

## Meeting Record

Project:	Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy	Reference:	1093.50
Location:	Coffs Harbour Ex-Services Club, Vernon Street, Coffs Harbour	Date:	16 December 2004

Present: Apology: Copy: Name:

Interest/Groups represented:

### SOUTHERN CFG

		✓	David Doyle	Existing Highway interests
	✓		Trish Welsh	Inner West Coffs residents interests
		✓	Phil Doyle	Outer West Coffs residents interests
	✓		Gillian French	Korora residents interests
			Steven French (proxy)	Korora residents interests
✓			Gail Latham	Bucca Valley residents interests
✓			Marlene Jacobs	Boambee West residents interests
✓			Peter Lubans	Business & Tourism interests
			Ernie Armstrong (proxy)	Business & Tourism interests
		✓	Hugh Saddleton	Development interests
✓			Paul Norton	Emergency Services interests
✓			Ron Smith	Environmental interests
	✓		David Pike	Agricultural interests
✓			Ron Gray (proxy)	Agricultural interests
			Tom Hamilton-Foster	Commercial interests (WITHDRAWN)
✓			Wilson Dale	Inner West Coffs residents interests
	✓		Doug Binns	Bucca Valley and Gaudrons Rd residents interests
✓			Bert Beasley	Inner West Coffs residents interests
✓			Greg Driscoll	Coramba and Karangi residents interests

PROJECT TEAM				
✓			Chris Clark	RTA
	✓		Bob Higgins	RTA
✓			Adam Cameron	RTA
✓			Tim Paterson	Connell Wagner
✓			Janice Smith	Pramax Communications
✓			Andrew Smith	Pramax Communications
	✓		Steve Murray	DIPNR
	✓		John Finlay	DIPNR
Recorded By: Pramax Communications				Total Pages: 11
Subject: Community Focus Group Meeting No 13 (Southern CFG)				

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Andrew Smith (AS) opened the meeting at 6pm and read the apologies.

## 2 NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 2.1 Notes of previous meeting accepted.

## 3 PREFERRED OPTION

- 3.1 AS asked Tim Paterson (TP) (Connell Wagner) to give an overview of the Coastal Route which had been announced as the Minister's preferred option. Copies of presentation slides attached.
- 3.2 CFG member Wilson Dale (WD) asked if the media release was a Ministerial announcement. The media release was issued under the RTA's banner.
- 3.3 TP: Members of the Woolgoolga Area and Sapphire-Moonee CFGs had also sought clarification of that at their meeting held last night. The announcement was endorsed by the Minister. He had accepted the recommendation made and the Coastal Route was the preferred route. As with all media releases, the media release had the Minister's approval. He continued with his presentation. The information was at various displays around the city. It had been July since the CFG last met and the group had been gearing up for the Value Management Workshop (VMW) held in early August. The VMW had examined two inner south and two inner north options. Representatives had attended from a range of interests including representatives of the CFG. The workshop had adopted a triple bottom line approach in assessing the options.
- 3.4 CFG member WD: They didn't look at cost in that process?
- 3.5 TP: Cost also was an issue that was addressed at last night's meeting and which Chris Clark (CC) would address in the presentation to follow. The VMW had resulted in a broad base of support for Inner South 2 and Inner North 2. IS2 was given the nod by the VMW but a subsequent assessment was made and the announcement was that Inner South 1 was the preferred option.

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- 3.6 CFG proxy Ron Gray (RG) asked if there had been a meeting last night of the Woolgoolga Area CFG. He questioned whether he had received notification of the meeting.
- 3.7 TP: The presentation would also cover the Sapphire to Woolgoolga section.
- 3.8 CC started his slide presentation. For the southern (Coffs) section, three broad corridors were originally investigated and the outcome of the assessment was that the inner corridor was the preferred corridor. Route options had then been considered within the inner corridor. IS1 was selected as the preferred option due to:
- lower engineering risks, greater flexibility with no tunnel
  - potential to further reduce potential noise and visual impacts
  - transport benefits of both options are similar
  - long term social & environmental benefits of IS2 are marginal
  - IS1 is \$65M less expensive & significantly better value
  - No ongoing tunnel operational costs
- 3.9 CFG member WD: What was the input from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR) regarding the assessment that the long-term social and environmental benefits of IS2 were marginal? Were they making the assumption that development would occur west of the highway as well?
- 3.10 CC: They acknowledged that development could occur west of the highway.
- 3.11 TP: DIPNR had acknowledged the impact on the planning of North Boambee Valley but they realised that the long-term planning horizon could allow development either side.
- 3.12 CFG member WD: Was there an implication that the RTA would help with the replanning?
- 3.13 CC: He would address that later. He continued. There were greater opportunities for screening IN2 and the opportunity to use the hidden valleys in West Coffs. There would be less severance for the developing areas in West Coffs and therefore likely higher community acceptance. With the announcement of IS1 as the preferred option, it had been recognised that there was a need to replan the North Boambee Valley area. The RTA would be approaching Council to see how it could assist.
- 3.14 CFG member Gail Latham (GL): Would that be technical assistance or money?
- 3.15 CC: That was still to be sorted out but a general offer would be made to assist and that had come about because of the adoption of IS1 as the preferred option. Council had made it clear that if IS1 was the chosen option it would entail significant replanning. There was a need to refine the concept design which would reduce the impacts the preferred option would have on the environment and community and identify future road boundaries.
- 3.16 CFG member: Marlene Jacobs (MJ): Would the RTA be talking to Bishop Druitt College and Council?
- 3.17 CC: The RTA would be talking to a lot of land owners.
- 3.18 CFG member MJ: There was a plan to do further development with Bishop Druitt College and the preferred option was adjacent to the college.
- 3.19 CC: The RTA was talking to a lot of people including adjacent property owners. It

