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24th November 2015

Dear Sir / Madam,

I do not believe that adequate provision has been made to minimise the adverse impacts of the Albion Park Bypass on agriculture – particularly at “Meadowview” – a dairy farm on the Illawarra highway located south-west of the current Princes Highway/Illawarra highway intersection.

“Meadowview” is a highly productive dairy farming operation. While the bypass will impact on Meadowview in many ways, I am particularly concerned by two aspects of RMS’s proposal;

1. The proposed route (opposite the Illawarra Highway/Croome Lane intersection) will take the limited amount of high ground at Meadowview and include the demolition of the farm’s sheds, milking shed, feedpad and the farmer’s family home. The location of this type of farm infrastructure on high ground is vital to the productivity and viability of a dairy farm. Much of Meadowview is vulnerable to flooding and unsuitable for this type of farm infrastructure. I encourage RMS to revise the route of the bypass to enable the preservation of the limited amount of high ground available for dairying at “Meadowview” – the current location of the farm sheds, milking infrastructure, feed pad and family home is vital as these buildings cannot be moved to lower lying land that is vulnerable to flooding. To proceed with the current proposed route would result in an unreasonable adverse impact on agriculture and dairying.
2. “Meadowview” is vulnerable to flooding. The Environmental Impact Statement states that the Illawarra Highway at Frazers Creek floods seven times per year. The bypass in its current plan is likely to decrease the drainage of flood waters from Meadowview towards the Macquarie Rivulet, resulting in paddocks that retain excess water for longer. Excessively wet paddocks cannot be grazed and this obviously has an adverse impact on a dairy farm. I encourage RMS to increase the use of bridging in the vicinity of Frazers Creek. The bypass should be built in a manner that enables Frazers Creek and surrounding paddocks to continue to drain at their current rates. To build a bypass that inhibits the drainage of flood waters will adversely impact both agriculture and the local environment.

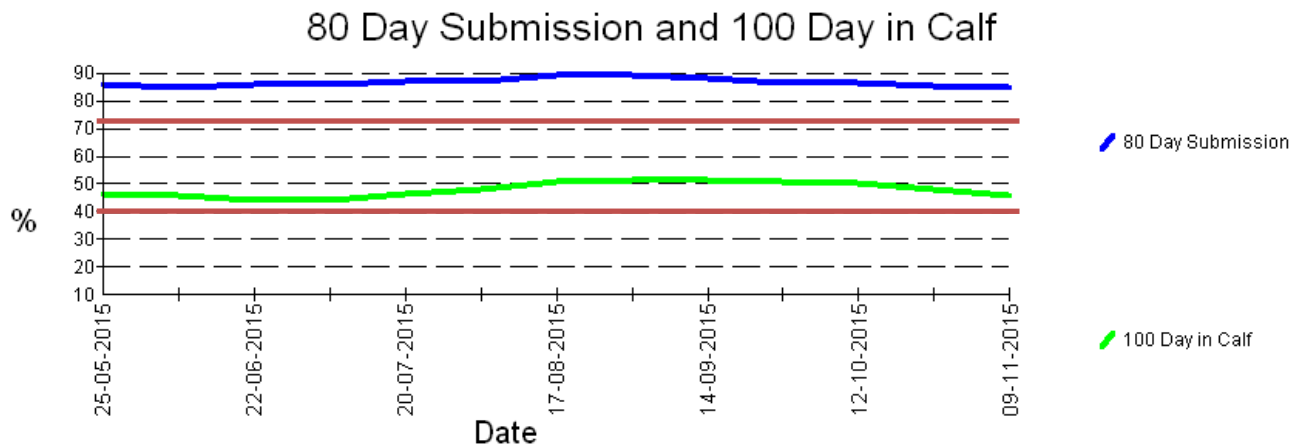
I also believe that the Environmental impact Statement fails to acknowledge the positive role that dairy farmers make to the local environment as custodians of the land that their farming businesses rely on. This is particularly true of Craig and Philip Tate. Although they stock over 1000 head of cattle (of which over 550 are lactating cows), most passers-by would never know the scale of their farming business. The paddocks are aesthetically appealing because the pastures are well-managed, the farm is virtually odourless and Frazers Creek is inhabited by normal aquatic vegetation – which prevents erosion during times of flood. “Meadowview” shows that dairy farms can co-exist positively with a healthy and aesthetically pleasing environment.

The viability of C & P Tate’s dairy farming operation at “Meadowview” is not just about the fate of one dairy farm – “Meadowview” plays a significant role within the NSW dairy industry on a number of levels. As the veterinarian and herd advisor at Meadowview dairy I was in dismay to find out that RMS proposes to demolish the milking facilities and take 67 acres of highly productive land at one of New South Wales’ most efficient dairy farming operations.

