

To the **householder**

JUNE 2008



Re: Decision making

for the Princes Highway Gerringong to Bomaderry

Many thanks for your participation in this important project.

This letter is to update you on the project.

Community submissions on the shortlisted options

The RTA has progressed with the analysis of submissions. Approximately 1 000 submissions were received from the community in response to the display of shortlisted route options. During this consultation some residents and stakeholders debated why an option to the south of the Berry township was not shortlisted by the RTA. The shortlist included only two options to the north of Berry.

Submissions included:

- That a route should have been shortlisted as it compares on merit with other options displayed from November 2007 to February 2008.
- That a southern route around Berry should be ruled out for environmental and flooding reasons.

One reason for the display of options was to publicly test if the shortlist was adequate. The RTA accepts that some in the community felt it was not adequate.

Peer review of Gerringong to Bomaderry route options

An independent peer review to date of the route options selection process was announced on 4 April 2008. The completed peer review indicates that the RTA's planning work on the options was comprehensive and appropriate. However, it also indicates that the costs should be considered for routes from Gerringong to Berry in their entirety, in addition to sections as was undertaken by the RTA. The review has suggested more detailed costings of route options to the south of Berry, as part of an overall route option, be obtained.

The RTA will now compile more detailed costings of a southern Berry option. This process is scheduled to be complete by the end of June. Following this, a decision will be made as to whether a southern Berry option should be confirmed as either not viable, or taken to the next step of the study process.

Many more project decisions are required

Community involvement is essential along with field work, government inter-agency discussions and engineering.

Areas to be considered next include:

- Access to Gerringong - a separate government and community workshop is needed.
- Access to Berry - a separate government and community workshop is needed.
- Designs for property and local road access across, and to, the new highway.
- Flood management designs.
- Considering how the preferred route can be designed to be as unobtrusive as possible.

The preferred route will continue to be modified and fine tuned in response to property, heritage and environmental issues.

What happened at the value management workshop?

This three day workshop was to compare the options that were displayed for community comment. This workshop was not to make the decision, but a process in which government and community debated how the options perform.

Key findings from the workshop include:

- The Red and Purple routes which have no alternative alignments along these sections of the highway, should form part of the preferred option.
- The Orange route should be modified.
- The Green route, in conjunction with the modified Orange route performed better than other options when considering functionality, socio-economic and environmental issues.
- If further investigations (including cost) do not support the Green route, the Pink route is the next best performing alternative in conjunction with the modified Orange route.
- The Pink route should only be considered following further investigations into how to reduce the impact of this option.
- The Brown, Yellow and Blue routes did not perform as well as the other routes.

Finally

We meant it in 2006 when we said we took community consultation seriously. Whilst this decision to further detail the costs of the options around Berry will not be accepted as a good one by everyone, it will strengthen the route selection process. The process to consider all issues transparently and inclusively has to be robust because property and livelihoods will be affected by the preferred route.

I see the further transparent consideration of costings of a southern Berry option and the intensive value management discussions as positive steps for this project. I will write to you again as soon as more work is done.

I urge the community to keep a sense of single purpose – to upgrade the highway and find the best solution to do that.

Yours faithfully

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For more information:

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