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A check was made following the meeting as to whether notification had been provided. Advice had been sent to RG by fax on December 7, 2004

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was obvious there would be a need to manage the existing highway before the bypass was built. The RTA hadn't identified what the works would be but it had accepted there would be a need for such works.

- 3.20 CFG member MJ: Would that include Hogbin Drive?
- 3.21 CC: The works might not necessarily be restricted to the existing highway. The RTA hadn't ruled anything out but had accepted there would be a need for works.
- 3.22 CFG member Peter Lubans (PL): So the RTA would be working with Council on that?
- 3.23 CC: The RTA has endeavoured to work closely with Council and it would continue to do so.
- 3.24 CFG member PL left the meeting.
- 3.25 CC: Following a series of workshops, a preferred option report was prepared and the report and a recommendation of a preferred option was sent to the Minister's office and it received his endorsement as well as DIPNR's.
- 3.26 CFG member WD: What was the thinking of the intersection of Mackays Road and Mastracolas Road?
- 3.27 CC: With the preferred option, the objective was to obtain functional access at the southern and northern ends and at Coramba Road. To achieve functionality, you could locate access in one location or split it between two locations. Community Update No.4 shows the access split between two locations, whereas Community Update No.6 shows it as a possible single interchange, bringing all movements into one location.
- 3.28 CFG member WD: So you would have greater separation between local and through traffic?
- 3.29 CC: Yes.
- 3.30 CFG member WD: So what does that do to the BCR?
- 3.31 TP: It wouldn't be higher. You would strategically get a similar outcome. The whole access issue needs more consideration.
- 3.32 CFG member WD: Was there any chance that would be revisited?
- 3.33 CC: There would be some reduction in traffic volumes if you put all the movements in one location and you would get decreased construction costs. What was important was what effect the location of the interchanges would have on local traffic movements.
- 3.34 TP: There was every chance it would be a key planning decision in how the project unfolded. There was a need to look at it further and make the necessary judgment.
- 3.35 CFG member WD said he could see problems with the Coramba Road interchange in terms of noise – acceleration and deceleration.
- 3.36 TP: There was a need to look at what the inner bypass might do and what form the interchanges might take.
- 3.37 CFG member WD: The RTA had said previously it would not be carrying out an environmental impact assessment on the southern section. Was that still the

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intention?

- 3.38 CC: The RTA would prepare the concept design, define where the interchanges would be and their configuration and take planning action to rezone, probably through rezoning of the land. The RTA was now able to respond to requests and applications from people wanting to resell.
- 3.39 CFG member GL: Now that the preferred option had been defined, was it possible for the blight to be taken off other properties in terms of real estate?
- 3.40 CC: It was planned to do that. Council would be provided with formal advice next week.
- 3.41 CFG member: WD: What about a timetable for acquisition?
- 3.42 CC: He had provided the same advice at last night's meeting. The RTA could approach landowners only after it obtained approval for a project. That was when the EIS had been signed off. Before that, the RTA could respond to applications from property owners, for example, if they could not sell.
- 3.43 CFG member WD: Did that apply to property owners who were close to the preferred option? He had a neighbour whose bank had said it would not let him borrow money to carry out property improvements.
- 3.44 CC: There was no provision under the Just Terms Compensation Act for that person.
- 3.45 CFG member GL: It would probably have more impact on him if the property was elevated.
- 3.46 CFG member WD: It was elevated.
- 3.47 CC: There was no provision for those properties not directly affected.
- 3.48 CFG member WD: Ron Gray was here representing the banana growers. What was his reaction to the announcement?
- 3.49 CFG proxy RG: The preferred option would have an effect on the growers.
- 3.50 CFG member WD: What about the north-facing slope on Coramba Road?
- 3.51 CFG proxy RG: Yes it would be affected.
- 3.52 CFG member WD: How much of an examination was made of that potential problem?
- 3.53 CC: It was considered – including the cutting through Roberts Hill ridge and the potential micro-climate effects. The project had received submissions on that issue and CFG member David Pike had raised it recently. When the preferred option underwent the environmental impact assessment process, the EIS would look at that closely. With the cutting through Roberts Hill ridge, they would put the road through a cutting and build a land bridge over the top, which had benefits from a visual and indigenous heritage perspective and as a fauna corridor as well. The curve in the road would reduce the wind effects as well. The RTA would look at it as it went through the process.
- 3.54 CFG member GL: IS1 didn't mention impact on bananas but it did for IS2.
- 3.55 CC: The impact on bananas was included in the assessment.

