

## Meeting Record

Project:	Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy	Reference:	1093.69.GE
Location:	Coffs Harbour Ex-Services Club, Vernon Street, Coffs Harbour	Date:	24 February 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
✓			Stan Dacey (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
✓			Peter Jackson	Infrastructure interests
✓			Wilson Dale	Inner West Coffs residents interests
✓			Doug Binns	Bucca Valley & 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
✓			Tim Paterson	Connell Wagner
✓			Rosemary Russell	Connell Wagner
✓			Jo North	Connell Wagner
✓			Andrew Smith	Pramax Communications
✓			Jenny Bonfield	Mayor, Coffs Harbour City Council
✓			Steve Murray	Planning NSW
	✓		John Finlay	Planning NSW
Recorded By: Pramax Communications				Total Pages: 11
Subject: Community Focus Group Meeting No 10 (Southern CFG)				

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Andrew Smith opened the meeting at 5.50pm.

## 2 NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 2.1 Andrew suggested that discussion of the previous Notes be left until later in the meeting. This was agreed.
- 2.2 CFG member Trish Welsh wanted the Notes to record that five days' notice for the meeting was appalling and that the Minister should respect the community and should have given earlier notice.

## 3 INTRODUCTION OF NEW CFG MEMBERS

- 3.1 Andrew Smith introduced the three new members, Doug Binns, Greg Driscoll and Bert Beasley. They each gave a brief outline of their backgrounds.

## 4 CURRENT STATUS

- 4.1 RTA project manager Chris Clark advised members that he would be providing an update on the progress of the strategy. Three reports were being made available to members. They were a Strategy Report, a Report on the Review of the Coastal Ridge Way Proposal and a Sapphire to Woolgoolga Supplementary Options Report. The purpose of his presentation was to provide CFG members with information on and background to the key messages in the latest Community Update; to facilitate comment and feedback on the Coffs Harbour bypass options, the Woolgoolga bypass options, the upgrade of the existing highway between Sapphire and south Woolgoolga, and the longitudinal sections and cross sections; and to facilitate input into the assessment of Council's preferred corridor and outline the way forward.

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## Steering Committee

- 4.2 Bob Higgins (RTA) said that the Steering Committee for the project had unanimously agreed to disband. He explained the role of the Steering Committee and said that, following the recent decision by the Council to select its own preferred corridor, the Steering Committee had agreed it could no longer continue to manage the process to develop the strategy. The Minister had agreed to examine the feasibility of options within Council's preferred corridor and that was underway now.
- 4.3 Chris Clark indicated that information had now been provided on the Coastal Ridge Way, the inner bypass options and the existing highway. No decision had been made so far. The intention was to seek public feedback on the options including Council's preferred corridor. When completed, an assessment report on Council's preferred corridor would be placed on display. Then all the information including information from the technical investigations and the community submissions would be brought together and provided to the Minister to enable him to make a decision. The Minister had indicated he did not want any delays.
- 4.4 CFG member Wilson Dale said some property owners who had had interviews at the staffed displays had said a decision on a preferred route had already been made. Why then was the CFG going through this?
- 4.5 Chris Clark said that some property owners had been briefed but perhaps some of the message had been lost in the translation. The message in the brochure was the correct message. No decision had been made on a preferred option. If there had been other comments made by team members, they were not correct and he would look into that.
- 4.6 CFG member Wilson Dale indicated similar comments were made by landholders more than five months ago. Wilson said that such incidents put people on the back foot and that they were really upset.
- 4.7 Chris Clark asked whether he could get the property owners' names. He confirmed that no preferred option had been announced.
- 4.8 CFG member Tom Hamilton-Foster asked why all the information could not be put on the table so that the members could view and digest it?
- 4.9 Chris Clark said the CFG had known for some time about the reports which had now been released. A decision to display these reports had been made in response to a request to get that information out. The RTA and DIPNR had laid their cards on the table.
- 4.10 Discussion followed on the merits of holding the CFG meeting and providing input at this stage when there was as yet no report on the feasibility of options within Council's preferred corridor.
- 4.11 CFG member Gail Latham asked when the Value Management Workshop (VMW) would be held.
- 4.12 Chris Clark replied a date would not be set for a VMW until all information was available. The intended program was that the necessary assessments would be completed and a preferred option identified by mid-2004.

