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The Director – Infrastructure Projects
Department of Planning & Infrastructure
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Letter of Objection to the proposed Princes Hwy Upgrade – Foxground and Berry By-Pass

I write in respect of the current exhibited plan to upgrade the Princes Hwy from Foxground to Berry and wish to formally lodge my objection to the proposal.

My family has continuously occupied and farmed this land since 1894. I am a third generation owner / farmer and custodian of the land. My 2 sons and their family now also assist in the management of the farm.

I believe that the study to date and the route chosen has insufficiently addressed the social, environmental, ecological and economic impacts. Specifically the affects on individual farmers and residents of the area. The current proposal **ruins my farm**, carving it into numerous isolated portions, severely reducing my carrying capacity which allows me to continue to farm and support myself and family. Not to mention the destruction of my home and outbuildings which are currently shown on the plan to be located immediately under Broughton Creek Bridge #3.

As a senior lady, who does not hold a driver's licence, previously relying on my now deceased husband, I now rely on my immediate neighbours for lifts and help when needed. The plan puts an end to this , severely affecting and jeopardising my lifestyle as I will no longer be able to walk to them or call for help when needed. This is a major concern for me, I feel the RMS does not appreciate the impact the fragmentation of my land will cause.

Below is a list of areas that are of most concern to me that need considerable more investigation, as I do not believe that the proposal in its current form sufficiently addresses the impacts of the development.

Heritage

My family has resided on Brookside since 1894 when my Grandfather, Gerrard Johnston, took up a lease from the "Berry Estate". The land was subsequently purchased by auction and has remained in constant family ownership and occupation since that time. I am 3rd generation owner. My 2 sons work the property with me and my 7 grandchildren are also now enjoying the amenity of the farm.

The cottage we reside in is the oldest building of the district and is of significant interest to local historians. The outbuildings too reflect early settlement style.

The route of the proposed highway will see it impossible for me to continue to reside in my home due to the close proximity. The deck of the proposed 3rd Broughton Creek Bridge will in fact be higher than my house and directly adjacent. **I do not want to have to move out of my family home.**

The impact of the proposed highway, not only affects the built elements on my farm but also the natural elements – creek banks, flood plain, tree stands, land gradients which collectively assist in how the property has been farmed.

Water Quality

The EIS is fundamentally wrong where it states "*There are no drinking water catchments in the project area. Groundwater has low use within the region because the area receives a relatively high rainfall and Shoalhaven Water provides a reticulated water supply to Berry. North of Berry water users are more reliant on tank water and groundwater*". **THIS IS INCORRECT.**

My home and farm, together with our immediate neighbours, rely solely on water pumped directly from the Broughton Creek- a key element of the water catchment area referred to within the study. This water is used for drinking (human & stock), bathing, washing, and all other manners of house and farm activities.

I know my neighbours on behalf of us all, had specifically alerted the RMS of the need to guarantee our continued supply of acceptable quality of water at the initial design stage of the project however, I was shocked on learning that they have disregarded our concerns.

The proposal as it currently stands is of serious concern to me, both during the construction and operational phase.

Currently Broughton Creek is burdened by one crossing. This presents just 1 point of potential contamination by passing motorists; fuel spills; litter etc. The proposal now includes 3 creek crossings and a path directly over the existing natural flood plain of our immediate catchment which I find totally unacceptable.

My ability to source a suitable water supply direct from the creek is much compromised by this proposed project. I am at a loss as to how RMS can guarantee an acceptable and safe water supply on a continued basis if this proposal were to proceed.

Further, I am concerned that proposed earthworks may alter the current flow of Broughton Creek, resulting in a disturbance and altering of current water holes that are the current location of pump points and stock watering points.

Noise Impacts

The EIS highlights that my property will be so affected by noise from the project both in the construction and operational phase that it does not comply, exceeding RMS's own new road noise criteria policy.

The background noise study quoted in the EIS was taken at a location not consistent with my property. Further studies at my locality including within my home should be undertaken so that a more accurate picture may be gained, especially considering my home is directly adjacent to the motorway and I wish to continue to reside in it just as my forebears did.

Furthermore, I enjoy living with open windows and doors for ventilation. It is completely unacceptable to think that I should live contained within a completely closed and sealed dwelling.

The RMS is creating a problem and should take full responsibility for the issue and the onus of relieving the problem.

I feel strongly disadvantaged as a rural property owner by being considered as single entity, because if all rural residencies in our locality were considered collectively, there may be a more suitable mitigation strategy.