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- 3.56 CFG member GL: In 20 years, it could be expected that urban growth would have spread up the banana hills.
- 3.57 CC: It was recognised that the banana industry was not as vibrant as it had been in the past and it might be that there could be little viable industry left.
- 3.58 CFG member GL: It was already evident in the Korora Valley and Bruxner Park and (CFG member) Gillian (French) talked about the nice green backdrop but it was increasingly urban development.
- 3.59 CFG member WD: What did DIPNR have to say about the north-facing ridge and productive banana land?
- 3.60 TP: There was no decision that it would go at this stage. There had been no strategic planning at this stage in terms of urban development versus bananas.
- 3.61 CFG member WD: There was a climate change when the cut was made for Korora school.
- 3.62 CFG member GL: The latest (Community Update) didn't say anything in relation to agricultural development but there was a lot of documentation in earlier documents regarding agricultural impact and it was certainly assessed.
- 3.63 CC: Although the Preferred Option report was a separate report, it built on all the work carried out before including community input and the previous technical investigations.
- 3.64 CFG member MJ: Land bridges had been talked about – how did they work and where had they previously been used?
- 3.65 CC: The Yelgun to Chinderah bypass had an example where the RTA had bored through the ground and left a bridge intact. He went on to explain the construction process.
- 3.66 CFG member MJ: Were there operational costs?
- 3.67 CC: Ventilation and lighting.
- 3.68 CFG member GL: Was cyclone fencing also an ongoing cost?
- 3.69 CC: Yes – to maintain it.
- 3.70 CFG member Ron Smith (RS): What would the width of the land bridge be?
- 3.71 CC: About 60m long. There was potential for two of them on Roberts Hill ridge with the two spurs.
- 3.72 CFG member WD: Had there been any testing of how a land bridge worked in reduction of wind volume? Was it possible to design one to ameliorate climate change?
- 3.73 CC: Was not aware of any studies. The idea was to take advantage of the curve in the road to reduce airflow through the tunnel but he was not aware of any studies.
- 3.74 TP: He was not aware of any studies done to address this particular situation but there was a level of confidence that positive outcomes could be achieved.
- 3.75 CFG member WD: Could work be done on Yelgun to Chinderah to see what outcomes could be achieved?

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- 3.76 CC: The issues were site-specific.
- 3.77 TP: Yelgun to Chinderah was not a coastal location. There were not that many applications in Australia although there were a lot overseas.
- 3.78 Further discussion on wind breaks followed.

