

We wish to register our objection to the North Macksville North Facing Ramps.

From **WC2NH Modification Environmental Assessment_ North Macksville Ramps**
1.3 Benefits of the proposed modification

The proposed modification would provide improvements to the Warrell Creek to Nambucca Heads Pacific Highway upgrade. Benefits of the proposed modification would include:

- Improved connectivity between Macksville and areas to the north, and in particular the proposed modification would provide improved connectivity between Macksville and Nambucca Heads*
- Improved connectivity to Macksville - While Macksville is not identified by Roads and Maritime as a Service Centre, the addition of the proposed modification and appropriate signage would, in conjunction with the Bald Hill Road interchange to the south, allow both northbound and southbound vehicles using the upgraded highway to stop at Macksville more easily*
- Improved utilisation of the upgraded highway between Macksville and the Nambucca Heads interchange by providing north facing ramps at North Macksville*
- Safer and faster travel onto the upgraded highway for Macksville traffic travelling north*
- Improved access to and from Macksville by emergency services and reduced emergency response times*
- Improved heavy vehicle access between the existing highway and Old Coast Road.*

Connectivity - With an interchange at Bald Hill south of Macksville and another interchange at Nambucca Heads the north ramps add little to nothing in terms of improving connectivity. The very high cost of the two ramps is not justified by the any perceived improvement. It also defeats one of the on stated objectives of the Pacific Highway upgrade of separating “through” traffic from “local” traffic.

Service Centre - Macksville is not a service centre as identified by RMS. The Pacific Highway upgrade has provided for a service centre to be established adjacent to the Nambucca Heads interchange. The ramps represent a very expensive duplication of a facility that has already been planned for and probably budgeted for and designed. The North Macksville Ramps have not been a part of the Pacific Highway upgrade and is a very late addition causing extensive delays in construction. Similar arrangements allowing access to sites “off the Pacific Highway” has been more than adequately catered for in other parts of the upgrade without very expensive taxpayers expense, duplication of existing facilities.

Improved Utilisation – How is this in any way relevant. The Pacific Highway upgrade in its “original” design provided very adequately for utilization. It allowed traffic to “pass” Macksville and Nambucca unimpeded; it separated local and “through” traffic; it bypasses a heavily compromised bridge whose operation has exceeded its design and is a serious traffic hazard, particularly for heavy vehicles.

Emergency vehicles will have an easy access without any significant delay via Bald Hill Interchange to the South and Nambucca Heads Interchange to the north. There will not be anywhere near the traffic on the existing Pacific Highway between Macksville & Nambucca allowing easy very fast passage, particularly under lights and sirens if necessary. The ramps will not improve response times significantly when you consider all the actions necessary to access the upgrade (many turns, roundabout, speed changes, U turn, etc). U turns on a multi lane highway with a speed limit of 110 km/hr will significantly increase the danger to the relevant drivers, passengers and possibly patients not to mention the unaware motorists.

Safer and faster travel – This is a little difficult to understand. The ramps will, by their nature allow an opportunity for traffic to merge and separate at varying speeds and different objectives. This will increase the opportunity for minor and very serious accidents. The ramps coupled with a roundabout, merging of “local” and “through” traffic with very different objectives create a recipe for a huge increase in accident rates. For the record the accident rate for the Letitia Close – Old Coast Road intersection for at least the last 22 years is Zero.

Improved heavy vehicle access – Prior to the commencement of construction of the Pacific Highway upgrade the largest vehicles that regularly used the Old Coast Road are the School Bus and the Roadside Rubbish Collection Vehicles. There is the very occasional delivery truck but that is usually a Medium Rigid Truck. Articulated trucks have been very rare. During the construction we have seen the quiet safe Old Coast road devolve into a game of “Russian Roulette”. Traffic is always oversize, dangerous and unpredictable making the road very unsafe. Post construction we had hoped it would return to its pre construction situation. The proposed ramps will allow the maintenance of a situation approaching the traffic we currently now face during construction. We understood the concept that the Pacific Highway was to separate “Local” and “Through” traffic. The proposal of the Ramps appears to make this situation counter intuitive. It will increase significantly the levels of traffic in what was a quiet rural residential area without any real benefit.

From **WC2NH Modification Environmental Assessment_ North Macksville Ramps**
1.4 Project objectives

Specific project objectives were developed for the Warrell Creek to Nambucca Heads upgrade.

