

Project:	Woodburn to Ballina Pacific Highway Upgrade	Reference:	00561786
Meeting	COMMUNITY LIAISON GROUP – Meeting No.7	Date:	07/ 06/2005

Present:	Apology:	Name:	Group/ Organisation:
✓		David Judge	Wardell Progress Association
✓		Kerry Kelly	Bagotville
	✓	Bill Walker	NSW Sugar Milling Co-Operative, Broadwater Mill
✓		Ron Rosolen	Wardell
✓		Natasha Heath	Wardell Progress Association
✓		Mike Rushby	Wardell
✓		Julianne Coyle	Wardell
✓		Roger Stanley	Coolgardie
✓		Trevor Monti	Bagotville
✓		Emma Walke	Bagotville
✓		John Degotardi	Broadwater
✓		Jack Matthes	Broadwater
✓		Jeffrey Phillips	Woodburn
		Rodney Ison	Richmond River CLG – Broadwater and Pimlico interest
✓		Darren Woolage	Broadwater
		Murray Shergold	Woodburn
✓		Steve Flatley	Richmond River Cane Growers Association
✓		Bert Plenkovich	Richmond River Cane Growers Association
✓		Tony Carusi	Richmond River Cane Growers Association
	✓	Ray Collyer	Wardell
✓		David McDonald	Rural area between Woodburn and Broadwater
	✓	Stephanie Lymburner	Coolgardie and Coolgardie Scrub Conservation Group
✓		Mark Graham	North Coast Conservation Council, Big Scrub Environment Centre and Nature Conservation Council
✓		Rik Nutt	Woodburn
✓		Bill Salapic	Woodburn
✓		Colin Duncan	Wardell
✓		Francine Hitchens	Riley's Hill
✓		Paddy Wilde	Riley's Hill
✓		Gavin Browne	Jali Aboriginal Council
✓		Artie Ferguson	Jali Aboriginal Council
✓		Shane Higgins	Roads and Traffic Authority
✓		Bob Higgins	Roads and Traffic Authority
✓		Andrew Nathan	Hyder Consulting
✓		Tony Gilson	Hyder Consulting
✓		Carolyn Stone	PPM Consultants
✓		Annette Ross	Hyder Consulting
✓		Daniela Payne	GeoLINK
Recorded By:	Daniela Payne, GeoLINK		Total Pages: 10

**WOODBURN TO BALLINA – COMMUNITY LIAISON GROUP
NOTES OF MEETING NO.7 – TUESDAY 7 JUNE 2005**

Carolyn opened the meeting at 6.30 pm, and welcomed members. Carolyn introduced Gavin Browne who will be fulfilling Barry Jameson's role in representing the Jali Aboriginal Council at the CLG meetings.

Apologies were received from Ray Collyer, Stephanie Lymburner, and Bill Walker. An apology was also received from Harry Batt, he is sick and cannot attend this evening.

Carolyn outlined the agenda for the meeting, and emphasised how this meeting was almost totally committed to hearing from the CLG members on their feelings and input from the display of route corridor options and the general community feedback they have received.

Carolyn confirmed the names of the CLG members that were going to attend the Value Management Session (VMS) as representatives of the CLG body as being – Jack Matthes; Bert Plenkovich; Mark Graham and Emma Wake. She drew attention to the fact that this evening's meeting would help these 4 representatives to gain a better overall understanding of the issues most important to the general community and other CLG members, so that they can better represent them at the VMS next month.

ITEM 1 Acceptance of CLG 6 notes (CAROLYN STONE)

Carolyn asked for comment on the notes of CLG 6 prior to the minutes being accepted by all.

Mark highlighted a few changes that needed to be made on the CLG 6 notes, which will be made and then the notes redistributed. Mark gave Daniela a copy of his notes with the changes marked on them.

Jack Matthes asked that in the instance of him making a statement, he would prefer not to be named personally in the minutes, but rather to be referred to as a CLG member. Mark Graham preferred to be named personally, as he felt that his statements often reflected his personal opinion.

The minutes were otherwise accepted.

