



MAYOR'S REPORT

14th June 2005

MM1 PACIFIC HIGHWAY SUMMIT FILE: * JACH

SUMMARY:

Reporting on attendance at the Pacific Highway Summit.



The Pacific Highway Summit was held in Ballina on Friday 6th May, and hosted by the Northern Rivers Organisation of Councils (NOROC). I attended together with the General Manager and Director Shire Services.

The Summit was opened by NOROC President, Ernie Bennett, Mayor of Kyogle Shire Council, who reinforced the need for a united and consistent approach to the Government to complete the Pacific Highway Upgrade, from Newcastle to the Queensland border, as soon as possible.

Other speakers included:

1. The Hon. Ian Causley, Federal member for Page, standing in for Deputy Prime Minister the Hon. John Anderson, who noted the Pacific Highway was a State road but that the Federal Government had committed funds in line with the AUSLINK programme, which aimed at a divided dual carriageway by 2016. He also noted the effectiveness of the Black Spot Program, which had increased Highway safety.
2. Alan Evans, President of NRMA Motoring Services, who spoke of the national tragedy of 430 deaths that could be avoided. Supporting safer drivers in safer vehicles on safer roads. The R.T.A. are prepared to commit time, money and resources to improving the Pacific Highway quickly and urged the formation of a Task Force, similar to the Princess Highway.

3. Ron Clarke MBE, Mayor of Gold Coast City Council, spoke of the overall strategy for infrastructure upgrade in South East Queensland, which had been developed in co-operation with both State and Local Government. The State Government owned the Pacific Highway and were devoting \$1 Billion extra to roads infrastructure in South East Queensland and Gold Coast City Council was working constructively with the State Government. Ron noted that the Tugun Bypass project was still awaiting a decision by NSW State Government after some 10 years of planning and urged Councils to seek a triple carriageway, as a dual carriageway would soon fill.
4. Don Page MP, Member for Ballina, spoke of the inability of the rail system to cater for the increasing freight load, even if substantial funds were available for rail infrastructure. He noted that 85 % of accidents occurred on those sections of the Highway not yet upgraded and 50 % of accidents were head-on collisions, which would be addressed by a divided carriageway. The State Governments commitment to being debt free was of no benefit if there was no investment in infrastructure.
5. Katrina Luckie, Executive Director of the Northern Rivers Regional Development Board presented a range of statistics on regional growth and the requirement for improved access, both interstate and overseas. Due to the new port facilities in Brisbane it was now easier and quicker to export goods to Hong Kong than to transport them to Sydney. Freight movements were growing at 1.5 times the rate of growth of the National Economy.

Mayors present were invited to provide their thoughts on the condition of the Highway and priorities for future works. I took the opportunity to raise community concerns with increasing traffic, increasing heavy vehicle traffic and the noise issues in urban areas, noting the recent accidents and the major accident – the Clybucca bus crash – and the comments from State Governor Kevin Waller.

Merv King from Lismore noted the impacts were more than just the accidents, as communities had deviations through urban areas when the Highway was blocked. A recent accident on the Highway lead to all traffic, both normal and heavy vehicles being deviated through Alstonville, Goonellabah and Lismore.

Charlie Cox from Richmond Valley noted the impacts of increasing traffic and heavy vehicles through the villages of Woodburn and Broadwater and community concerns with noise and safety in urban areas.

Phil Silver from Ballina noted the recent accidents in the area and the community impacts. His major concern was the bottleneck in funding from the State and urged Councils to join with the NRMA to pursue this issue.

A representative from Byron Shire Council presented a dissenting view and noted Byron Shire Council did not support the thrust of the Summit.

A communiqué was released following the Summit and is attached at [\(Appendix A\)](#). Copies of all papers are available from the Director Shire Services should any Councillor require copies.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

- ***Environmental***

There are no environmental implications from this report.

- ***Social***

It is important for the communities on the Highway present a constant and consistent message to the Government on the need for Highway upgrades.

- ***Economic (Financial)***

There are no economic implications from this report, as funds for attendance would come from existing votes.

- ***Policy or Statutory***

There are no policy or statutory implications from this report.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the information be noted.

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MAYOR

J A C Hayes