

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES: COFFS HARBOUR

Organisation:

Name: Mr John Langhorn

Telephone:

Date Received: 16/12/2005

Subject:

Summary

John Ewin Langhorn.

The Director,
General Purpose Standing Committee No.4,
Legislative Council,
Parliament House,
Macquarie Street,
Sydney, NSW 2000.

15 December 2005

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re; Pacific Highway Upgrades; Coffs Harbour.
Submission No. 23.

Following my brief submission dated 5 November, I attended the Public Hearing at Coffs Harbour on 21 November and was concerned that the committee should receive such a distorted view of the matters before them. It would appear that the witnesses heard were chosen from those dissatisfied for various reasons with the outcome of the extensive deliberations over the last few years. This is understandable as the rest of the community believes that all relevant issues have been aired and thoroughly investigated and that detail planning of the preferred option is proceeding.

I trust that the attached information will assist you to reach a more balanced understanding of the complex issues involved and, as referred to later, I would be prepared to give evidence to the committee under oath if required.

Yours sincerely,

John E Langhorn.

Personal information.

In 1998 I retired after some 50 years in the construction industries including being General Manager of a group of commercial and industrial builders and developers in south west Sydney and a commercial arbitrator. Whilst working for an international civil engineering company I was involved with the design and/or construction of roads, bridges etc. for the DMR, as it then was, and others.

I chose to live in the Bucca Valley rather than on the coast as I prefer the rural atmosphere and life style rather than the hustle and bustle of the coastal strip. My son and his partner own a local commercial and domestic building company (Centenary Constructions Pty Ltd). He lives with his family in Emerald Beach and my daughter, who is the Company office manager, lives in Boambee.

My three grand-daughters travel by school bus from Emerald Beach to Sandy Beach on a daily basis.

Amongst other voluntary work, I am president of the Bucca Rural Fire Service.

Referring to transcript of GPSC No. 4 meeting of 21 November 2005.

P.35. **BRUCE ALXANDER SCANLON**, *Sapphire to Woolgoolga Community Focus Group representative.*

This is at least misleading. There is not, and never was, such a group. There was a Sapphire to Moonee Group and a Moonee to Woolgoolga Group. Mr. Scanlon and I were both members of the latter. Once the preferred route was announced these were re-organised into a Sapphire to Sandy Beach Group and an Option “E” by-pass of Woolgoolga Group. Mr. Scanlon and Mr. Moody remain members of the latter whilst I moved to the former as the residents of Bucca Valley are not directly affected by the by-pass. Mr. Scanlon may “represent” the Woolgoolga group which is made up of essentially Woolgoolga residents. He most certainly does not represent the other Group and his views are definitely not shared by them (for examples refer to the minutes of the CFG meetings and joint group meetings).

P.35. *As far as the community consultation process by the RTA is concerned, there is a view that there has been none. and
The facilitator has continually shown bias toward the RTA . .*

These views are not shared by myself and other CFG members. The comments by Mr. Scanlon and Mr. Moody in support of these views are distorted in the extreme and before any weight is given to them they should be checked against the minutes of the various CFG meetings. Notice should also be taken of the Value Management workshop held in August 2004 when, after a full day of detailed discussion and evaluation by a diverse group of attendees, consensus was reached by all except Messrs Moody and Scanlon.

P.36. **Mr. Moody** *this enquiry; it is most welcome to the people of Coffs Harbour.*

As mentioned in my previous submission, the residents of Bucca Valley and, I would suggest, a majority of the residents of Coffs Harbour and environs (with the exception of most Woolgoolga residents but by no means all) are fed up with the continuing delays and simply want the highway upgraded to a safe dual carriageway as soon as possible. We see this present process as just one more delay. I would point out here that most of the delays have been caused by a noisy minority who keep coming up with outlandish suggestions which are then investigated and subsequently found to be not feasible.

P.36. . . . *using at-grade protected intersections . . .*

Following the last meeting of the Sapphire to Sandy Beach CFG I called a meeting of residents of Bucca Valley to discuss the progress to date. The CFG members and the residents were almost unanimously against at-grade (commonly called seagull) intersections and called for the RTA to provide grade separated intersections wherever possible with connecting roads where applicable. I am particularly concerned with the dangerous Emerald Beach and Sandy Beach intersections which are traversed daily by school buses (with my grand-daughters on board) and these concerns are shared by others.

P.37. *CHAIR: . . . can I ask you do all members of the focus group agree with the views that you have put before the Committee today in relation to the consultation process?*

Mr. SCANLON: . . . have had 100 per cent agreement – some more strongly than I . .

at that point I interjected from the floor and said “that is not so.” Mr. Scanlon then said *of the present CFG, we are talking about.*

I have already addressed this question but would point out that without my interjection and submission Mr. Scanlon would have left the Committee with the impression that 100 per cent of the Sapphire to Woolgoolga CFG members are in agreement with his expressed views! That is much more than misleading.

P.38. Mr. Scanlon then refers to *a number of the CFG members met independently . . . Most of them had the same views that I have expressed today.*

As only those members who shared his views were invited then the outcome is not surprising. I was not invited.

P.39. *CHAIR: . . . just a classic snow job. Would that be a fair description?*

I trust that a thorough investigation of the allegations made by Messrs Scanlon and Moody will dispel this assumption. In that regard I would be willing to give evidence to the Committee under oath if required.

P.39. **Mr. SCANLON:** . . . However, at a later stage during the process, a vacancy occurred and the RTA did appoint an individual – I use the word “individual” – to the CFG who apparently did not represent any community or any broad spectrum of the community, other than himself. Also his property was also in line with one of the options that the RTA did not like and subsequently rejected.

I am the individual Mr. Scanlon is referring to and would welcome the opportunity to reply in detail to his statement before the Committee. In short;-

When option “A” was added to those being considered, some residents of Bucca Valley asked me to represent them on the Woolgoolga CFG as it would be detrimental to the Valley. Mr. Scanlon is well aware of that and of our objections to option “A”. He was also present at CFG meeting No. 5 on 22 May 2002 when Andrew Smith introduced me as “being brought in as a representative for the Bucca community.”

I would like to know the reasons behind Mr. Scanlon’s reference to my property as “being in line with one of the options . . . “

Conclusion. Notwithstanding the statements of the Mayor, it is our opinion that all relevant issues have been adequately aired and that further overviews are unnecessary. We believe that the highway is dangerous now and will become more dangerous as development proceeds and we support in general the statement of Mr. Hartsuyker at page 20 in regard to the upgrade of the highway from Sapphire to Woolgoolga “*It needs to be rapidly escalated up the priority list. It needs to be addressed now. . . .* “

Thank you.

John E Langhorn.