ITEM 2 CLG members' summary of their opinions on the route options display

Carolyn explained that each member would get an approximately 5 minute period in which to summarise their concerns and present their respective communities' concerns with regard to the route corridor options that were currently on display. If the member felt that they needed more than 5 minutes, they could get another turn to add to their comments after each person had already had the chance to offer their opinions.

The comments received were as follows:

CLG Member 1: He expressed that he has been very disappointed since he received the letter on Friday 27th of May regarding the route options display, and what the chosen routes were. At CLG 6, on the 18th of May, some major issues regarding flooding, the catchment areas in question, ponding sections in question and other issues were raised, which were clearly not referred to before selection of the various routes presented – this was evident because of the very short time frame between the CLG meeting and the issuing of full colour brochures showing various route options, and because of where those routes were selected for the options presented – as they were not representative of accepting the huge amount of input already given to the project team – at CLG, focus group and other meetings and conversations. Bert felt that the CLG group had been a hard working and committed group throughout the process thus far, and that their input has not been received in this manner. He strongly felt that the opinions and local knowledge that had been offered to the project team from the CLG members had not been taken into consideration when deciding on the various route corridor options.

He added later in the meeting these points: That we are making a decision here for a community beyond Woodburn, and it does not seem that way at all. He would like to emphasise the effect of flooding in this region, because for 50 years he has been involved in monitoring, inspecting, and saving families in flood events, and he has experienced first hand the devastating effects it has. In this respect he added that any obstruction on the floodplain which causes delays or bottlenecks, create real hazards. He related this point specifically to 1A option which he said would have a very isolating effect on the residents in that area during a flood event as a result of the highway going in that particular location. He also said that the reliability of flood models or predictions are not reliable, and that a 100 mm change in flood levels would have a significant and devastating effect on certain local

areas. In relation to this, he cannot accept that 1A, 1B and 1C route options are being put forward as flood free options, as they are not.

Option 2F removes 600 ha of cane land, and leaves fragments of properties which cannot be used as viable portions after the severance has occurred.

Option 2E – he believed the original plan was to steer the route east of Cook's Hill, and then swing west of Law's Hill. He cannot accept that a road would be considered for the bad country below the Tuckombil canal. He emphasised that during harvest season within the cane industry, there are approximately 60 trucks per day, - travelling 24 hours a day.

His preference of route option is a route between route 2D and 2C – going around the west of Law's Hill and East of Cook's Hill. A member asked him where he proposes crossing the river with this option – he said the west side of Law's Hill would be the best spot for that option.

He has had a great amount of people talking to him in the community and feels that if all else fails, he thinks there will be a commission of inquiry into making sure the best route is chosen.

CLG Member 2: He said that he had prepared 3 or 4 pages of questions and comments he had made on the very troubling situation at present, but that there was not time to go through that in detail. He would provide his pages of notes to the project team so that they could look at the detail he had included. He tried to summarise his points as follows:

- Only good point on one of the routes – 2C – was that it was outside of the flood prone area, otherwise it was a poor selection because of its proximity to homes.
- He recalled the CLG meeting when all members were divided into 5 groups and various routes were proposed. He confirms that not one of the groups that day presented any routes that were as flood prone as some of the routes represented by the various options on display at the moment.
- At CLG 6 he asked whether the 'flood free route' option that was submitted was still being considered, and it was confirmed that it was still being considered. Looking at the various options proposed however, and within which time frame they were proposed after the last meeting, he does not trust that this was actually the case.
- He pointed out that various of the route corridors selected had 2 river crossings, very wide (up to 500 metres) river crossings, the interruption of fish breeding grounds at these crossings, and the traversing of mangroves, houses, heathland and the flood plain by some of the options.
- He asked whether the highway was still being planned for the 1:100 year flood event, or whether that had been changed to the 1:20 year event.
- He gave specific and brief comment on each of the routes proposed:
 - 1A – With the exception of 1km up the northern edge of it, the route was very much within the badly affected flood plain.
 - 1B – No comment
 - 2A – He identified flaws which included using National Parks, cutting through 6/ 7 homes, having a bridge on a sharp corner on the river – which could increase flood levels during a flood event.
 - 2B and 2C – Flood prone area, cutting through several homes, river crossings of 500 metres or more, cuts through 1 and a half kilometres of cane land, 1,8 kilometres of flood plain, and bisects valuable endangered habitats.
 - 2D – Should be located on high ground
 - 2E – Goes over Cooks Hill, and traverses a flood prone route
 - 2F – The entire route option lies within a flood prone area, and he was lead to believe over the past few months that this option had been wiped out as a result. It also had the widest river crossing and traverses 8km of cane land.

CLG Member 3: He stated that he has not had much time to go through the options in detail, but said that he is very concerned over the western side of the river options proposed after the glance he has had through it. His feedback from the community was that one owner he knows of that has had his property on the market for a period of one month or so cannot sell it at the moment, as no one wants to buy during this period of uncertainty, at least up until a route is decided upon. He questioned why a route was even considered which cuts through thick marshland – he feels he has wasted his time thus far discussing various factors within the study area with the project team.

CLG Member 4: He owns the BP in Broadwater (one of the static display venues), and so has heard a lot of what people have to say about the various options which have been proposed. His comment is that there is a lot of negativity over all the options that have been proposed at this stage. His specific personal comments were:

- He does not understand the reasoning behind physically splitting Broadwater and Riley's Hill (two very close communities) by the highway (options 2A and 2B), and also removing homes and land in the same process.
- Two river crossings create extra unnecessary noise
- Flooding is a huge issue in this area – he feels it is time the project team started listening to the community, because he feels up until the present moment they have not been listened to as yet.
- He asked why the East National Park route had been dropped off as an option – he felt that this one was probably the best out of a bad bunch.
- He suggested that route 2D needed to be moved further east, and not through the land it currently traverses.
- He asked whether an economic impact study had been done as yet, and to what extent the choosing of routes pivoted upon the findings. He also asked that if it was done, if he could please get a copy of it. Both Carolyn and Shane gave answers to this question. Carolyn said that a study had been completed and that the full study was not available right at the minute for distribution, although this could be organised. Shane said that the Executive Summary of the working papers which lead up to the route option display period was handed out this evening, and that it contained a summarised version of what studies had been completed to date. Darren, Mark and some other members requested that they get a full version of the studies completed; the list of CLG members who wanted this full version (a 240 page document) would be collected by Tony Gilson.
- How much consideration does the community get with respect to submitting the feedback forms that have been distributed with the pamphlets on the corridor options? It was answered that each of the submissions are considered by the relevant specialist on the project team. Every submission is certainly considered however.
- He feels that the route options 2A and 2B would create a much greater noise impact for the Riley's Hill residents, who have bought in that area because of its distance to noise generating problems such as the Pacific Highway.

CLG Member 5: He believes that the whole study area is in the wrong area, and that it should be moved over to the East. With the flood prone areas being throughout the study area, the effect that high roads will have on the 1:100 year flood line that exists already will only impact flood prone areas more than they are already impacted upon, as well as having a larger impact on the upstream locations. He believes that the proposed bridge crossings of 1km are too large with too many impacts which have a detrimental effect. The community members to whom he has spoken thus far have spoken only negatively of all the route options that have been proposed. Although the only support there has been, has been with regard to the Eastern options. He agrees with other CLG members on the seriousness of the flooding impact, and believes that it should be given more attention. He added that roads sink constantly at the moment along the current route.

CLG Member 6: Her understanding from previous CLG meetings was that it was a prerequisite that the highway did not cut through any town areas, or separate towns in any way. From the proposed routes presented this does not seem to have been followed through at all. She is very confused over the whole community liaison process, as it seems that whatever has been said by the CLG members thus far has not been listened to anyway.

CLG Member 7: He is feeling deceived by the process at this time – whether it has been the RTA or the consultants that deceived him he is not sure. His feeling is that there is a list with tick boxes next to them in Sydney somewhere which asks whether community consultation has occurred, and that this box has been ticked without actually listening to what the community had to say. He feels his time has been severely wasted in attending all the meetings and taking phone calls and talking to other members within the community and relaying their concerns at the CLG meetings, as all he has put in to the process thus far seems to have been neglected. Community members themselves are asking the CLG members 'what have you actually been doing during your numerous meetings?' saying that it looks like they are wasting your time. The fact that no actual input has been accepted is very disconcerting.

From a positive point of view, the areas that should have the highway going through should be further east of the proposed route in the southern section, if we are going to stick to the 1:100 year flood free access route goal. He noted that some input had been taken on board with regard to river crossings, but added that it was really important for the southern section to be shifted further east so as to avoid the extreme loss of valuable agricultural land, and to avoid the severely flood prone areas.

He said it 'smelt' like the State government has issued a directive that the National Parks are not to be touched with regard to route options, but strangely by using some of the higher lying areas within the National Park, we would alleviate most of the problems with respect to flooding impact. He added that using the Back Channel was insanity, as it is very low lying territory that is crazy to build anything on.

He suggests that the route should sweep right around the back of Broadwater, staying east of Allister Lane and coming back in at the back of the Ponda Rosa. From a cane industry perspective, he believes he would rather lose a piece of this land than disturb towns in this area. He recommends staying right up on the sand dune bank – 3m above the natural ground level. He feels that a 50 mm to 100 mm flood depth increase may be called insignificant to the engineers in Sydney who are working on the project, but for the elderly local people, for example, it is a huge problem to them being able to move around during a flood event. He also warned that we should be mindful of the fact that flood models are not a clear indication of what happens in reality. He spoke of using underpasses under the highway being constructed for a variety of purposes – to accommodate ecological movement and assist in flood water mitigation.

CLG Member 8: He and his young family bought property in Riley's Hill a few years back for the reason that it was a quiet and peaceful lifestyle, quite removed from the highway and main arterial routes. If he wanted noise and more of a town life, he would have bought in the towns along the current Pacific Highway. Now with the proposal that comes very close to Riley's Hill Township, he will be quite badly affected with noise pollution. He is also drastically concerned that the last remaining fauna corridor has been traversed by one of the proposed routes. If the project team would just listen to the locals, we would know that they are not at all happy.

CLG Member 9: He feels that the flood free route that was proposed was the most sensible route proposed thus far. His biggest concern was whether the project team who had selected the proposed routes had actually been on to ground level and looked at all the route options in terms of where they actually cut the ground. He said he would be heartbroken should the highway be put through his Bagotville farm which he has spent 20 years clearing, so that he can grow cane on it. He believes the decision makers should have a hands on look at the properties to gain a better understanding of what they are dealing with.

CLG Member 10: He reiterated that he was a newcomer to the area at the beginning of the project and did not have the same history of local knowledge, although by talking with locals, that knowledge base is growing rapidly. His main objective was to make sure that local people within the study area still had good access to the highway and that their local roads were not removed or destroyed in the process. He wanted to make sure that local people were considered in the location of on ramps and off ramps. He is frustrated why this has not been part of the process to date. An answer was given that this part of the design of the road would certainly take place, with consultation to the community members, at the design phase of the project – which would be once a preferred route was chosen.

Mark Graham: Mark presented Stephanie Lymburner's letter that she had sent to read at the meeting, as she could not be at the meeting. Her letter was read to the CLG members, and then passed around the group so that people could read it again if they chose to.

Mark started by introducing the fact that a community meeting had been held regarding the proposed routes, and that he felt a great sense of betrayal along with most of the other community members, regarding how the project has progressed recently. He is most discontent at the very limited time period which has been allowed for public comment over the proposed route corridor options. He stated that the community need at least 1 month and perhaps up to 6 months additional time to be able to consider their input and be able to make some informed decisions over the options available to them at the moment.

He made some specific comments regarding each of the proposed route corridor options:

- 1A, 1B and 1C – Limited social and environmental impact. It appears to be a sound proposal, and appears to have taken cognisance of many of the constraints facing that section of the study area.
- 2A and 2B – He has massive concerns over these options – as they have immense social impact on the communities of Bagotville, Meerschaum Vale, Riley's Hill, Coolgardie and some other smaller areas.
- 2C – the southern section of this option traverses some of the most culturally significant areas – of both an Aboriginal and local property owner significance. In the Northern section of this option, there are threatened species and endangered flora communities, which will have a massive affect on the Meerschaum Vale and Coolgardie communities.
- 2D – This option has a massive impact on Jali Aboriginal land and communities, as well as a very large impact on endangered ecological communities.
- 2E – This option was poorly defined within the public release arena – it does not state how many properties are affected etc. If the RTA seeks public comment on the route option, they will have to provide more information to the public on the option.
- 2F – a variation of 2F would be his choice of a preferred route in this particular section, because it interferes with very few residents, although it allows for a substantial loss of good cane land (he believes at least cane

farmers can be compensated for loss of land). He suggests a route that follows this path, but is slightly outside of the study area so as to minimise residential impact.

- 3B – this is his preferred route in the northern section of the highway, his reasoning was that this follows the existing route of the Pacific Highway, and the impact of a highway in that area has already been felt and has taken its affect – this affect will just be expanded upon.

CLG Member 11: She questioned why options that have been put forward by local long time residents such as Jack and Bert have not been considered in more depth prior to this time. She is very disappointed at the possibility of a route (2A) running straight through Riley's Hill. In this same route there is a koala habitat which runs alongside the proposed route, as well as running along Riley's Hill Road. She named a few fauna species including birds, mammals and other species which are endangered and are found within the park which was bought by Paul Hogan to be able to preserve one of the last remaining koala habitats in the area. Out of the 57 houses in Riley's Hill, every one of the householders opposes the options 2A and 2B. She also mentioned significant non indigenous heritage items within the area under consideration for options 2A and 2B – including the dry dock, school hall and others. She mentioned the cost and flooding impact of having 2 river crossings. She pointed out that at the present moment the only noise impacts that Riley's Hill residents are open to are the cane trucks every two years only, whereas the proposal, which she finds hardly believable, would have huge noise impacts upon the village. She has had her community ask her whether she actually had input into the process, and if she was actually the one who proposed these routes that are the current options. She assumes that the RTA are using the 'divide and conquer' tactic of pitting one group against another and then steaming ahead and running the road where they like anyway – whilst community members are fighting amongst themselves.

CLG Member 12: He has been away for six weeks, and has just returned. His overall impression is that there is only one group of people who seem to be driving the process and making sure their options are taken on board, and that is the Environmental group. He stated that this should not be the case, as there are numerous other interest groups and constraints that should be given equal consideration. He feels that the fact that the National Park is being left alone in most instances is evidence of this fact. He also added that it should be known or advertised that CLG members are not responsible for the maps and the decisions that are made during the process.

CLG Member 13: He shed some light on the fact that the property that he owns and manages houses approximately 40 households of people, and is not simply a residential block that houses one household of people. The possibility of taking the highway through this property would entail relocating and rehousing all these households, rather than just one household of people. He believes that the procedure has been far too rushed and feels that mistakes have happened as a result. The human error and incompetence element has been pressured by the speed of the project, and as a result major flaws are opening up in the course of the project. He feels that residents are being pushed to get this through, and that there is simply not enough time for the public and residents in particular to be able to make an informed decision or submission regarding the feedback on the options presented. He believes that it is paramount that the community gets to know what the access particulars are for the various routes, before a submission can be made, as this is a major factor in trying to decide which option to lean towards.

CLG Member 14: She asked firstly, what the hurry was in making a decision, and that rushing the process has a really big and detrimental effect on everyone, and she feels that the time frame for submissions simply has to be extended. She suggested a more easterly route, that it would have less of an impact on people's homes and livelihood. She has a problem understanding how these maps, which are simply on paper at the moment have not been physically checked on the land prior to them being released as options. She suggests that each property actually needs to be traversed, and that would help to educate both the project team, and would allow more time for the community to become more educated on the process and be able to make a valuable contribution to the process.

A question was posed from Mark Graham at this stage, asking whether the project team actually drove each and every public road within the study area to be able to get a fuller understanding of the ground conditions. Shane answered that each of the 14 green and gold routes were followed on the ground as close as possible, and that the project team spent three days doing this ground traversing.