## 4 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- 4.1 CC: The RTA would be continuing with community consultation including industry meetings, meetings with landowners, CFG meetings and contact with the broader community.
- 4.2 CFG member RS: What was the timeframe for when the northern section would commence?
- 4.3 CC: Any timeframe given would have to be qualified due to unforeseen factors – possibly including external influences. The boundaries were planned to be finalised by the middle of next year and the RTA understood the need to do that for the community. For the southern (Coffs) section, there was a need to preserve the corridor, but at this stage, it was not possible to predict how long that would take. With the Sapphire to Woolgoolga section, it was hoped to have the EIS out by the end of 2005. By mid to late 2006, it was hoped to have planning approval. After that, construction of the project was dependent on funding approval.
- 4.4 CFG member GL: Wasn't money already set aside for the Sapphire to Moonee section?
- 4.5 CC: There is funding for preserving the corridor for the southern section and for the EIS and planning approval for the Sapphire to Woolgoolga Section. There is currently no allocation of funds to take the project further.
- 4.6 CFG member GL: Thought that Bill Wood had said there was a certain amount of funding to be spent on the project. So the bucket was empty?
- 4.7 CC: We have funding for the project development stage but, at this time, no commitment to further funding.
- 4.8 CFG member WD: With Sapphire to Woolgoolga, the problem was noise. Noise tests were done for the Noise Taskforce and areas had high readings. The contour map showed a lot of houses had to be treated for noise. Had there been any re-testing since then?
- 4.9 CC: As a result of the noise investigations, there has been road resurfacing and acoustic treatments are being identified. There will be re-testing to assess the effectiveness of the mitigation measures. The results would be assessed after the second tests and further measures carried out if necessary.
- 4.10 CFG member WD: The tests called for extensive noise barriers.
- 4.11 CC: That was raised as one of the options, not necessarily the adopted option.
- 4.12 CFG member WD: It was thought that at two locations noise barriers were appropriate because of the concentration of houses. What was the results of the re-testing? Some people had said it had reduced tyre noise when speed was down but not engine noise and speeding noise.
- 4.13 CC: Some people the project team had talked to had said the road resurfacing had



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reduced noise.

- 4.14 CFG member GL: Could they be assured the new routes would have better road surfaces?
- 4.15 TP: There would be an integrated approach to the design so it would mean acoustic control rather than retrofitting.
- 4.16 That approach could include quieter road surfaces, landscaping of vegetated mounds, barriers built in a way that they were least visible, lowering of the road in the topography, acoustic screening, reducing the grades so truck noise was decreased and not multiple access so there was not the acceleration and deceleration in driving.
- 4.17 CFG member GL: So would that thinking help with the design of interchanges and where they would be?
- 4.18 CC: Yes. Noise at interchanges and increased traffic movements needed to be considered.
- 4.19 CFG member GL: They also have to meet local needs. So (CFG member) Greg (Driscoll) (GD), did it meet the needs of your community?
- 4.20 CFG member GD: Would have preferred half interchanges to get greater access but less movements concentrated in one area. However, they were happy with what's suggested.
- 4.21 CFG member WD said there was a review underway of the Act in relation to noise. Any idea what the timetable was?
- 4.22 CC: Didn't know.
- 4.23 CFG member GL: Would be concerned about what was happening at Bucca Road with the highway.
- 4.24 TP went through the types of interchanges and their locations. How they would unfold would be assessed according to need which would be balanced with local traffic needs.

Break from 7.10pm to 7.35pm.

## **5 FUTURE ROLE AND MEMBERSHIP OF CFG**

- 5.1 CC: In the southern section, the concept design had to be refined and the road boundaries set and then reserved. This was one of the key milestones in the project. The aim was to have the concept design finished by mid-2005 and out to the community for comment.
- 5.2 CFG member WD: Would the design define the limits exactly of property take?
- 5.3 CC: Yes. They would identify the exact location of the road and set property boundaries to fit within the corridor what they needed to fit.
- 5.4 CFG member GL: Are you inviting us to stay on as CFG members?
- 5.5 CFG member WD: Would it be more appropriate if directly-affected people were on the CFG?
- 5.6 CFG member MJ: There might be a need for some people – it was like starting all over again.



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- 5.7 CFG member WD: Would the RTA be looking at noise amelioration and would it be property specific?
- 5.8 CC: With the design, they were only setting the road boundary - not noise amelioration. It was not specific but in general terms. It was not the intent at this stage to take the design further. As far as property treatments were concerned, they were personal issues better dealt with on an individual basis.
- 5.9 CFG member WD: Are you looking for answers or other people to take on issues.
- 5.10 CC: Appreciated the interest shown but believed that there would be only one or two more meetings of the Coffs CFG. The design limits would be set and then planning action would be taken to reserve the corridor.
- 5.11 CFG member GD: Was this a concrete proposal, that is, the final design? It would mean the group could start to address more specific issues such as access.
- 5.12 CC: Yes, the RTA was proceeding on the basis that this was the final decision and there was now a need to reserve the corridor.
- 5.13 TP: Planning action meant placing a formal reserve on the planning scheme. It could be ultimately acquired and set aside and that could occur in the second half of 2005.
- 5.14 CFG member WD: The timetable was so 'airy fairy'. A five-year timeframe had been suggested for the southern section at some of the property owner interviews.
- 5.15 CC: Could not comment on timeframes – they were unknown at this time.
- 5.16 CFG member MJ: The Sapphire to Woolgoolga section – was the middle section still a priority?
- 5.17 CC: They would proceed as part of their objectives to have identification of boundaries in the next 6-12 months. There would probably be two further meetings of the Coffs CFG for those who would be happy to continue.
- 5.18 CFG member WD: What would be discussed?
- 5.19 CC: The concept design, road limits, interchange locations and possibly the configurations.
- 5.20 CFG member WD: What about tunnels on IN2?
- 5.21 CC: It was not the intention to make decisions about tunnels at this time. With advances in technology, the final decision would only be speculation. Given present techniques, there would be a choice in terms of tunnels and open cuttings. But it was not currently possible to lock in the decision.
- 5.22 CFG member WD: What was the depth of the cuttings?
- 5.23 CC: About 60m.
- 5.24 CFG member WD: Thought the arbitrary point of cut-off was about 45m – which was interesting for the Coastal Ridge Way (CRW).
- 5.25 CFG member GL: Was that to do with the length of environment?
- 5.26 CC: There were a range of issues with the CRW. If you go with a cutting, you have potential visual impacts and microclimate impacts. You have to leave flexibility to

