

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

Organisation:

Name: Mrs Donna Jarrett

Telephone:

Date Received: 19/08/2005

Subject:

Summary

Parliamentary Council
GENERAL PURPOSE
STANDING COMMITTEES

19 AUG 2005

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To: Committee into Pacific Highway Inquiry Fax: 02-92303416

From: Gary & Donna Jarrett Date: 19/8/2005

Re: Submission Pages: This page plus 4 to follow

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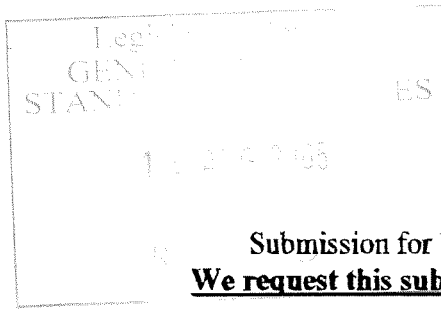
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Please find as follows our submission for the parliamentary inquiry into the Pacific Highway

Upgrade. Please acknowledge receipt.

Sincerely,

Donna Jarrett



Submission for Inquiry into Pacific Highway Upgrades
We request this submission be kept CONFIDENTIAL please

My name is Donna Jarrett and I am writing this submission on behalf of my husband, Gary, and his parents, Kevin and Edna Jarrett. Our farm is located at

It is 330 acres in total area and part of this farm has been in the family since 1919. Both Gary and Kevin have never lived anywhere else.

Our occupations are beef farmers, auctioneers and commission cattle buyers. We run cows with calves and buy store cows to fatten and sell on the export market. Between Kevin and Gary, this family also agist cattle on nine other properties within the study area and six separate properties on the fringe of the study area.

Arguments in relation to Parliamentary Inquiry

I (a) Reasons for expanding the study area.

In 1997 the RTA went through this same process to find a suitable route between the newly constructed Bangalow Bypass and Ewingsdale. In 1998 a preferred route (being Option B) was announced and an EIS prepared and released in September 1999. This is the upgrade we were led to believe would occur. Our business and commitment to this area has grown because we believed we would not be affected by the proposed highway upgrade between Bangalow and St Helena. After Yelgun to Chinderah was completed and b-doubles were illegally allowed onto the Pacific Highway (without any community consultation), there was considerable impact on peoples lives and amenity. The Northern Pacific Noise Task Force was formed to address the impact of noise on people living alongside the highway due to the increase in traffic – namely b-doubles. This group lobbied the RTA to look at another alignment through St Helena in the hope of alleviating their noise issues. Our home is 1 ½ km away from the highway and as such has no significant noise issues and we were therefore unaware of this lobbying. It seems unfair that people who have chosen to live on the highway can lobby to send the highway away from their doorstep and be successful in doing so. In reality, the highway past Ewingsdale will remain at exactly the same place and therefore will not address this situation for Ewingsdale residents at all.

I(b) Level of upgrade proposed for this section

The destruction caused by an upgrade to the level proposed in the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale section of the Pacific Highway will be catastrophic to this area. It is not in dispute that the highway in this area is in urgent need of upgrading to dual carriageway. However, this upgrade should be restricted to the existing highway corridor so as to minimize the impact on the extremely precious resources of this area, that being its highly valuable agricultural land and the visual and social qualities of this area that make it unique as a holiday destination and for quality of lifestyle. Having lived in this area all our lives, the changes we have seen occur over the years has been dramatic and something that no one can stop. However, the effects such a large upgrade would have on land anywhere other than on the existing highway route would mean disaster for this area in agricultural terms and in terms of its natural beauty. This is an area under increasing pressure from urban development and we were hopeful the legislation being put forward on the Farmland Protection Policy would allow farms to remain in useable sizes for future generations. A highway anywhere else but the existing corridor would render many of the farms in this area useless.

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1 (c) Impact on Agriculture

Our land has recently been declared regionally significant farmland. It is the centre of our entire cattle trading operations and the yards on St Helena Road (under which the proposed tunnel and highway run) are also central to Gary's auctioneering business. Not any part of Kevin's property has ever been sold off for profit or gain. This family has held onto its' property and expanded it where possible in order to increase our farming opportunities in this area. It appears that because we have consolidated this prime agricultural land into large holdings (for this area) that the RTA view this as an unencumbered route for a new highway. This is an unfair outcome to a family who have shown genuine commitment and support to the community of Bangalow for four generations.

At this stage the RTA have only one option beside the existing highway, that being a tunnel and road running the entire length of our property and dividing it in two. Not only do we stand to lose a considerable amount of land from this farm, but our nine agistment paddocks within the study area are also at risk of division and depending on where the road goes our stock numbers may have to decrease considerably because of this loss of land. This will have considerable economic impact on our businesses and the ability of our children to have a future in farming in this area. We would be forced to relocate our business operations to another area as there is no where in this shire that we can replace the acreage we have accumulated here and in particular on this very fertile, drought proof ridgeline.