Importantly, it should be realised that currently I am able to gain assistance from my neighbours by yelling and calling for help when I am about my house yard and paddocks. The noise from the proposed motorway will put an end to this basic neighbourly assistance!

Simarlarily, I am able to hear my cattle and other stock monitoring them in case of a need for me to tend to them ie calving, fox threat etc The expected noise from the motorway will limit this ability.

Social Impacts

The proposed highway upgrade will sever my direct access to my neighbours the Seatons , McLarens, Kellys and Binks of whom I rely heavily upon for all manner of things, including transport, assistance, friendship and social interaction. You should realise that I do not drive and have no public transport available to my property. My neighbours are the key to the outside world!

My neighbours have been able to provide me with emergency medical treatment when they heard my calls for help whilst out in my paddocks. They are currently able to directly access my home and paddocks cross country, via foot, horseback, quad bike, tractor and motor car.

The motor way will put an end to this. I will no longer be able to walk to my neighbours and they will no longer be able to readily and speedily access me, as the motorway, as proposed, will be positioned in the centre of my property, upon the most appropriately graded lands for overland travel - isolating me.

The suggestion by RMS officials that pedestrian access could be done via access under the Broughton Bridge Crossing 3, and clambering up and down the hill in front is totally unacceptable. The steepness of this hill is nearly impossible for my cows. In fact, one broke its leg and the area was fenced off so as to stop the erosion of the bank. In reality, my only access route to the Seatons, and McLaren's is being taken by RMS and their planned roadway. If the proposal were to proceed in its current form, the only way to my nearest and most helpful neighbours is via a route that would be in reality over 2 km long - via Austral Park Rd, the link Road and the old highway. At my age and physical ability this is not realistic!

The isolation of persons and fragmentation of neighbours via this proposal is unacceptable. Regard must be given for the rural nature and dependence on neighbours. We have our own "neighbourhood watch" system in place, all of us care and watch over each other's homes and welfare, we are quickly able to access each other, lend a hand and provide basic neighbourly assistance.

Regard must also be given as to our security and privacy, and that of our neighbours. All of us live in a rural environment with our houses located a considerable distance from the existing Princes Highway. The proposed motorway, associated access roads and interchanges will directly impact our current amenity, placing at risk our security as our houses become a lot more visible and accessible to passing traffic. Concern is also raised as to our security during the construction phase when no doubt numerous workers will be in our immediate vicinity, clearly able to see our daily routines and the contents of our properties.

As a senior woman, my current rural property provides me with a form of security. This will be eroded when my house becomes clearly visible to passing overhead and through traffic.

Environmental Impacts

My property contains many natural environmental attributes. The main being the Broughton Creek, its frontage passes through a great portion of my property.

On my daily afternoon walks I notice a large variety of wildlife including platypus, bass, water dragon, eels, snakes, wombats, sugar gliders, flying fox, micro-bats, kangaroos, echidnas, quolls, lizards etc, not to mention the vast variety of birdlife, which inhabit and pass through my farmlands.

The creek is also a food source for me and my family as we, can and do, regularly fish for bass for our dinner, just as my forbears have done over the past century.

Upon my property are some remanent and regrowth vegetation stands. Consequently Shoalhaven Councils' LEP has identified my farm to contain "NRS Biodiversity Zone, having a sensitive area habitat and sensitive area significant vegetation". This significant natural resource should be preserved for future generations and for the health and habitat of local wildlife. It is a significant contributor to the local wildlife corridors.

Mature trees located along the creek banks are proposed to be removed for the motorway. This will result in great instability of the creek banks and loss of habitat. Having witnessed many floods of the Broughton Creek and learnt from my forbears, I fail to understand how & why RMS officials would believe that constructing a motorway in the location chosen, interrupting the natural water catchment is not in any way, a sound decision.

The proposed earthworks and re-sculpturing of the natural landform will have direct consequence on my remaining pastures and their recovery from local flood and drought. The current flood plains have natural groundwater springs beneath; their natural soakage provides pasture growth in dry times. The current landform and slope of the land towards the main creek allows for quick recovery of pastures after local flooding events. I rely heavily on these natural elements for my cattle. This will all be lost to the motorway!

Visual Impacts

My land is currently designated under the Shoalhaven LEP as Zone 1(b) Scenic Protection Zone. Fundamental to this classification is its scenic nature and high visibility status within the surrounding district. Development on these important sensitive scenic lands should be sympathetic to the surrounding environment. The proposed multi-lane highway and associated interchange in no respect complies with this zoning intent. The path chosen visually scars this scenic and sensitive area.

My forebears and I chose to live in this area for the visual amenity and rural outlook – not a built up urban environment!