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go with tunnels or cuttings because we are planning for the future.

5.27 CFG member GL: Coffs Council – are they governed by DIPNR's approval?

5.28 CFG member MJ: There was a meeting tonight.

5.29 CFG member GL: The Mayor's reaction had not been favourable. Would Council be able to influence the decision?

5.30 CC: Council had been duly elected and it was not his place to speculate about what the outcome might be.

5.31 CFG member MJ: It might hold the project up if they took some other action.

5.32 CC: It was the RTA's intent that it would push on with the concept design for the preferred route to provide certainty for the community.

5.33 TP: The State Government made the decision and took a long time considering it.

5.34 CFG member RS: A Councillor hadn't accepted the viewpoint and he could not see him changing his mind.

5.35 CFG member GL: So the community could get another bite at the routes?

5.36 CC: The RTA is moving forward from here.

5.37 TP: The RTA is progressing the preferred option so they could get a formal proposal.

5.38 CC: The RTA wanted to work with Council.

5.39 CFG member GL: Was the RTA looking for feedback on the preferred option?

5.40 CC: Not specifically looking for feedback but the RTA would accept comment at any time.

5.41 CFG member GL: So if GD's community wants to provide feedback?

5.42 CC: Yes, a report would document any feedback.

5.43 CFG member GL: It took time for members to canvass their communities but it was no longer necessary to do that.

5.44 CFG member WD: The Minister had started to talk about tollways in a more favourable light so if they wanted a roadway in reasonable time, they would need to look at tollways. Supposing that was the case and the possibility that there would be a change in State Government, what were the chances of reverting back to the Motorway Pacific concept?

5.45 CC: There were a lot of 'ifs' and 'buts' in that question. Too much speculation to respond to.

5.46 TP: Tollways had been proposed for funding for the Pacific Highway. It had been estimated it might take 20 years to complete the whole upgrade of the Pacific Highway and this was likely to be unpalatable for the community. However, commenting on what might or might not happen in the future was crystal ball-gazing.

5.47 CFG member GL: How do rural areas compete against city areas?

5.48 CC: Did not accept that rural areas didn't get their fair share. He could not

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speculate on political issues.

- 5.49 TP: \$2.2 billion had been committed to the current Pacific Highway Upgrading Program and the Federal Government had made an in-principle agreement to increasing its funding commitment.
- 5.50 CC talked about funding for the current program. Under the Auslink program announced in August 2004, the Federal Government had made a major commitment for the next five years.
- 5.51 TP: So there is a serious commitment for the three years after the end of the current 10-year program.
- 5.52 CFG member GL: So the whole project could be pushed along?
- 5.53 CC: It could be, but projects further advanced down the process would be the ones most likely to be considered for funding first and one around here is the Bonville Deviation at Pine Creek.
- 5.54 CFG member GD: When would be the earliest for the southern section?
- 5.55 CC: There would need to be an EIS and acquisition of land and, with a project as controversial as this, anything less than four years would be seriously underestimating the time required for this.
- 5.56 CFG member GD: If there was the political will, four years for an early start, so maybe five years from now. When talking timeframes, he wanted to know what was the quickest.
- 5.57 CC: He was sensitive about timeframes. He had qualified timeframes in the past but all people remembered was the number.
- 5.58 CFG member GD: If he was to muster support, how quickly would it happen?
- 5.59 CC: He'd still rather tell groups it was the best estimate. Back to the CFG, it would mean there would be a few more meetings. The members might want to think about whether they wanted to continue in their role. If they wanted to rethink their involvement, they could contact Janice Smith at Pramax.

## **6 CLOSE OF MEETING**

Meeting closed at 8.00pm.

**Next Meeting: To be advised.**