CLG Member 15: He stated that the time frame for submissions of feedback forms simply has to be extended. He is not willing to send the feedback form prior to being able to send complaints to the Northern Star newspaper. He believes that keeping the timeframe so short is nothing short of shooting ourselves in the foot, as it does not

help the progress of the project at all. He gave examples of RTA projects further south on the Pacific Highway where they are building pylons out to sea to support the highway, so he takes this as meaning the RTA has plenty of money to be able to spend on providing a highway with the least impact on its surroundings. He would be happy to see Government land (National Parks and the likes) be used to build the highway on rather than private property which supports families and their livelihood.

CLG Member 16: She stated that there are still people within the effected community that have not received any mail; this includes the residents in the path of the suggested route options. She also raised that the Aboriginal Community on Cabbage Tree Island had not received any mail with regards to the upgrade of the highway. Cabbage Tree has at any time a population of 180 – 250 people and this is a large amount of people who have been ignored, dismissed, forgotten. She asked how a decision could possibly be made based on flawed or incomplete data.

Her comment on the 2D option was that while it has been suggested that it is largely flood free, that you are trying to get the 'path of least resistance', and that most of the land was Aboriginal land and therefore the RTA thought no one would fight for it, or disagree. She advised that the project team may be surprised at those willing to fight. She advised that this area was one of the first hit by the invasion, and so little is left of its original culture and heritage. Why take any more, heath included, it is vital to the community as a whole?

She said that by putting a road alongside the Back Channel Road, options 2D and 2C would cut Cabbage Tree Island off from the roads to Alstonville, and Old Bagotville Road. She also stated that while she feels strongly about the Koori Community, George Laws and his family have been at Laws point for over 150 years and their heritage and culture would also be destroyed.

She also stated that the maps from the route options brochure did not represent the people living in Lumley's Lane or Old Bagotville Road as they would be affected by the road.

She felt that there simply had to be some changes made with regards to possible route options, but also discussed the time frame issue and the speed with which the process was progressing. She asked for a lengthening of time for the whole process, if not just the submissions.

CLG Member 17 was very disappointed in the options presented as route corridors. She hated them all, and found them to be terrible. She stated that if she had a choice, she would choose an Easterly route option, and that she did not care at all if the Ponda Rosa had to be destroyed or removed. She feels that the route selection has been based around where to get fill, and that the specific section which skirts the Blackwall range is a really good example of this fact. She asked whether people read the front page of the Saturday paper – as there was an article from a couple who currently live in the path of one of the route options near the Blackwall Range. She believes that the RTA have plenty of trucks and enough money to be able to bring in fill from somewhere else, and that the route should not be based upon where on site fill can be attained.

CLG Member 18: He supports whatever CLG Member 17 had to say, and will continue to do so.

CLG Member 19: Since this is his first CLG meeting, he is fairly new to the project and so cannot give a personal opinion, however, speaking on behalf of the community he represents – the community is shocked and dismayed at the proposed routes. He will be involved in formulating a submission on behalf of the Aboriginal Land Council.

CLG Member 20: He had a number of concerns regarding the process and the proposed route options, these being summarised as follows:

- There was a 96% attendance rate of the CLG members at a recent community meeting they held outside of the RTA control. He feels that this points out that there are serious concerns and feelings of betrayal within the CLG group towards the project.
- He asked Gavin Browne whether the Lumley's Lane and Cabbage Tree Island communities did get the update on the route corridor options. Gavin said that to his knowledge they did not. Daniela did say that Geolink had certainly been in phone contact with Barry Jameson and was in the process of arranging a private meeting with the RTA and the Jali Aboriginal Council. He pointed out some statistics from the ABS that in Woodburn the number of people per household is an average of 2/3 people, whilst in the Aboriginal communities within the study area the average is around 5/6 people. This means that although the communities might appear to be small, there are a lot of affected people involved within these Aboriginal communities.

- When people in the community ask whether he is part of 'this' – meaning the route corridor options, he really feels as though he is not. He is not proud of the results, and he feels that his input has not been taken in to consideration much. He feels that although he has been lead to believe that he is a representative within the community that is meant to be helping RTA get the community input, he feels that the reality is that he has not been armed (with maps and the like) to be able to actually do this. He feels that at the last CLG meeting (meeting 6), there is evidence that the community consultation process had been staged, as the proposed route corridor options were released far too close to the date of the last meeting to be able to have any impact on changing the outcome of the selected route corridor options.
- He manually counted the approximate number of properties that were affected by the East National Parks route from the last stage of the project to be 111; whereas the number of properties affected by just the back channel route affects 90 properties (which is only a short portion of the entire route).
- He said that some of the routes that have had a lot of time and money put into them already have been 'bastardised' into some other options. He would hate to say that he has been wasting his time being part of the CLG group, but he says it is getting harder to remain any bit positive at the moment.
- He supports the flood free route that was proposed from within the CLG group, as he finds it to be an extremely positive route for a number of reasons – it provides a fire break, affects fewer properties, it is flood free, and various other positive factors.
- He says the response time given to the public is far too short, as people are asking if the highway is to be built next month already.
- He asked whether the study are has been extended, because it certainly appears as if it was.
- The hill to the east of Broadwater is 400 metres from the Broadwater Hall, and that is where one of the routes is proposed. He feels it is far too close.
- He said that when your choices are limited to this degree, they are forced to make a selection which is the best of the worst bunch of options.
- He stated that it was paramount to racism on the RTA's behalf that not one but two Aboriginal Communities were "whited out" with white text box labels put over their communities on the community brochure and RTA/Hyder neglected to post updates to approximately 220 Koori Aboriginal people.
- He asked Bob Higgins, whether he acknowledged that the noise level on the existing highway is 5-6 times higher than World Health Organisation recommendations.

CLG Member 21: He agreed with what has been said by the CLG members this evening already. He reasoned that certain options had been put into the equation at this point, (being options that are clearly not viable for the community - like the close passing of Riley's Hill and the long river crossings, etc) just so that they could be rejected, thereby easily reducing the options to the public.

He stated that it was not rocket science and that local knowledge was very important in helping the project to be well informed. He noted that people get very suspicious within small communities when information is not given completely, and also noted that the pamphlet regarding the route corridor options arrived earlier than any other normal post item would have if it was sent after the last CLG meeting. He asked why such flood prone routes are even an option when there are far better areas to be used that are outside the flood plain. He also asked why the upgrade had to take place at all – he would much rather see an upgrade of the New England Highway inland from Grafton.

CLG Member 22: He said that he has had more contact with community members this week than ever before – only because previously they were not impacted upon, and now suddenly they have a 6 lane highway possibly cutting through their property. They are very shocked and deeply disturbed, and scared to loose their properties and homes. He supports the flood free option that has been submitted to the project team previously.

He stated that the RTA has plenty of money and used the Lawrence Hargrave Upgrade near Wollongong as an example of the funds that the RTA have at their disposal and that money should therefore not be an issue when selecting a preferred route option. The major issue for the need of the upgrade is saving lives, the area experiences a high number of motor vehicle accidents from driver fatigue. This area is nine hours north of Sydney and the upgrade would result in a lower number of fatalities. In addition, they want roads to be provided with the freeway to accommodate for local traffic. The CLG should get on with the process of selecting a preferred route option and to trust the experts working on the project.

Some general comments were then input from all the community members, these can be summarised as follows:

- The diagrammatic maps distributed in the pamphlet are not very clear, and property owners cannot really establish whether or not they are going to be affected or not. We need to get better maps. These will be

distributed to the CLG members. Some members asked why we had not already received these maps, and if there was any reason for the delay.

