

**Submission
No 55**

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES: COFFS HARBOUR

Organisation:

Name: Mr & Mrs Paul & Anne Commerford

Telephone:

Date Received: 11/11/2005

Subject:

Summary

Paul & Anne Commerford

11 November 2005

Director of General Purpose Standing Committee No 4
Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to request that the Wells Crossing to Iluka Road upgrade of the Pacific Highway be included in the Parliamentary Enquiry into the RTA (North Coast & Mid North Coast). Our concerns are similar to the people of Woodburn, Tintenbar, Ewingsdale and Coffs Harbour.

Our property at Gardiners Road, James Creek is within the study area for the Wells Crossing to Iluka Road upgrade of the Pacific Highway. Option C Green cuts a swathe through the middle of our farm and passes within 10 metres of our house.

We were notified by mail on 28th October 2005 of the possibility that our property may be affected by this option. We were given until 18th November to make a submission. This equates to a period of 24 days. We spent the first 7 days in shock. We then started to source information to prepare our submission. 24 days is simply not enough time to prepare a submission.

The information provided to us in the mail by the RTA was a 12 page marketing tool. The letter that accompanied this information stated the following:

“Members of the study team are available to meet with you. To arrange a meeting please call the project information line (freecall) on 1800 557673. We can either visit you at your property or you can make an appointment to meet us at the following locations”

My neighbour phoned on behalf of 4 landholders, to request a visit to our properties. She was told by the RTA representative that it was physically impossible to meet with us on our property and that our only option was to attend one of the locations. We then made an appointment and met with a representative of RTA and SKM on 1 November 2005. This matter was raised at that meeting. Diana Loges, Project Development Manager for the RTA was present at this meeting. She apologized on behalf of the RTA for this mis-information and advised that members of the study team would come to our

property on requests. This clearly shows a level of incompetency within the RTA.

Also present at this meeting was Paul Robilliard, a representative of Sinclair Knight Merz, the company engaged by the RTA to complete the study. Our first question at this meeting was to request an extension to the submission date. We were advised that this would be noted, however, it was not likely that it could be changed.

We also queried how traffic flow information was gathered. We were told that a vehicle was captured at Iluka Road and if it had not passed Wells Crossing within one hour, then it was deemed that this vehicle had stopped or turned off the highway at some point. This vehicle was then classed as local traffic. We have an anomaly in our area where 68% of the vehicles that currently use the Pacific Highway are local traffic. When the new highway is completed only 32% of the existing traffic will use it. The remaining 68% of the traffic will still be using a sub-standard road that will be passed on to Clarence Valley Council to maintain. This is hardly a satisfactory solution for the local traffic.

We also asked if a representative of SKM had met with Clarence Valley Council. We were told that SKM had met with Council staff and obtained a copy of Council's Settlement Strategy. This strategy was compiled for the Maclean Shire Council in 1998 and published in 1999. The Maclean Shire Council underwent amalgamation in 2004 and is now part of the Clarence Valley Council. This information from 1998 is what SKM have based their findings on. This information is outdated and inaccurate.

I believe that the RTA have exhibited quite serious levels of incompetency in their handling of the consultation process with the community. I also believe that the RTA have not listened to the community nor taken heed of their knowledge.

I believe that SKM have been working with outdated, incorrect data. I also believe that SKM have merely produced a marketing tool by releasing their report. It is flawed, incomprehensive and incoherent.

I agree that many parts of the Pacific Highway are dangerous and to travel on it is to place your life at risk. The Pacific Highway definitely requires upgrading and lives need to be saved, however the RTA are placing other lives at risk by the methods they have employed to communicate with landholders and stakeholders.

Kindly consider this request to include the Wells Crossing to Iluka upgrade in your Parliamentary enquiry.