reference are the same as those applying to the Ewingsdale and Tintenbar section.

Accordingly we address:

Items 1 b) The level of upgrade proposed for this section and the remainder of the Pacific Highway.

And indirectly the issues caused by:

Item 1 e) The impact of B-doubles on the Pacific Highway

Item 1 f) The impacts of interstate heavy transport on the Pacific Highway and the mixing of interstate and local transport.

SUMMARY

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Attachments

Attachment 1 (BROWNE-PacHwy-Location-SapphireStrangulation.jpg) shows the location of the Sapphire Strangulation. Note the total lack of any by-pass roading for local traffic.

Attachment 2 (BROWNE PacHwy Arial SapphireStrangulation2.jpg) is an arial view of the Sapphire Strangulation.

Attachment 3 (BROWNE PacHwy Photo SapphireStrangulation2.jpg) is a photographic view of the Sapphire Strangulation, looking south.

Comment

The last publicly exhibited plan of the proposed new highway design shows the existing highway at the Sapphire Strangulation proposed as the southbound carriageway of the upgraded highway, with a new northbound carriageway to the west.

The current highway designers have inherited this proposed upgrade path from the projected future directions of the past designers. The very designers who created the Sapphire Strangulation!

From a local residents point-of-view, the current proposal delivers the worst possible result.

The narrow coastal strip which was once part of the village of Sapphire is now being increasingly developed to high density housing. The Sapphire Apartments Complex is one of the largest in Coffs Harbour. It comprises 62 large strata title apartments. These range in size from 2 to 7 bedrooms. Combining residents, staff, visitors and services there are approximately 150 - 180 highway exit/entry experiences daily, to and from the Complex. This number rises to approximately 240 per day during the holiday season. Of these experiences, our counts show, some 80% are to and from the south. Additional people use the common entrance with the Sapphire Apartments to access the units being developed at Sapphire House and adjacent block (about another 12 strata title units). This type of development has been allowed along the full length of this narrow coastal strip and all feeds onto the existing highway.

It is absolutely unacceptable by any standard of highway design, that a new highway development (with the potential to handle future traffic volumes of Freeway proportions) make no provision in a popular tourist area for pedestrian, cycle, or other non vehicle access between the Northern and Southern coastal strips of NSW.

Noise is already a problem with the current highway and current traffic conditions. Recent measurements carried out on behalf of the RTA show that CURRENT NOISE LEVELS are well over both the RTA and the EPA acceptable limits. The road past Sapphire Apartments has recently been resealed to try and reduce tyre noise although it has little effect on trucks. Residents have recently made a number of written complaints to the RTA on this subject. There is no stated provision in the upgrade program for any form of noise abatement structure. There is no allocation of space to put such a structure in place. This is quite unacceptable given the projected increase in traffic volumes.

The current new highway design proposal effectively fragments the Sapphire community, dividing it into segments with no local access between segments. No provision has been made for any form of reasonable local access from the Sapphire Apartments to the local convenience store situated at the Sapphire Service Station. The proposed plan requires "centre of the road manoeuvres" which are already quite dangerous in peak hour traffic.

The "at-grade intersections" 'seagull-style' (center of the road) proposed at Nautilus/Pelican and Sapphire Crescent are time consuming (and therefore dangerous). Waiting in the centre of the road (sometimes for up to five minutes) in morning and evening peak hour periods, even under the current traffic conditions is "hair raising" to say the least! The life of "at-grade intersections" is likely to be very limited. They will either become unusable due to increasing traffic volumes, or will be closed following some serious accident. They will have no place in any "six lane" highway. It is beyond belief, that any new highway with the potential to handle future traffic volumes of Freeway proportions be initially designed with 'seagull-style' "at-grade intersections".

Solution

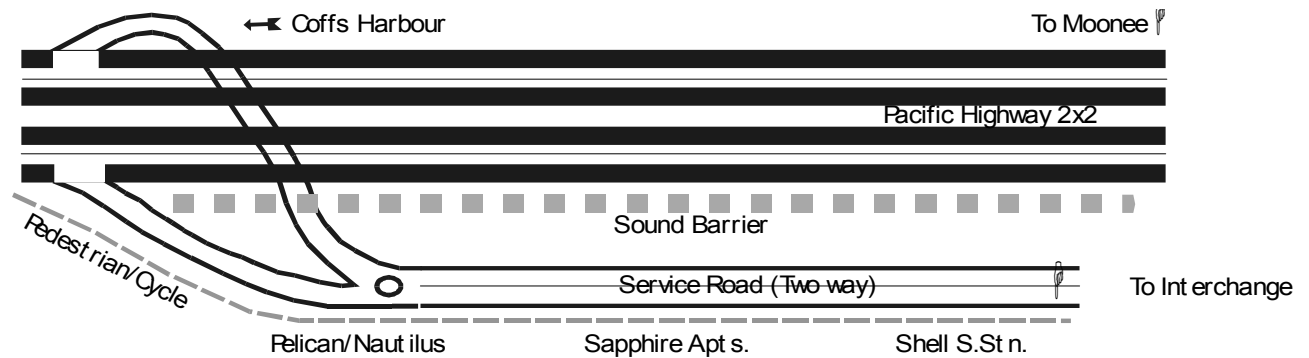
We propose the Highway Upgrade address these issues in the following way ...

Two new lanes to be developed to the west of the existing highway leaving a portion of the old highway as a TWO WAY access service road with a pedestrian/cycle lane on its eastern side. This Service Road should run from the entrance of Pelican/Nautilus Resorts north, past the Shell Service Station/Convenience Store, to the proposed highway interchange situated at Gaudrons Road. This has the benefit of re-uniting what was the village of sapphire. It has the additional benefit of providing space for suitable noise abatement structures.

Access to the northern end of this Service Road (to and from the Highway), by southbound traffic from Moonee could be at the proposed interchange. The southern end of this Service Road would have special access. Access from the Service Road to the Highway, for city centre bound traffic, could be from a merge lane and access from the Highway to the Service Road, for northbound traffic from the city centre, is a proposed underpass/overpass fed with a left-lane exit.

A study of the topography just to the north of the Pelican and Nautilus Resorts entrance will indicate an underpass for local traffic would be quite feasible. The topography would also suit the building of an overpass. The choice would be a matter of cost and convenience.

Much of the additional land required for this proposal is already held by the RTA or is local road reserve.



We ask that the Committee consider this special case and hopefully recommend that any new highway design incorporate an adequate local service road to by-pass the Sapphire Strangulation and link the Sapphire community with a road safe for local traffic.

Yours faithfully,
 R. James Browne
 Chairman Owners Corporation
 Sapphire Beachfront Apartments
 Member for South Sapphire, of Highway Community Focus Group.

Attachment_1: