

## Refer to CBAG Submission Section 1 Introduction for context and related content

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### **SUBMISSION COFFS HARBOUR HIGHWAY BYPASS EIS (SS1\_7666)**

As one of the original steering committee members of the Coffs Bypass Action Group (CBAG) and someone who will be directly affected by the construction and ongoing noise of this project, I firstly want to thank you for the opportunity to make another submission. Unfortunately, I have found no record of the hundreds of submissions that were sent following the 2018 Concept Design release. I'm very critical of the lack of transparency the RMS has shown our community during this entire process. I'm glad to see that common sense has finally prevailed, and the design is now for 3 tunnels, a lower grade-line and quiet open grade asphalt. The research I undertook before buying our property might now deliver a bypass that will mean my home continues to be liveable.

As the steering committee member who is in charge of social media, I have found it astounding and disheartening to witness the divisive nature of this project. The political interference and complete failure to honestly communicate the impact this project will have on our community, will continue to exacerbate the lack of trust that clearly exist with the RMS. Surely delivery a bypass with such complexity, should have been a project that everyone could have been proud of. Instead, the community has had to fight tooth and nail to get something that is slightly reasonable.

The following is a list of my major concerns regarding RMS's Coffs Harbour Highway Bypass Environmental Impact Statement September 2019.

#### **Noise and traffic:**

I'm disappointed with four main issues regarding noise:

The first is how RMS arrived at what houses should be treated and which ones should be left out. As a resident who carried out our own independent noise modelling, we are very concerned with RMS's own noise study. The noise measurements in the RMS study are very different from what we as residents actually experience, with more than 20 decibels difference overnight. My concern is not only for my home, but all my neighbours who have been classified in a much higher noise bracket than we all currently experience. This must be revisited by a truly independent noise audit.

The second concern is that the night time noise readings for our house on the southern/western side facing the local street are shown as being quite a bit noisier than the other sides of the house. I find this difficult to believe. We hear very little noise at night other than the trains at distinct intervals, from the northern/eastern side, and then the birds from just

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before sunrise. I understand that the difference in the figures for our property in the EIS are due to local traffic noise. I would like to see the evidence, because it is a very quiet cul-de-sac. Unfortunately, this decision also means that this façade, with the majority of large windows, will not be treated.

The third is that RMS has arbitrarily decided to treat some subdivisions for noise and not others. On page 56 (Volume 4A Appendix G, 4:3:1) of the EIS is a table (table 29) of DA conditions of approval which state what each developer had to do in each estate to treat each house against noise. However, each condition of approval is different and how were home owners and developers supposed to know the speed of traffic on the new highway, the type of pavement, the traffic numbers (because these have not been available until the EIS was released) and in some cases, that there is going to be a major interchange near the houses? The difference of designing a house that can block out road noise on a local arterial road with traffic speeds at 80kms and very low night traffic volumes, is vastly different to that of highway noise at 110kms and a significant amount of trucks during sleep hours. RMS seems to have put all the responsibility on us and Coffs Harbour City Council whilst keeping any information under wraps.

The fourth is that the construction noise levels seem to be very high and there is no proposed treatment of houses for that noise, which will go on for years. This appears grossly unfair and at no time were homeowners and developers required to treat their houses for construction noise, that a DA Consent Condition. The residents in my area have not been contacted regarding any potential treatment prior to construction, or when the build is completed. When will this occur?

### **Dangerous Goods:**

The Pacific Highway upgrade for Coffs Harbour is supposed to remove all heavy vehicles off the existing Pacific Highway (which will then become a local road). The RMS information update (September 2019) that accompanied the EIS, states that the issue of Dangerous Goods has not yet been resolved, but the EIS states that a risk assessment has been done. Which is it? How is it possible to release an EIS and not deal with the serious issue of dangerous goods, particularly when they're travelling through a major Regional City and have become a contentious issue for our community? A dangerous goods risk assessment must have been completed for the RMS to make any sort of decision for Coffs Harbour. In fact, I believe all dangerous goods vehicles are far safer in tunnels, because of the drenching systems. Why has this important information been kept from everyone in Coffs Harbour, including Council? At the tunnel in Ewingsdale near Byron Bay traffic signs say that only Dangerous Goods Class 1 and Class 2.1 must not access the tunnel, but there is no clarification in the EIS. Coffs Harbour residents only want the same rules to apply here as those at Byron Bay tunnel, i.e. that all dangerous goods except Class 1 and Class 2.1 can use the Coffs Harbour Bypass.

### **Consultation:**

This project is a \$1.8billion project and will take years to complete. The consultation with the community by RMS has been woeful. For years they asked us what we wanted and we agreed it was to be tunnels, then without any consultation they came out with a completely

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different design with no tunnels which we rejected and now we've had six weeks with school holidays in the middle, to comment on a circa 4,000-page EIS. However, the EIS is not a detailed design and surely the community deserves a further comment period once the final, detailed design is completed. Unfortunately, there has been no variance to the interchanges, which seems outrageous considering the amount of legitimate concerns expressed in 2018 regarding their poor designs. The interchanges will have far reaching impacts to the noise experienced for the many residents that surround them. It is paramount that they are refined to work, with the smallest footprint and the removal of traffic lights.

### **Contract:**

There are further concerns regarding the contract style for the build. There have been far too many cases where a "design and construct" contract has been used, which has resulted in substantial differences than were outlined in the EIS to the community. It is essential that the Coffs Bypass is a "construct only" contract, together with a detailed design, so that the community gets what is promised.

### **Biodiversity:**

The Coffs Harbour Bypass route is unique along the Eastern Seaboard because this is where the Great Dividing Range meets the Coast. This is why flora and fauna abound here to make Coffs Harbour a biodiversity hotspot. Now we have tunnels, a lower grade-line and quiet asphalt but please make sure when the Bypass is being built that only local native species are used during revegetation activities to ensure the best environmental outcome possible.

Coffs Harbour residents have waited for and deserve the best possible bypass, in this highly populated and sensitive area. The decades in waiting to build this long overdue piece of infrastructure, has only exacerbated the impact to the increasing number of residents. This project will affect how this city grows and the community for decades to come. It is important to get it right the first time and build something that everybody can be proud of, something that improves this city and that we can all live with.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

Marnie Cotton

Declaration: I have made no political donations in the past two years.