These objectives align with and relate to the overall objectives for the wider Pacific Highway

Upgrade Program. These project objectives were reviewed for the proposed modification. The project objectives that are relevant to the proposed modification are:

- Develop solutions for the ultimate grade separation of the Pacific Highway and local road intersections including consolidation of accesses by the use of service roads*
- Provide rest areas within the investigation area*

- *Achieve safe driving conditions on the highway for travel speeds of 110 km/h in rural areas and 80 km/h in urban areas*
- *Have acceptable roadway capacity for traffic volumes 30 years after opening*
- *Develop a dual carriageway road that accommodates all vehicles up to and including B Doubles*
- *Provide acceptable access to properties*
- *Maintain highway access during flood conditions*
- *Integrate input from local communities into the development of the proposal*
- *Provide connections from the upgraded highway to the key centres of Macksville, Nambucca Heads and Urunga*
- *Develop delay management strategies to minimise disruption to local and through traffic and maintain access to affected properties and land during construction*
- *Provide transport infrastructure that is complementary with surrounding land use*
- *Ensure the project outcomes achieve value for money*
- *Develop solutions that facilitate the staged construction of the project.*

Rest Areas – How is this project Objective for the North Macksville Ramps relevant?

Is there a plan to construct a highway rest area near the Old Coast Road?

Traffic will be able to access adequate rest areas under the original plan for the Pacific Highway upgrade by entering / exiting at the Bald Hill or Nambucca Interchanges. In addition we understand that a “service centre” will be established at the Nambucca Interchange. The Ramps represent an unnecessary and very expensive duplication of facilities and a waste of taxpayers money.

Many vehicles currently use the Old Coast Road an unofficial rest stop, dumping their rubbish, parking in the turning lanes. This is unpatrolled by either the Police or the RMS. Residents, particularly Mrs. Judy Woods in her own time, at her own expense, often collected the rubbish. The Nambucca Shire Council, the RMS or anyone else took no responsibility. The police do not stop vehicles from using the turning lanes to park on the highway at the intersection of Old Coast Rd and on occasion use it themselves.

Develop solutions for the ultimate grade separation – How is this even relevant? The Ramps proposed seem to do exactly the opposite of this objective. There already are adequate plans for this with the Bald Hill or Nambucca Interchanges. The Ramps simply create an unnecessary potential point of contact between “local” and “through” traffic to “contact” each other in potentially disastrous ways.

Achieve safe driving – The proposed Ramps will do exactly the opposite of this objective. Remember the accident rate for Letitia Close is Zero. You are proposing the construction of two ramps, with diverging traffic and variable speeds from 110 km/hr down to 60 km/hr, through a roundabout with a school bus and stop occasionally and a T intersection onto the existing Pacific Highway across a seriously compromised bridge that has been the scene of numerous serious truck accidents. Not forgetting the occasional U

turn on a multi lane 110 km/hr highway be “authorized” vehicles (what is to stop “unauthorized” vehicles from making this U turn causing serious risks/accidents?). How is this safer?

- **Develop a dual carriageway** – The addition of the ramps at North Macksville will increase the traffic at Letitia Close. All Ramp traffic and Old Coast Road will now pass by the front of our house. This is a dramatic increase in traffic in an area that has had only minimal local resident traffic. It goes even further to destroy our amenity and our few neighbours without any compensation of even a simple acknowledgement. We believe that the RMS care very little about sensitive receivers”. Our experience throughout this entire process since at least 2003 in a formal sense and 1994 prior to the purchase of our property (at which time the RMS formally RTA told us that they were not going to build the Pacific Highway along the Old Coast Road.

The volume of traffic immediately adjacent to our property will increase greatly along with the higher risk of accidents (Medium risk according to RMS document indicating they expect accidents.) B double trucks will access areas they currently cannot and will continue to use the severely compromised Macksville Bridge, through the town degrading council roads, limiting completely the plans for the redevelopment of Macksville town, concept plans that have been developed and published. In an earlier submission we raised the issue of B triples. This was ignored / dismissed by the RMS et al. I have heard recently that trial of B triples has already occurred. What is the future of this area of transport? It certainly is not in the public interest and will have very serious implications for this and other parts of the reconstruction.

The “development” of the Pacific Highway has influenced Government and public attitude to the use of the road. The New England Highway was the “national” route lauded by government and voted for (at least with their wheels) the heaviest users of the highway – Trucks. When the Burringbar Range was bypassed by the Chinderah – Yelgin section of the Pacific Highway the usage of both roads (New England and Pacific Highway) changed dramatically. Accidents increased on the Pacific Highway; traffic volumes exploded.

Do the towns people of Macksville know and understand that heavy vehicles will continue to have access and usage of the current Pacific Highway and the streets of Macksville? Do they also understand the associated implications?

- **Integrate input from local communities into the development of the proposal** – In reviewing all our correspondence since 2003 we can find little to no clear evidence that SKM, RMS, Pacifico, Nambucca Shire Council, NSW Parliament have taken any serious notice of our plight. The project has destroyed our neighborhood especially with the removal of 9 families and their houses and our amenity. There has been no compensation or acknowledgement of any kind offered to any of the remaining affected residents. The word “consult” has been confused with the word “dictate”.