- Some of the CLG members had long lists of complaints over the process and the procedures involved in the whole project thus far, they will submit these lists to us.
- Mark asked why the RTA website was not updated timely once the announcement of the route options happened. He said he has evidence that it only happened 5 days later, and found this to be an unacceptable delay. This fact would be looked in to. He also noted that the press release only occurred in some of the papers eight days after the announcement. It was explained that the newspapers have deadlines for advert copy. He feels the advertisement of the announcement has been a less than credible effort.
- Shane reminded of all the processes of advertisement that have occurred to date: an updated webpage; press release to local media outlets, community information centre is open, mail out to all affected members of the public, ringing every CLG member on the day of announcement of the route options. Bob added that perhaps there was a hiccup in terms of the announcement advertisement, but they tried their level best to work within time constraints of all the prerequisites of the advertisements deadlines.
- With regard to the request for the extension of time for submissions to be accepted, the process on the RTA side is that they do continual assessments of the project up until the staffed displays to judge whether the timing is going fine or whether more or less time is needed; they are running a series of information sessions over the next few days, at which they will gauge the feedback of what people are saying with regard to time constraints in getting feedback to the RTA. A member claimed that the 1800 number is not being answered, Daniela confirmed that should a call not be answered, an answering machine will take the call and those calls are returned either that day or the next. Bob Higgins added that the Minister's office is also asking questions of the project team – in addition to the community questions.
- Bob confirmed that it can take 3- 5 years to plan highways, so this needs to be kept in mind. Mark then asked why there is a 2 and a half year period assigned to this particular section. Bob explained the process as including the EIA process, concept design phase and other issues that may come up. He confirmed that they do have target dates but these are subject to the issues raised on each particular project.
- The CLG members were reminded to make sure that when they present maps to their community members, they need to need to tell those people that the current route corridor is 250 metres, whereas the actual road width will only end up being up to a maximum of approximately 100 metres.
- It was confirmed that the access issue will be dealt with at the design phase of the project.
- A CLG member noted that local people do not prefer to use the new highway as a local road, and so he wanted to remind the RTA that the local road network will still need to be maintained.
- With regard to property access - this issue will be dealt with at the design phase of the project, and will be worked out with individual property owners.
- It was accepted that no one was happy at the CLG meeting this evening, but it was reminded that the original priority of upgrading the highway will still go ahead – a 2 lane carriageway in each direction.
- The September deadline of reaching a preferred route corridor is not a hard and fast deadline, that is the date they are working towards, and the deadline must be reached at some time.
- Mark also asked why the project is being rushed when it is being driven by non availability of funding on the RTA side. Bob took cognisance of this fact, and said that there is no perfect timing for such a project, and that there is also pressure out there to get this upgrade finished as soon as possible.
- Tony said that with due respect to everything that has been said, he wanted to return to the point over the flood free route being assessed and considered. He was given the indication that throughout the project this route would be a consideration. He feels there has been no evidence of this thus far, and wants to know what guarantee he has of this actually happening from this point onwards.
- A CLG member reiterated that he feels that options that have been given to them are a joke, and that there is a choice of bad, worse, or even more worse than that. He claimed that the noise levels are up to 6 times higher than the WHO acceptable level. 17,5% of people are affected by noise according to the statistics, but he feels that according to the real statistics, he feels it would be more like 98% in Wardell particularly. Bob added that the current noise levels are one of the reasons why the upgrade is being looked at. Another CLG member added that the noise levels are non-existent in Riley's Hill at the moment and will be changed quite substantially should the route be chosen that passes right by it.
- A CLG member asked all interested CLG members to stay after the meeting to talk about the flood free route option, as he stated that it had impacts upon 1 house, 700metres of cane farm and it is flood free – all of these factors pointed towards it being a perfect route in his opinion.
- A CLG member asked whether the 19th of July (the provisional date for the next CLG meeting) was enough time for the flood free route to be considered, to look at potentially widening the study area, or to look at the flood free zone.
- Mark suggested a tour to be organised of the study area.

ITEM 3 Closure of meeting (CAROLYN STONE)

The VMS will be held at the end of July 2005. The next CLG meeting will be provisionally on the 19th of July, so that it can be before the next VMS. The CLG members will be notified of the final date as soon as one is set.

Carolyn thanked everyone for joining the meeting and for all their input into the process and the meeting was closed at approximately 10:45 pm.

No.	Action	Who
1.	A3 maps with more details on town and properties.	Hyder
2.	Jack to provide his pages of notes listing his concerns to the project team	Jack Matthes