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- 4.13 CFG member Gail Latham asked whether the Minister was premature in making his announcement.
- 4.14 Bob Higgins again stated that no decision had been made yet.
- 4.15 Discussion followed on the role of DIPNR and a press article quoting comments by a former Planning NSW employee.
- 4.16 Steve Murray (DIPNR) indicated that the article that appeared in the newspaper quoted personal comments by Jo Gardner which were not on behalf of the Department. He was attending tonight's meeting to gain further understanding of the process being undertaken by the CFG.
- 4.17 CFG member Trish Welsh: *"It is too late for your Department, you really need to be actively involved."*
- 4.18 Steve Murray said that John Finlay (DIPNR) had had regular input and representation into the process for the past 2-3 years. The Department had not necessarily been a loud voice but it had been involved. It had for example taken part in the Value Management process for the Sapphire to Woolgoolga section.
- 4.19 CFG member Gillian French: *"We would like to suggest that you get more actively involved so that we can discuss these issues."*
- 4.20 Steve Murray said the Department's role was not necessarily to look at local issues but to "look at the bigger picture".
- 4.21 CFG member Wilson Dale: *"This is not the debate, the debate is about the Coffs Harbour area."*
- 4.22 CFG member Greg Driscoll: *"You must have some sort of preferred option."*
- 4.23 CFG member Gail Latham asked Steve Murray whether information was gathered by his department or Connell Wagner and what was the procedure.
- 4.24 Steve Murray replied that draft documents were prepared by Connell Wagner and given to his Department for comment.
- 4.25 CFG member Trish Welsh asked, if there were going to be overheads, could the members have copies.
- 4.26 Chris Clark replied that he did not have any copies.
- 4.27 CFG member Trish Welsh: *"We have been asking for copies to be provided to members now for two years – I am disgusted."*
- 4.28 Chris Clark said there was an agreement between the RTA and DIPNR to finalise the strategy.
- 4.29 Bob Higgins said although there was now no Steering Committee, briefings of Council would continue to be held. Council also would be involved in the VMW.
- 4.30 CFG member Gail Latham asked what the representation of the Council stakeholders in the VMW would include.
- 4.31 Jenny Bonfield (Mayor (CHCC) responded that the Local Government elections were to be held in late March and there could be new faces on Council.

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- 4.32 CFG member Gillian French said she had concerns that with a new council some of the councillors would be not be as well informed as the current council and that within this new group there would be different levels of familiarity.
- 4.33 Chris Clark commenced his presentation on the key messages in Community Update No. 4

## **Coffs Harbour City Council's preferred corridor**

- 4.34 The RTA has agreed to assess the feasibility of options within Council's preferred corridor in terms of its functional, environmental and socio-economic impacts. Public input into this assessment was being invited. When completed, the assessment report would be placed on display for comment. Copies of overheads were posted to CFG members following the meeting
- 4.35 CFG member Hugh Saddleton wanted to see an outline of the CHCC preferred corridor. Chris Clark referred him to Community Update Figures 1 and 2.
- 4.36 CFG member Gillian French would like to see a depiction of how the options would look. Chris Clark pointed out the artist's impressions. Gillian said she could not visualise the size and width and depth of options from these.
- 4.37 Tim Paterson said all the material was on the website.
- 4.38 Chris Clark said he'd show the long sections and cross sections later in the presentation.
- 4.39 CFG member Wilson Dale commented that most people were not engineers and couldn't visualise the design just from reading plans. At the last meeting it had been suggested that three-dimensional models of the various options could help in presenting information to the community.
- 4.40 Andrew Smith suggested there was provision in the presentation for questions and answers at the end of each section and asked if members could note their questions down until the Q&A section was reached.
- 4.41 Chris Clark continued his presentation

## **Existing highway upgrade**

- 4.42 A key message was that an upgrade of the existing highway through Coffs Harbour to an urban motorway does not merit further consideration due to its socio-economic impacts on the Coffs Harbour urban area.
- 4.43 CFG member Gillian French asked why there couldn't be a highway/bypass just for trucks.
- 4.44 CFG member Gail Latham asked about access to and from the Pacific Highway - when would there be any improvements to the current situation.
- 4.45 Bob Higgins replied that ongoing minor improvements would continue on the existing Pacific Highway, such as coordination of signals. The studies being done assume that the ring-road system is in place.
- 4.46 CFG member Gail Latham asked what would be done about access on the existing highway north of the Big Banana, how is it going to be improved?