1(e) The impact of b-doubles and interstate heavy transport

The effect the b-doubles and interstate heavy transport has had on our area since Yelgun to Chinderah was opened has been huge. As previously stated, the impact on people living directly along the highway was so great that a noise task force was formed to help deal with their noise issues. As we understand, the upgrade proposed for the Bangalow to Ewingsdale section was designed before the b-doubles were allowed on this highway. It was designed as an upgrade suitable for regional and tourist traffic, which is the classification this road carries. The RTA reports that 70% of the long distance freight traffic along the North Coast Highway is interstate freight and as such has no direct benefit to the local residents and the rest of the drivers using this road. Is it then fair that some of the nations' best agricultural land and one of its most popular tourist destinations is sacrificed for the sake of an interstate freight route. These trucks should be relegated back to the New England Highway, the highway designated for interstate freight. It seems ridiculous to have a national freight route running through the highly populated and highly scenic route of the Pacific Highway, when towns west of the divide are crying out for development and infrastructure to help their regions grow.

3 Any other related matters

The process we have had to endure to date has been extremely flawed and leaves us with little confidence in the RTA.

On 1st November, 2004, we were approached by Arup consultants showing us a map with the proposed tunnel and a road running through our property and asking if they could come onto our property to look at flora and fauna. As we were unsure of our rights, we showed them onto the property. They had no letters of introduction, left no

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business cards and there had been no public announcements made regarding the upgrade. We were extremely upset and in shock.

On 3rd November I rang Arup requesting a copy of the map we had seen and after some delays, was sent a study area map. I again rang Arup requesting the map I had seen and was told we should not have seen that map and that only the RTA could release that map to us. We were advised to ring the RTA requesting maps in relation to Option B but not to tell them we had seen the map with the tunnel as it would get things off to a bad start. As at this stage we had no reason not to trust the advice we were given, we did this. The RTA told us there were no maps, no tunnels and no options – and of course we knew this to be otherwise.

At the information meeting on the 12th November when I raised the matter of a map and a tunnel, we were told that the RTA and the community were all at the same stage ie that they had no maps, no tunnels or options and it was all up for investigation. One Arup consultant was noticed rolling her eyes to another Arup consultant as I was speaking. This same consultant then spoke very rudely to me at the information session on the 15th November when I again raised the subject of the map we had seen. On the 15th November a man was found wandering around one of our back paddocks trying to gain access to a neighbours' property to set up satellite markers. He had no letters of introduction or business cards. Gary helped him to find his way. On the 16th November a large coach full of people stopped in front of our property, disembarked and spent 10-15 minutes looking over our property in the direction of the tunnel and map we had seen. We were not told who they were or that they were coming. We later found out this was a focus group meeting organized by the RTA. At this stage, only weeks into the investigation, we had already seen a map with a road and were told it didn't exist, and had been treated disrespectfully and felt we had been lied to about the RTA's intentions for our property. How then are we to have confidence in the community consultation process that the RTA is meant to implement when it appears to us they knew where they were going even before any public announcements were made?

Archaeologists also came onto our land unannounced, without letters of introduction or business cards. It was only when the geologists came and followed proper procedures that we were made aware of how we should have been approached in the earlier incidents. They were very professional in their approach to us and they made us aware of our rights.

On 22nd July, the Community Liaison Group was shown options of proposed routes for the highway upgrade. They were released to them on a confidential basis. These people are our elected representatives and are there to consult with the wider community. If they cannot tell us where the options go, then how is the community to be consulted on where the road is best to go - another reason to have a lack of trust and faith in the process. It appeared to us from a very early stage that the RTA came into this project with a proposal and an option, and that community consultation is not genuine. There has been extreme anxiety and pressure put on the community resulting in division in a community that is normally very united.

Summary

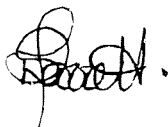
In summary, we don't believe an upgrade designed to cater for interstate traffic is appropriate for our area. We live in an area where the community has taken great pride

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in preserving its' natural beauty and where the sheer quality of the soil allows a very diverse range of agricultural activity to take place. An upgrade of the Pacific Highway is a must but, without mixing heavy, interstate freight traffic, this can be achieved along the existing highway corridor, minimizing the effects on heavily populated coastal communities, preserving a vast array of agricultural industry, and preserving the scenic value of the eastern coast line for future generations to enjoy.

We thank you for giving us the opportunity to put forward our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donna Jarrett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Donna Jarrett
On behalf of the Jarrett Family