Loss of Productive Land

Should the proposal proceed in its current form we understand that RMS will compulsory acquire approximately 25 acres of my land, dissecting the farm effectively into 6 separate parcels of land. Furthermore, the lands identified to be acquired are our most productive pastures. They contain, water, shade, good native pasture grasses, shelter and have natural landform attributes that assist me in managing my heard of cattle.

In 1936, the then Roads Authority, dissected my land in two, via upgrade works to the then Princes Highway. The existing route sees approximately 6 acres of my land on the western side of the current highway, accessed only via a cattle crib under the roadway. This in itself has its own set of problems, which I am continually forced to deal with - trespassers, scavengers and cattle duffers, not to mention the responsibility to maintain many more metres of boundary fencing. The under road crossing is not at all ideal. Its height and width make it only possible for me to access this parcel of land by foot or motor bike. I cannot take my tractor through. So from experience, I can tell you that the current proposal to further divide and segregate my land is totally unacceptable. I recall the RMS at one of their early community workshops stating that it was their intention not to sever productive farm lands – that is exactly what they are proposing and I protest now at the highest level! Please hear my screams!

I believe that the path chosen for the multi-lane motorway will be disastrous to my farm and consequently my lifestyle. The impact of this is great enough, with then having the additional burden of the interchange, which takes a further portion of some of my most productive land and isolates an island of my farm. Why cannot the burden be shared by other land holders further south, such as the RMS whom already own many properties along the route. Surely you are taking enough from me already – why am I chosen to be the most affected landholder.

RMS advised that this interchange location was chosen as the most cost effective, what about the cost you are having on my life, my farm, my income, my heritage, my wellbeing and my family. **How can you put a price on this?** I ask the Department of Planning to reject this interchange in its current location and remove it from my property. I have not come to terms with the fact that you are carving through the middle of my property, let alone, carving it up further into 6 separate portions for an interchange that could surely be moved further South.

This interchange was only recently included on the proposed plans when the RMS were considering access for neighbouring properties. Other options are clearly available South of Austral Park road.

Currently I am able to carry 100 head of stock, with a bull on site, and I usually breed an additional 40 calves each year. All of my stock feed on the native grasses that cover our land. I am not required to buy in additional feeds, even through drought time, as the native grasses and natural spring soakages, mentioned above, guarantee continual feed growth in the driest of times.

Water for stock is direct from the creek. Again, I have no need to supply holding tanks and pipes for stock watering purpose. All my stock is able to access the creek for watering, regardless of which paddock they are in. The RMS proposal will isolate some areas of my farm to such an extent that water supply will not be possible. A guarantee must be provided on how such can be maintained without additional cost or maintenance works by me and my family.

The loss of shade and shelter trees is also not acceptable. My cattle require shade and shelter at all times.

The proposed bridges will also remove pasture. I will be left with underbridge areas, that due to lack of sunlight will not support pasture growth. I imagine these lands will soon be barren, subject to

severe erosion by cattle hoofs and will become impassable and a threat to cattle health in times of wet weather,. These areas will be a perfect breeding grounds for cattle stock parasites. THE EIS makes no mention on how such lands could or will be managed. It is important to note that Broughton Creek Crossing #3 is upon my most valuable lands. A pasture for generations referred to as the "Calf Paddock." The area where cows choose to raise their young, it is flat, with quality pastures, good water supply and shelter.

Another individual contributor to my modest economic income stream is the rent that I currently receive from the 2 billboards located upon my property. I rely on this income stream. I am concerned that the new highway will make the current billboard location obsolete and that new State Planning Controls under SEPP 64 will prohibit me from any further possibility of hosting a similar asset.

The only monetary income I receive is from my cattle production and billboards. I am not entitled to government pensions or the like. I am entitled to the full productive capacity of my land without threat, as were my forbears and as are my children after me!

Light Intrusion Impacts

My home and majority of pastures are not currently affected in anyway by traffic or street light intrusion. I am concerned that the proposed roadways that will dissect my property, their height and design will put an end to this, resulting in direct light spill into my dwelling and property , affecting our quality of living and scaring of stock.

The EIS makes no mention of how this impact will be managed, this is not acceptable.

Access to Property Impacts

Currently I enjoy direct access from the existing highway into my property. I can access all portions of my land by foot, including that land dissected as a result of the 1936 highway upgrade, referred to earlier in my submission.

The proposal now before me is totally unacceptable. It is proposed to dissect my farm into 6 separate portions. Access to each and every parcel will be compromised. Stock management across my farm will be labour and mechanically intensive, in some cases I suspect impossible!