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- 4.47 Bob Higgins (RTA) advised that the General Manager Safety is investigating what can be done for the whole highway and will submit a report to the Minister for his consideration.

## **Coastal Ridge Way proposal**

- 4.48 The key message on the Coastal Ridge Way proposal was that investigations had shown the proposal had major environmental (biophysical) impacts, poor functional performance, high cost and provided poor value for money. A decision regarding the proposal would be made following the assessment of the feasibility of options within Council's preferred corridor.
- 4.49 CFG member Wilson Dale queried the figures on traffic volumes presented saying the percentage seemed a bit high.
- 4.50 Chris Clark advised that the figures were based on projected 2021 traffic volumes. Local trucking companies had advised that about one-third of their heavy vehicles did business in Coffs Harbour itself.
- 4.51 Bob Higgins said that because of the fact that about 40,000 vehicles per day would be using the highway through Coffs Harbour, we would have to have a good standard dual carriageway road.
- 4.52 CFG member Trish Welsh said the document was a confusing and misleading document and wasn't correct. For example, where is the information on the northern section. If she is confused, how will the community make sense of it?
- 4.53 CFG member Wilson Dale said the photography was more than 2 years old and that people would notice that.
- 4.54 CFG member Gail Latham asked whether the Northern Section was going to be put on hold.
- 4.55 Chris Clark replied that identifying a preferred option for Sapphire to Woolgoolga was a key step - we cannot talk about timing of construction until we can identify and set aside a preferred option. He said that the timing of the investigations in the northern and southern sections had now come together.

## **Inner Bypass Corridor**

- 4.56 Of the strategies assessed to date (the existing highway corridor, Coastal Ridge Way proposal and Inner Bypass corridor) the strategy preferred by the RTA and DIPNR for Coffs Harbour was a bypass located generally within the Inner Corridor. Options for this were on display for community comment. The preference for an Inner Bypass would be reviewed following an assessment of the feasibility of options within Council's preferred corridor. All of the information was available on the project web site.
- 4.57 CFG member Bert Beasley asked how many options in CHCC corridor were we looking at?
- 4.58 Chris Clark said we'd only just started looking at the constraints, we'd try to identify all feasible options.
- 4.59 CFG member Wilson Dale said he had an issue with Peter Jackson's membership of the CFG. Peter Jackson was an employee of the RTA and therefore Wilson Dale believed he should not be a member of the group.

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- 4.60 Andrew Smith said it was inappropriate to discuss the matter at this time and further, that the matter had been discussed at a previous meeting and dismissed.
- 4.61 CFG member Wilson Dale said he believed that was not the case.
- 4.62 Andrew Smith replied that he was certain that was the case and the matter had been recorded in the previous meeting Notes. He said there would be no further discussion on the matter but Wilson Dale's comments would be recorded in the Notes.

## Meeting break

- 4.63 Following the break, Andrew Smith advised the CFG that Mr Jackson had resigned from the group as he did not feel comfortable being subjected to criticism of his membership. Andrew also reminded the CFG that every member had completed a nomination form which gave details of their background and representation. All applications were then screened by an independent assessment committee.

## Sapphire to Woolgoolga Section

- 4.64 Chris Clark advised that originally five route options had been identified for the Sapphire to Woolgoolga section. The findings of a Value Management Study were that:
- Option A was not favoured due to environmental (biophysical) and Aboriginal heritage impacts, poor functional performance, high cost and poor value for money;
  - Options B1 and B2 did not merit further consideration due to the need to protect valuable agricultural land;
  - Option D was not an acceptable option due to its social and economic impacts on the township of Woolgoolga.
- 4.65 Chris Clark said Option C1 was a modification of the initial Option C. He described the route from South Woolgoolga to north of Safety Beach Drive. Option E was a combination of Options B and C1. An inner bypass of Coffs Harbour and either Option C1 or E would necessarily include the upgrading of the existing highway from Sapphire to South Woolgoolga to dual carriageway standard. The costings for the Sapphire to South Woolgoolga section are included in the Options C1 and E costings. The investigations completed to date indicated that the section from Sapphire to Moonee would have the highest priority for duplication as it presently provided the lowest level of service for road users and substantial urban developments were being planned along the highway corridor and in the Moonee area.
- 4.66 CFG member Phil Doyle said he couldn't understand why Options B1 and B2 were rejected.
- 4.67 CFG member David Pike explained that they cut through ridges protecting banana plantations and would change the microclimate.
- 4.68 CFG member Wilson Dale asked about a report by the Noise Taskforce. He said the report had been with the RTA for some time and asked when it would be released.

