

Notes of Meeting



Purpose of Meeting		Business Focus Group Meeting No.2	
Project	Wells Crossing to Iluka Road, Upgrading the Pacific Highway	Project No	EN01810
Prepared By	Jo Moss	Phone No	9920 2100
Place of Meeting	Grafton Community Centre, Grafton	Date	19 October 2006
Present	Vince Castle, NSW Cane Growers Association George Cowan, Clarence Valley Council Greg Hayes, Grafton Shopping World Laurie Marchant, South Grafton Progress Association Tony Wade, South Grafton Progress Association Diana Loges, RTA Jo Moss, SKM Peter Prince, SKM		
Apologies	<i>Russell Widin; Peter Dibella; Kerren Law; Jim Fear; David Munro</i>		
Distribution	All above plus Scott Smith RTA, Mark Eastwood, RTA, Paul Robilliard, SKM and Susan Crick, SKM		

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- 1) Diana Loges welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were introductions by participants. Diana Loges thanked everyone for their input to the project to date.
- 2) Project Update – Overview of the preferred route
 - Diana Loges and Jo Moss described the preferred route and the aspects that had been taken into consideration in its selection. Diana Loges explained the display process and timing.
 - She explained that the project team members have been meeting individual property owners to understand specific impacts and identify aspects for further refinement during the development of the concept design.
- 3) Discussion
 - Council's representative commented that the preferred route is a reasonable compromise from community's point of view, particularly at the southern end with an interchange close to Grafton. Issues of importance include standard of access to each community. Importance of style and location of interchanges. Access for heavy vehicles to and from the highway.
 - From the retail business community perspective, the selection of preferred route

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and interchange locations was considered to meet their requirements. Issues include signage issues and directional signage to businesses.

- Business would like more information about RTA service centre policy, how many service centres may be along this length and where they may be located and there was some discussion on this aspect. There was concern that a service centre with such a low traffic volume would not be financially viable. Emergency services were identified as an important consideration. It was suggested that these, together with tourist info centres and service centres, could be integrated to overall benefit of economy of the area. There was some discussion that Tyndale could be developed to service local and through traffic.
- Representatives of the South Grafton Progress Association comments that the preferred route is a reasonable compromise. There is a positive response to the location of the route west of Glenugie Peak and the interchange close to Grafton. At the same time there is recognition that the cane in this area is at a critical mass and there is concern for impacts north of Tyndale.
- There was comment that the current location of the interchange at Glenugie, within the State Forest, will inhibit any development in the vicinity of the interchange and whether it could be moved to north of Eight Mile Lane. Moving the interchange further north would provide access to potential commercial / industrial development. Interchange will be land locked if it stays in current position. Important for Grafton's future. Would minimise additional transport / freight costs to have interchange closer to development. DL indicated that RTA's current view is to locate the interchange generally at its current location, but will consider the suggestion.
- There was a question about whether the works to the existing highway can be done in advance of upgraded works. DL responded that the staging of works has not yet been decided. There are a number of ways of constructing the project.
- The cane industry representative made a statement on behalf of the industry.
 - Should not under-estimate impacts on the cane industry. Thought consultation process had been good but with the announcement of the preferred route the industry has decided that consultation has been hollow. Industry is bitterly disappointed.
 - North of Harwood, industry accepted there was only one option and there would be impacts on cane land. Industry accepted that on the basis that they expected there would be minimisation of impacts on cane land south of the river.
 - The area north of Tyndale is the best cane land; land closest (150-200m) to the river is most productive. Land beyond that is marginal. If growers only have land at the back, farms will not be viable.
 - Cane land is under pressure from hobby farms. Cannot withstand any further reduction in area and supply to the mill. Cane industry estimates that 380 ha will be lost - that means a loss of 100,000 tonnes to mill. Under 600,000 tonnes, mill will not be viable. All sugar is refined at Harwood. If industry

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- closes at Harwood mill will be redundant and that will affect the entire sugar industry.
- Mill hoping to develop cogeneration with Delta Energy. Delta Energy now questioning if mill can meet supply with reduction in productive land.
 - Cane industry creates jobs and lifestyles that are multi-generational. Industry working hard to attract people and for farming families to continue. Hard to retain/attract younger people and will be even harder with no future for the industry as a result of the highway.
 - Cane industry wants a new route. Favoured a combination of red/green. Cane industry options are: either a revised route that minimises impacts or a political solution. They consider the preferred route cannot be substantiated.
 - Industry held a meeting of cane growers at Tyndale – 8 growers indicated they don't have a future.
 - Cane industry stated that negotiation with RTA and SKM is at an end. Growers have unanimously agreed that no single cane farmer owner will meet separately with the RTA.
 - Cane industry has approached Federal MP, who will be visiting the area after Parliamentary sitting. From cane industry's perspective this is now political.
 - Cane industry participates in DoP Committee on protection of prime agricultural lands. One government agency working in contravention of another agency.
 - Summerland Way brochure describes impacts on agricultural land but no consideration of impacts on cane industry in WC2IR documentation.
 - New corridor goes through entire riverbank of cane land.
- Diana Loges acknowledged the comments of the cane industry and emphasised that impacts on cane land had been seriously considered in the development of route options and the selection of the preferred route south of the Clarence River and the preferred route had been selected as a result of seeking to achieve a balance between many significant potential impacts. She explained that the RTA had also considered options east and west of Harwood; while they are feasible, the potential significant impacts on cane land was a key consideration in selecting a route based on the existing road corridor between Harwood and Iluka Road. She also asked that the cane industry not discourage their members from speaking with the RTA. It was very important that the RTA spoke to property owners on an individual basis as well as on an industry level.
- 4) The next steps
- Diana Loges outlined the next steps in the project, which are to progress the concept design in consideration of issues raised by stakeholders and property owners.
 - Specific issues arising from this meeting to be considered include:
 - Cane industry wants RTA to move route north of Tyndale to the back of the cane farms.

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- Hold an interchange location and design workshop.
- Council is going through process of updating the LEP - need to make sure that plan facilitates best use of land around the corridor. Council and RTA will liaise in relation to severed and fragmented lots (building lot sizes, subdivision potential). LEP to facilitate special zonings – make sure that orphaned areas of land can amalgamated or otherwise managed so that prime agricultural land can be retained.
- Access to / from local roads – particularly for cane trucks in Maclean area.
- Service Centres and signage. Provide information to participants on RTA policy.
- The cane industry representative indicated that they would be asking RTA to participate in a meeting with cane growers. Need to see how impacts can be minimised (Tyndale to Farlows land at Yamba Road). Impact is too great now. Looking for minimum loss of cane. George Cowan, Laurie Marchant and Tony Wade asked to be invited to be invited to that meeting.

The meeting closed at approximately 12pm.