The total mishandling of the Old Coast Road school bus indicates this very clearly. As far back as 2003 the School bus was mentioned. It was raised regularly in

correspondence and in at least 2 face to face meetings with the Pacifico Traffic managers. The result was the school bus had to stop in the middle of the Old Coast Road to let off the children to wander through the construction traffic to get home (this happened for 2 months!). This was also the case at Mattick Road. There was no attempt to pro actively deal with the problem until we contacted Ms Melinda Pavey's office and a level of political persuasion was applied. This incident, one of child safety clearly indicates that "consulting" as far as the RMS / SKM / Pacifico / et al are concerned is very low on their priority. This "bus fiasco" epitomizes our experience with the consultation process. There has been little regard for affected residents in any real way.

- **Provide connections** – The ramps do nothing to enhance the connections between Macksville – Nambucca and Urunga. There are interchanges south of Macksville, North of Nambucca (including a service centre) and at Urunga. Additional access is unnecessary and a very great waste of taxpayer's money to fulfill a wish that seems to be politically driven at best. There is no demonstrated need and to the best of our knowledge no cost benefit study.

Develop delay management strategies – This exists in the original plan. There is an Interchange south of Macksville, North of Nambucca including the proposed Service Centre. That will allow more than enough "delay management" strategies. It would seem a huge waste of taxpayer's money to duplicate existing facilities.

Provide transport infrastructure - Is the Old Coast Rd Bridge girder/Batch Plant going to become a future industrial site? The current land use (prior to construction) was rural residential as zoned by the Nambucca Shire Council and ignored by the NSW Government, RMS, Pacifico et al. How is this statement in anyway relevant to the construction of ramps at North Macksville? They are not necessary and add little for the extreme cost of their construction.

- **Ensure the project outcomes achieve value for money** - The ramps are a waste of public money. They duplicate existing facilities unnecessarily. Where is the value for money in wasting money on duplicating facilities that have already been incorporated?

- **Develop solutions that facilitate the staged construction of the project.** - How is this statement in any way relevant to the ramps? The North Macksville ramps were never part of the original plan and are likely to cause significant cost blow-outs and possible future litigation if Pacifico and the RMS cannot agree. They were not part of the original tender. They are currently causing delays in construction because the plans have not yet been accepted. Additional land and a home from our neighbours had to be purchased to only weeks after a senior engineer at a Letitia Close meeting vehemently stated that no new land would be acquired now. "Is the left hand not talking to the right hand?"

Additional Points

Under the proposed design all Old Coast Road traffic will now pass by the front of our property vastly increasing the traffic levels that are currently not there. Air / engine brakes will now be used to access an incline, roundabout and transition from 110 km/hr. to 50km/hr, excessively shattering the current peaceful local amenity, particularly at night when it is rarely policed.

Heavy vehicles will access the Letitia Close area. This currently does not occur. The exhaust stacks vented vertically and the high use of engine brakes, as well as “normal” vehicular traffic managing speed changes will significantly increase noise levels to adjacent homes and properties. The accident rate at Letitia Close is and has been zero.

There is a vastly increased risk of accidents that does not exist at the moment (some will be very serious as heavy vehicles will be involved). There seems to be very little policing of heavy vehicles in the Nambucca Area after dark. Heavy vehicles regularly exceed the speed limit, tailgate and intimidate other motorists. The frequency of heavy vehicle travel increases after dark as the RMS traffic inspectors and the NSW Police rarely conduct evening or night operations on a regular basis.

Light spillage from all vehicles managing the grade changes will inevitably flash their light at the existing residences. The street light that will be placed in the centre of the roundabout will definitely increase the levels of light pollution in the area. (Thankfully we had no lighting at night until the Old Coast Rd Batch plant and Site Office was constructed and because it is manned at night there are all lights blasting every night).

When the ramps were first proposed I had a lengthy conversation with the Shire President Ms R. Hoban where she clearly indicated to me that the Shire Council did not want the ramps. The RMS Ramp material indicates otherwise. Someone is not being honest. During the same conversation it was indicated that the ramps were a political decision motivated by only a couple of well-connected community members. We can only go by what we are told and this would appear to be the wrong reason for the ramps. Has there been a Cost / Benefit study conducted? If so, could we please have a copy asap. We have not seen or heard of a study.

The process of the development of the North Macksville ramps and roundabout has the appearance of being a reaction. It was never considered as part of the original upgrade. What are the **REAL** reasons for the ramps?

If it's to prop up the economy of Macksville then it won't. The service centre at Nambucca Heads will draw all the traffic for fuel, food and rest breaks. The RMS's own report does not recognise Macksville as a service centre. The reasons for the ramp have been fabricated to “fit” a justification.

This “consultation” process discriminates against people who are not Internet savvy and do not have a reasonable Internet connection. In addition the process time appears to have been compressed to suit other conflicting priorities. It does not allow a suitable platform to properly examine the cost / benefit of duplicating existing facilities in the form of these expensive ramps.