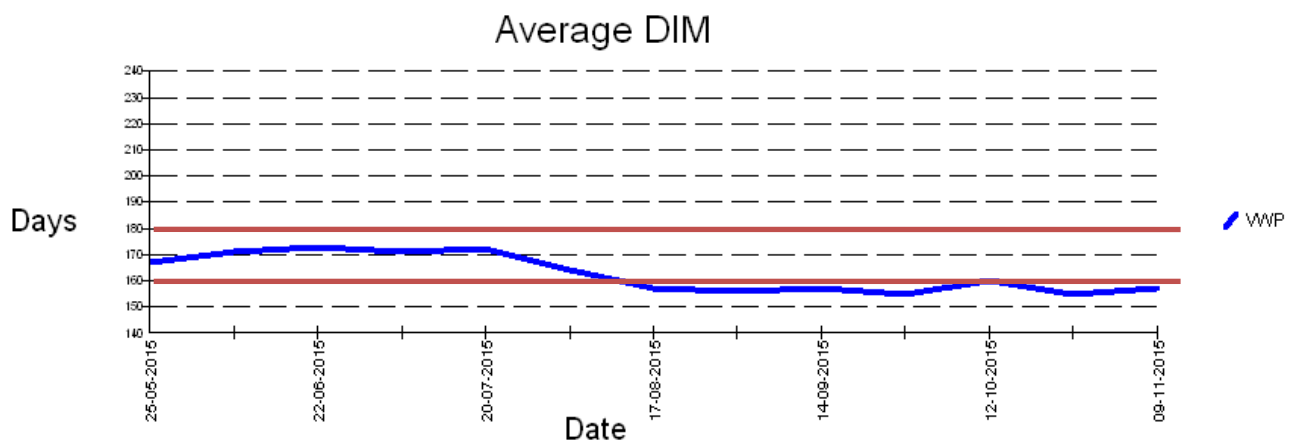
The University of Sydney has provided a veterinary and consultancy service to “Meadowview” dairy for almost 8 years. In that time, “Meadowview” has also provided final year veterinary students with valuable hands-on experience and access to case material.

The University of Sydney currently services 30 dairy farms in New South Wales – all of which strive to be efficient farming operations. My records show that C & P Tate is consistently our most reproductively efficient dairy client. It is for this reason that Craig and Philip Tate’s operation was featured at the 2013 Dairy Research Foundation’s symposium for dairy farmers. By featuring such an efficient business it was hoped that other farmers would learn from “Meadowview” and become inspired to improve the efficiency of their own businesses.

In order for a dairy farming business to produce milk efficiently, reproductive management must also be efficient. Two of the key indices used to measure reproductive efficiency are 80 day submission rate and 100 day in-calf rate. In New South Wales a year-round calving herd should aim to achieve an 80 day submission rate of at least 73% and a 100 day in-calf rate of 40%. Most dairy farmers in NSW fail to meet these targets, yet “Meadowview” consistently performs better. The most recent data I have (09/11/2015) shows that “Meadowview” currently has an 80 day submission rate of 85.1% and a 100 day in calf rate of 46.1%. This is demonstrated in the chart below. I am not personally aware of another year-round calving dairy farm that has a 100 day in calf rate as high as 46.1%.



It is this farm's ability to get cows pregnant early that enables the farm to maintain a "fresh" herd. A "fresh" herd has the ability to produce more milk per cow than a "stale" herd. A "fresh" herd should maintain an Average Days in Milk of between 160 and 180 days. The chart below demonstrates that "Meadowview" consistently achieves this target. In fact, "Meadowview" is currently performing ahead of this target with Average Days in Milk of 157 days.



Located only 100km from Sydney, "Meadowview" is one of the closer dairy farms to Sydney. To my knowledge C & P Tate's operation produces the second largest volume of milk within 150km of Sydney.

There are several reasons why provisions should be made to minimise the adverse impacts of the Albion Park bypass to the "Meadowview" dairy farm:

- C & P Tate's operation is amongst the most efficient dairy farming businesses in NSW, which makes this dairy an important part of the NSW dairy industry.
- In an era in which the number of dairy farms has recently decreased in NSW (a fall from 773 farms in 2012 to 713 farms in 2014), efficient dairies like C & P Tate's play an important role to local food security.
- In an era in which food must be transported greater distances to Sydney, C & P Tate's dairy makes an important contribution to locally sourced milk as the second largest producer of milk within 150km of Sydney.

- C & P Tate's dairy operation has contributed to the education and training of a large number of final year veterinary students, having provided hands-on opportunities and veterinary cases to the university for the past 8 years.
- C & P Tate are good custodians of the land they farm. Pastures are well-managed, the paddocks are aesthetically pleasing, the farm is odourless and Frazers Creek is inhabited by normal aquatic vegetation that is important to the prevention of erosion during times of flood. "Meadowview" is a great example of how agriculture can co-exist with a healthy and aesthetically pleasing environment.

I encourage RMS to make changes to the plans for the Albion Park bypass to provide for minimal adverse impact on agriculture and the ongoing viability of the Meadowview dairy farm. The current RMS plans fail to acknowledge the importance of the limited amount of high ground at Meadowview to agriculture – this high ground should be preserved for dairying. The current RMS plans also fail to address the adverse impact of the bypass on future flood waters at Meadowview – unimpeded drainage of flood waters is important to the productivity of Meadowview.

Yours sincerely,

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