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- 4.69 Bob Higgins replied that the draft report had not been formally accepted and therefore was not yet a public document. It was inappropriate at this stage to discuss any of the findings of the report.
- 4.70 CFG member Trish Welsh asked when copies of the document would be available.
- 4.71 Bob Higgins replied that when the report was finalised, it would be available as a public document after it had been shown to the affected residents identified in the report. There also were many other noise studies being conducted along the length of the Pacific Highway and those reports were also coming to fruition. The result would be that a range of noise mitigation measures would be suggested for various situations.
- 4.72 CFG member Trish Welsh asked when it was expected the report would become a public document.
- 4.73 Bob Higgins advised he expected it could be within the next month.
- 4.74 CFG member Wilson Dale said the reports had been promised to be available in the new year.
- 4.75 Bob Higgins responded that a lot of work had been carried out along the length of the highway and the RTA was trying to get the reports finalised.
- 4.76 Chris Clark continued with his presentation.
- 4.77 Jenny Bonfield (Mayor, CHCC) commented that she was concerned about noise and asked how successful has noise reduction been in other regional areas, what comparisons and tolerances are being allowed in those areas of Coffs Harbour.
- 4.78 Chris Clark replied that the RTA worked on guidelines from the EPA and RTA.
- 4.79 Bob Higgins added that there was a set of guidelines that they have to comply with including consideration of the decibel rating. There are a number of measures that can be used to reduce noise e.g. design, gradient (can we eliminate or change some of the grades?).
- 4.80 Jenny Bonfield (Mayor, CHCC) asked whether the noise levels were acceptable.
- 4.81 Bob Higgins (RTA) replied that they are going back to review all the noise results as they have to comply with the guidelines.
- 4.82 CFG member Gail Latham commented that at the last meeting members were advised that a noise study was about to be launched and that we would like reassurance that there has been a true noise study done.
- 4.83 Chris Clark advised that there is a document which goes into a lot of detail on the noise assessment.
- 4.84 CFG member Wilson Dale said RTA is saying that EPA standards apply, but the outcome is not satisfactory. We should be talking about a satisfactory outcome.
- 4.85 Bob Higgins said there was a process that the document had to follow, and that it would take 2-3 weeks. The RTA also has to do post-construction noise studies of its projects.
- 4.86 Chris Clark then referred to the longitudinal sections and cross sections shown.



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- 4.87 CFG member Gillian French asked whether deeper cuts were necessary if they were going to reduce the gradient.
- 4.88 Bob Higgins replied yes and added that they can bring the grade line down.
- 4.89 CFG member Trish Welsh asked for information on tunnels, stacks and extractors.
- 4.90 Bob Higgins gave a brief explanation.
- 4.91 CFG member Trish Welsh then asked how long they were talking about vehicles being in the tunnel and what impact would fans have on residents.
- 4.92 Chris Clark indicated that fans were only used in emergencies and the use of tunnels or cuttings depended on a range of considerations.
- 4.93 CFG member Gillian French questioned the depth of a cutting.
- 4.94 Chris Clark responded that the deepest cut (on the Coastal Ridge Way proposal) would be 81 metres. All these statistics would be in the Coastal Ridge Way report.
- 4.95 CFG member Trish Welsh asked about noise bouncing off the hills and echoing to which Chris Clark replied that they would need to go into a detailed investigation.
- 4.96 Jenny Bonfield (Mayor, CHCC) commented on the noise of the trucks, braking of the trucks, emission control.
- 4.97 Bob Higgins advised that design standards were changing in Europe and that an RTA team were looking at such developments.
- 4.98 CFG member Wilson Dale commented that we, as a CFG, wanted to voice our displeasure before this goes to the Minister for consideration. Will the Council be any closer to having a finite route in their corridor because we are talking about the public feeling a bit anxious.
- 4.99 Tim Paterson (Connell Wagner) replied that the Minister and the RTA had made a commitment to undertaking an assessment on the Council's preferred corridor. The Council was relying on the RTA to do that. There would be ongoing consultation with Council and any suggestions from Council would be taken on board.
- 4.100 CFG member Trish Welsh wanted to know whether affected property owners were contacted re the CRW and CHCC corridors.
- 4.101 Chris Clark replied that letters and brochures were sent out and phone calls made to potentially affected property owners offering to meet them by appointment either at staffed displays or on-site.

