

Major Projects Assessments,
Department of Planning and Infrastructure,
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

By email plan_comment@planning.nsw.gov.au

19 January 2013

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Woolgoolga to Ballina Pacific Highway Upgrade SSI-4963

As local residents of the Clarence Valley we object to the above proposed upgrade in relation to sections 3, 4, and 5.

Our objections are on environmental, social and economic reasons.

1. Environmental

The location of the upgrade requires extensive clearing of land through the heart of the valley on eastern side of the Clarence River. This area contains established forest; pristine wetlands; and ecologically diverse ecosystems.

This area supports a large number of native animals some of which are recognised as Threatened.

One of the most recognisable is the Coastal emu – a local iconic species. Annual NPWS surveys, and documented sightings, to which local residents contribute, show a steady decline in the number of emu and the area of the emus range. The location of the proposed motorway bisects the last remaining home range of Coastal emu in the Clarence Valley. The mitigation measures offered by RMS to protect the Coastal emu are inadequate and unproven, and as such provide an unacceptable risk which may well cause the demise of our local population of emu.

2. Social

The proposed motorway largely provides an advantage to through traffic, but very little advantage to local residents.

The safety target of the Upgrade Program is 15 crashes per 100 million vehicle kilometres travelled. This is little better than the current average highway crash rates which is 15 at Maclean and 16 at Tynedale. [Ref: page 4, RMS Project Summary].

The extent of the construction will alter the amenity of the small villages of the Clarence Valley e.g. Harwood Island. This and other small villages offer unique, colourful and picturesque places to socialise and shop. A motorway cutting a swathe directly through Harwood Island will cause very significant disruption throughout the construction phase, and most will likely result in a village a poor shadow of its present state, if it survives at all.

As small villages are lost so too the social infrastructure is lost, along with the rural ambience.

3. Economic

The unspoilt and underdeveloped flora and fauna of the area between Maclean and Glenugie is a key attraction to tourism volumes both now and, more particularly, in the future. This area is one of the last remaining regions on the eastern seaboard of NSW to enjoy close association of native flora, fauna and quaint villages. To construct a motorway such as the one proposed through this exceptional and irreplaceable environment would be to destroy future tourism potential and employment opportunities for local residents.

The proposed motorway totally bypasses Grafton, the major commercial centre in the Clarence Valley. A bypass of such a long distance away at best reduces, and at worst eliminates, opportunities for commercial interaction generated by through traffic. The isolation of Grafton, will guarantee our region will have no economic significance in the future.

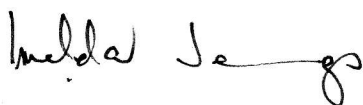
The offers of increased employment during the construction phase are a short term benefit and are not commensurate with the broad scale and long term losses.

In summary, the proposed option –

- a) Destroys environmental principles
- b) Compromises low-key but important social amenity
- c) Isolates the commercial hub of the region

In conclusion, the proposed option significantly reduces the current values of the Clarence Valley, at the same time as it fails to recognise essential requirements. Therefore the proposed option cannot be the preferred option.

Yours sincerely,



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