

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

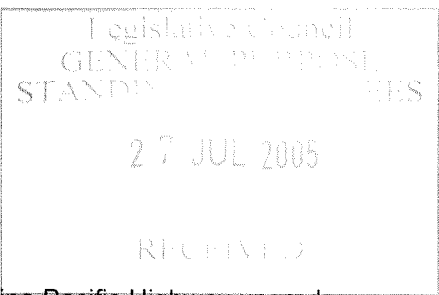
Organisation:

Name: Mr Raymond Collyer

Date Received: 27/07/2005

Subject:

Summary

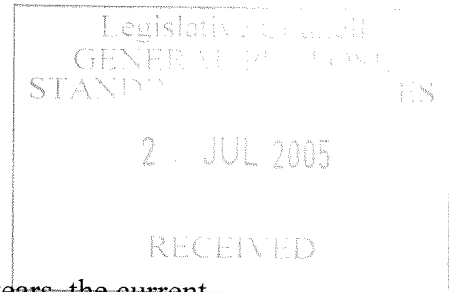


I am a member of the Community Liasion Group for the Woodburn to Ballina Pacific Highway upgrade. During the course of numerous meetings, a number of potential routes have been identified, and as would be expected in such an undertaking it is enedivable that there would be an impact on a vast array of environemental,ecological and social issues. When a final route is selected, there will no doubt be an impact on someone and some thing, it is imperative that this impact be a minimal as possible and at the same time achieve a suitable outcome..

SUBMISSION TO GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING
COMMITTEE No 4
INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE
WOODBURN TO BALLINA SECTION.

The Chair
Hon Jenny Gardiner MLC

Dear Madam.



With the inevitable increase in traffic volume in coming years, the current configuration and location of the Pacific highway must be addressed to cope with this impact. A recent news story indicated that the RTA is conducting feasibility studies into the introduction of B triples onto NSW roads. In the current construction standard of the Pacific Highway north of Grafton to Brunswick Heads this would be sheer madness. Therefore an improved and relocated Pacific Highway is imperative.

I wish to address the following issues in regard to the Woodburn to Ballina section.

IMPACT ON PRIME AGRICULTURAL LAND.

The area between Woodburn and Ballina is a diverse area of prime agricultural land, with areas of heath and some hilly country to the western edges of the study area. The major agricultural pursuits have been beef and cattle production and more recently Sugar cane and Soybean crops predominate. The heath country is mostly National Parks with some private ownership.

Several possible routes have been identified within the study area that bisect vast amounts of this prime land with the potential impact on the smaller holdings in the area to render them un viable. This would have a major detrimental impact on the Sugar industry in general and devastate individual property holders in particular. There is an alternate route that has been identified which has minimal impact on agricultural land and utilises already established tracks and fire breaks within National Parks. This route has been identified within the Community Liaison Group as "The Flood Free Route"

IMPACT ON FLOODING IN THE MID RICHMOND AREA.

The North Coast of NSW is renown for flood events on a reasonably regular basis. Some of these flood events have devastating effects on local communities and disrupt the free flow of traffic on a regular basis.

I have had considerable experience in the State Emergency Service and the NSW Rural Fire Service in both Flood and Fire Events since 1974 and am well versed in the effects of both on the population.

All the routes that have been identified to date with the exception of " The Flood Free Route" will have varying impact on flooding and water retention, diversion on a vast area of the Mid and Lower Richmond river communities. In major flooding events the

water from Lismore, Kyogle, Casino converge on the lower river area in the Woodburn area flooding literally thousands of hectares of land for up to two weeks, with the closure of local roads and for shorter periods the current Pacific Highway. To construct a new highway (Which is effectively a levee bank) any where on the vast flood plane is courting a disaster with the water retention possibilities extending and increasing flood heights isolating communities for a longer period and placing a greater strain on emergency services to service these communities. The number of minor crossings and drains would increase construction costs and one identified route (2F) to the East of the existing highway traverses sugar cane land that in times of even heavy rain events has up to a meter of water in places and proposes to cross the Richmond River East of Wardell at what is possible the widest section of the Richmond river.

Where a route that traverses mostly high ground and would offer a completely flood free route with minimal impact on the environment is identified, it is ludicrous to consider entering a known flood plane and place any obstruction, however minor that will have an adverse impact on water flow.

IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES AT BROADWATER, WOODBURN AND WARDELL.

The Highway currently traverses all three communities, with an adverse impact on individuals. The increase over recent years of traffic volume and in particular the size and number of heavy transport, in particular B doubles has eroded the quality of life of all residents who live within the current Pacific Highway corridor. The relocation of the highway to by pass these communities is imperative and with the forecast doubling of Highway traffic in coming years the case becomes more urgent.

There may be some impact on local business owners, in particular petrol stations with the loss of highway through traffic, but as has been noted in other communities the loss of through traffic has given the towns a new identity and the potential to bloom in another directions and attract travellers to a more peaceful tranquil setting without the constant roar of vehicles meters away. I offer Bangalow in northern NSW as a prime example of a small town reborn without the highway passing through the centre.

The small Villages of Broadwater, Wardell and Woodburn all have incredible potential to offer travellers a welcome, peaceful and QUITE respite from their travels when the highway is diverted.

OTHER MATTERS.

In conclusion, I am a member of the Community Liaison Committee for the Woodburn to Ballina Section of the highway upgrade. As a committee we have identified several routes and these have subsequently gone on public display. Following the initial selection of routes several members have investigated alternates, which with extensive local knowledge in regard to flood and fire impact of the area have identified what we have come to identify as the "FLOOD FREE ROUTE". This proposal traverses as has been stated above high ground to Ballina which offers all that a major transport route should offer where as some of the other proposals would require extensive construction problems to offer the same unhindered progress. One river crossing is required and the impact on agricultural lands is minimal where some of the other proposals will have major impact on agricultural land, dwellings and in one instance an entire caravan park.

The choice of a route for the Pacific Highway upgrade, and I refer specifically to the Woodburn to Ballina section, will be a decision that will impact on the Communities and individuals of the area for eternity. We will not be called on to consider a similar project in the foreseeable future if ever. I hope the decision that is made will give future generations a sense of pride that we got it right and we didn't consider the sacrifice of a few hectares of National Park more important than the future and livelihood of individuals and families.

I thank you for the opportunity to submit my thoughts

Ray Collyer