## 5 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 Chris Clark said the feasibility of options within Council's preferred corridor would be assessed and a report on the assessment would be placed on display when completed. A VMW would be held to assist with selection of the preferred option. This would involve technical and non-technical representatives from a range of Government, Council and community interests. The recommendations arising from the workshop would be considered as part of the subsequent evaluation of options. A draft Preferred Options Report would document the evaluation of options and present the preferred options. A decision on the preferred options was expected by mid-2004. After a preferred option for the southern section of the strategy was

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identified, planning action would be taken to reserve the required corridor. Following the identification of a preferred option for the Sapphire to Woolgoolga section of the strategy, a concept design would be progressed and a range of key highway planning matters would be addressed in more detail, including the location and configuration of interchanges and intersections, the need for service roads and the type and location of noise mitigation measures. Another important activity would be further application of urban design principles. The concept design would be placed on display for public comment. An environmental impact assessment (EIA) would be prepared before seeking planning approval to construct the project. An EIA was required to demonstrate that feasible alternative options had been investigated and that the preferred option best met the project objectives.

5.2 CFG member Phil Doyle asked about compensation for people owning land in the path of the preferred option.

5.3 Chris Clark advised that after the environmental assessments had been done and approved and signed off by the Chief Executive Officer, landowners would be approached and compensation would be offered. This could take up to 2-3 years.

## **6 FUTURE ROLE OF CFG**

6.1 Bob Higgins said that the information release was now on display for comment. When completed, the report on the feasibility of the CHCC preferred corridor would be placed on exhibition. The feasibility assessment is basically a constraints mapping exercise to investigate opportunities for feasible options. The next step after comment on the CHCC corridor report is a VM study where representatives of government agencies, CFGs, Council, RTA, DIPNR etc. evaluate the options and try to reach some conclusion. Once that happens, the RTA reports to the Minister and, together with DIPNR, they decide how it can go forward. CFG members will be providing input to the CHCC corridor and participating in the VM.

6.2 CFG member Gail Latham asked would the CFG members be able to assess all routes. Currently, there's no decision on the CHCC corridor.

6.3 CFG member Phil Doyle said there are only 4 inner bypass options and the CRW and Council's corridor to consider.

6.4 Andrew Smith said the CFG still has a role - they are encouraged to provide feedback. The investigation into the CHCC corridor may find other routes or may not find any routes - we have to look at the constraints and opportunities. If there aren't any, we have to look at why not.

6.5 CFG member Stan Dacey - that should only take a couple of days.

6.6 CFG member Gail Latham asked when does the CRW stop getting tweaked.

6.7 Bob Higgins said the RTA is on a timetable. There has been lots of investment in the CRW, lots of tweaking and we think we've done sufficient.

6.8 Andrew Smith said we can't set a date for the next meeting tonight - can't have a meeting until the CHCC corridor assessment has been finalised. That will be at least 4 weeks.

## **7 OTHER MATTERS**

7.1 Andrew Smith asked that as minutes were not formally accepted from the previous meeting at the start of the session and the minutes were about a meeting held 5 months ago, did anyone have any issues with the minutes?

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- 7.2 No issues with minutes - minutes accepted. No other issues
- 7.3 CFG member Trish Welsh said that as there were never any answers to issues, there's no point in bringing anything up. Normal meeting protocol was to call for agenda items prior to the meeting.

#### **Media release from this meeting**

- 7.4 There was some discussion regarding the need to publicise that the CFG was operational again and that the project was being progressed. CFG members felt that the general community needed to know where the project was heading in terms of the timing for a preferred option being announced

#### **8 NEXT CFG MEETING**

To be advised.

#### **9 CLOSE OF MEETING**

Meeting closed at 9.15pm.

**Next Meeting:** To be advised.