

**Submission  
No 33**

## **INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES**

**Organisation:**

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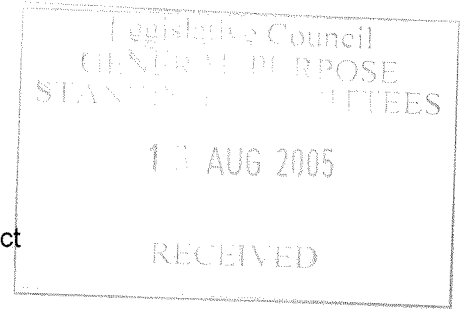
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**Subject:**

**Summary**

**From:**  
**To:** <gpscno4@parliament.nsw.gov.au>  
**Date:** Sat, Aug 13, 2005 10:32 am  
**Subject:** Inquiry into Pacific Highway Upgrades- Submission



The email sent earlier this morning (9.45am, 13/08/05) showed our incorrect email address. We have now rectified it on our submission and enclose a copy of our submission incorporating the correct email address.

#### SUBMISSION

#### INQUIRY INTO THE PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

#### SUBMITTED BY:

Keith & Robyn BAUER

#### INTRODUCTION

We are both residents within the original and expanded study areas for the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale upgrade (T2E). We have lived immediately adjacent to the steepest section of the Pacific Highway on St Helena hill for over 25years. Having travelled this section of highway up to six times daily for over 20years we are acutely aware of the safety, social and environmental impacts that the significant growth in traffic (including road freight) is having on the North Coast.

We have always supported a reduction in RTA's design criteria for the proposed highway upgrade through the North Coast region and the utilization of the existing highway corridor for any such upgrade. We maintain the view that this will provide a more socially equitable outcome and will achieve a better balance in protecting the region's unique natural beauty and prime agricultural lands.

#### TINTENBAR TO EWINGSDALE:

#### REASONS FOR EXPANDING THE STUDY AREA

We attended all three Community Information Sessions held by the RTA in November/December 2004. Although we never supported the suggestions made to expand the original study area, nevertheless it must be recognized that there was considerable community support displayed at these CIS meetings requesting the RTA to investigate the feasibility of expanding the study area in order to consider other corridor possibilities. There was also considerable support for expanding the study area generated during meetings of the original RTA Community Liaison Group. Various meetings facilitated by the Bangalow Community Alliance also displayed strong support for expanding the study area.

In conclusion although we stress we did not and do not support the move to expand the study area, it is not correct to say the decision to consider expanding the study area was flawed or did not consider community input.

The Ballina Bypass to the south and the Bangalow to St Helena section to the north have previously undergone extensive studies and already have preferred routes determined. The decision to now place both of these upgrades on hold has resulted in unnecessary uncertainty to residents and businesses. The decision also ignores strong and widespread community support for the Bangalow-St Helena upgrade to proceed along the existing highway corridor. Further delays caused by now considering routes outside the existing highway corridor will significantly contribute to a reduction in safety standards as

the use of the highway continues to increase beyond its capacity.

#### ROAD SAFETY - TINTENBAR TO EWINGSDALE

The present mix of road freight of which 70% is interstate/through freight (including B-doubles) with tourist and local traffic is dangerous and has increased exponentially as a result of other upgrades becoming operational. The RTA has been strongly urged by the local community to address serious safety blackspots along the T2E existing highway by reducing speed limits to 80km/h and employing speed cameras and increased compliance patrols.

The capacity of T2E to safely deal with the mix of freight and tourist traffic has failed badly. This has occurred as a direct result of the decision to approve B-double use of this section of highway as well as the transfer of interstate freight from the New England Highway following the Yelgun-Chinderah upgrade becoming operational.

One of the T2E upgrade objectives is to:

"Where possible, improve safety of travel on the existing Pacific Highway (through the study area) until the proposed upgrade is operational" (T2E Pacific Highway Program and Project Objectives).

Unfortunately the RTA has proven to be reluctant to reduce speed limits along this section of highway. The speed limit for the whole of the highway between Bangalow and Ewingsdale must be reduced to 80km/h and it needs to be done urgently. To limit traffic to 80 km/h on one bad bend on the St Helena hill while there exist many other black-spots along this section is quite simply irresponsible and is playing Russian Roulette with road users' lives.

#### ROAD FREIGHT (INCLUDING B-DOUBLES)

The dramatic increase in Pacific Highway road freight following the opening of the Chinderah-Yelgun upgrade has only served to considerably reduce safety on the remaining two-thirds of the highway yet to be upgraded.

The decision by the RTA to allow B-doubles to mix with large volumes of other traffic on non-upgraded sections of the Pacific Highway was irresponsible and outside its own guidelines. This decision has also significantly eroded road safety on non-upgraded sections and needs to be reversed until the remaining sections are upgraded.

#### STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PLANS

The current development of the Pacific Highway as a single corridor for road freight is contrary to the strategies outlined in the Australian Government Auslink White Paper. Any upgrade proposals for the Pacific Highway must comply with Auslink's strategic planning framework.

We support Auslink's objectives to develop a comprehensive transport strategy to incorporate rail, air, sea and road. Incentives need to be provided to business to encourage use of rail and sea and promote decentralisation of bulk distribution warehouses to regional areas. Such initiatives reduce demand placed on road infrastructure and assist in developing regional economies.

#### JUST TERMS COMPENSATION ACT

The application of this act is only applicable when planning approval is given to an upgrade proposal. The time delays between announcing a preferred route and seeking and receiving planning approval are considerable. It is entirely inappropriate to allow unnecessary hardship to be endured beyond the announcement of a preferred route.

In addition, compensation is only considered in respect of direct impact and ignores the substantial losses attributable to the indirect negative impacts

of such planning decisions.

The upgrade of the pacific highway is a substantial project and directly and indirectly impacts on many property owners and businesses. If the wider community demands improved road infrastructure it is unfair to expect individuals to pay more than their community share of the cost of such improvements. The Just Terms Compensation Act urgently needs review to enable it to adequately and more fairly address the consequences of such large scale planning for upgrading of public infrastructure.

Keith & Robyn BAUER  
12 August 2005

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