Access to my neighbours, whom I rely on greatly, will be severed. This is no way to humanely treat me or my family. I will no longer be able to access them by foot. The journey to reach them would be in excess of 2 km long. I am not physically able to make such a journey!

Lot 181 of Deposited Plan 1112260 is a parcel of land appended to my property, but on separate title, that currently enjoys an access via a ROW through the adjoining "Boysenberry Farm" now owned by RMS. Despite my constant advice to RMS officials of the need to maintain this separate access way, it seems this has been disregarded. Please advise how access to this separate title of

land is to be maintained, if this motorway were to proceed. This is important to me, not only to maintain the dollar value of the land, but also as a security for my family, should my sons wish to separately farm and occupy the land in the future.

If the motorway proceeds, many additional elements need to be included so as to assist me in my current farming practices, including cattle yards and additional cattle and tractor underpasses so as to link all parcels of my farm.

Of major concern is the ability for emergency and utility service vehicles to access all of my property both in the construction and operational phase.

I personally have required ambulance services in open paddocks, vets need to attend stock across the entire farm. The creek crossing point and natural landforms of the farm currently assist in our cattle mustering. These attributes are to be lost with the proposed motorway. The EIS makes no mention on how this could or will be addressed.

If I am forced to temporarily relocate from my home during the construction phase, I am concerned where it is I would relocate to. I need to be on the farm so as to manage my stock. To relocate to the east of the freeway would not be feasible due to flooding. Residents of neighbouring homes located east of the existing Broughton Creek Causeway are often locked in for 5 or more days. This is not acceptable as I would not be able to tend my stock nor access basic services such as healthcare etc. RMS need to more fully consider this real and threatening impact! It is not my desire or wish to relocate to the eastern side of my property with access via Austral Park Road and associated ROWs.

I also question how I am supposed to manage my stock once the construction phases commences. How many separable portions will I be dealing with, how do we safely move and muster cattle with heavy vehicle machinery, temporary bridges, construction fences, excessive noise and workman about my property?

The resultant changes to the local roadways may lead to confusion and would delay emergency vehicle response times.

The proposal currently includes a turning circle at the end of Austral Park Road. I object to this inclusion as this area would become an attraction for local youths to “show case” their cars, or a dumping ground for unwanted goods. This would also present another security risk, as persons “explore” the area and find an easy entry to remote portions of my farm. Austral Park Road should be kept only as an access route to local farms. The proposed plan indicates that the turning circle would be for the purpose of a garbage service. Please note, Shoalhaven Council does not provide a service to our rural farms and nor do we want one. Our current arrangements with Council are more than adequate. They allow us to self manage and self haul to the local transfer station, providing coupons for free tipping. I do not want the current arrangement to change. There is no need for this proposed turning circle.

Vibration Impact

I am concerned with the potential affect of vibration on my heritage dwelling and out-buildings both in the construction and operational phase. In the construction phase I am concerned with the heavy machinery movements, blasting and rock picking and in the operational phase I am concerned with the vibration resulting from; travel over road surfaces; travel across expansion joints; compression air brakes on trucks and extreme stereo sound systems in passing vehicles.

Dust Emissions

My concern is during the construction phase, specifically in the earthmoving and blasting process that my property will be directly affected by dust covering and entering my home, furniture and fittings, pasture, water supply, laundry etc together with diesel and other fuel emissions from mechanical plant and vehicles.

I am aware that significant construction sites in Sydney include the requirement for the developer to regularly provide cleaning services to affected properties. These services include window cleaning and external wall washing etc. Should this proposal proceed appropriate responsibilities must be imposed on the developer.

It should also be noted that my son, who lives with me permanently on the farm is an asthmatic and I have concern for his health during the construction and operational phase. What guarantee can be provided as to the air quality if this proposal were to proceed?

Economic Impact

Should the proposal proceed the value of our property will be significantly reduced both in real term and prospective earning capacity.

My property provides my sole source of income via cattle production and the rental from the billboards located near the current highway.

This proposal will severely reduce my stock carrying capacity, will increase farm maintenance costs, particularly boundary fencing maintenance, will require addition plant and equipment given the fragmentation of the farm.

The proposal will mean that my stock cannot readily access natural water sources which will mean infrastructure costs to provide and maintain water at all times.

The value and appeal of my property will be dramatically affected if this proposal were to proceed.

My house, farm, animals, lifestyle, social interaction, health and security are under real threat – PLEASE reject this proposed highway upgrade and associated interchange in its current form.

Yours faithfully

Helen Chittick