



**Constructing Australia's Future**

**Pacific Highway Upgrade  
Brunswick Heads to Yelgun  
Community Liaison Group Meeting No. 14  
7 June 2006**

**Attendees:**

Pauline Millington  
Malcolm Murray  
Kathy Norley-Farmer  
Greg Milham  
Gillian Secombe  
Patricia Warren  
Tony Stupka  
Jack Taylor  
Don Armstrong  
Trevor Watts  
Barry Hutton

Bill Gardyne (EMR – DoP Representative)

Will MacDonald (Abi)  
Rebecca Walker-Edwards (Abi)  
Michael Polito - Abi  
Terry Paxton (Abi)  
Wendy Dooley (Abi)

Peter Borrelli (RTA)  
Dave Purdy (RTA)  
Ron Holmes (RTA)

Apologies: Brett Lee, Sue Stirton, Robert Rosen, Colin Tarbox and Frank Mills.

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**1.0 Welcome**

Terry Paxton welcomed members to the 14<sup>th</sup> CLG meeting. He also welcomed the project Safety Manager, Michael Polito and also Rebecca Walker-Edwards, the project Environmental Officer who was standing in for Mark Sabolch who was taking some leave.

**1.1 Apologies**

Apologies from Brett Lee, Sue Stirton, Robert Rosen, Colin Tarbox and Frank Mills were noted.

## **1.2 Comments on Notes of Previous Meeting**

The notes of the previous meeting were accepted without amendment.

## **1.3 Meeting Agenda**

Terry advised that the agenda for the meeting would cover: -

- Outstanding actions from the previous meeting.
- Construction update.
- A brief presentation on the website.
- Occupational Health and Safety presentation.
- General Business.

As it was a relatively long agenda with a number of items to be addressed in General Business, Terry asked representatives and presenters to be concise in their comments so all items could be adequately covered.

## **2.0 Outstanding Actions from Previous Meeting**

One item was noted as outstanding and that related to information on the earthworks matters. As the action was with Mark Sabolch, who was unable to attend the meeting, it was agreed to hold it over until the next meeting.

## **3.0 Construction Update**

### **3.1 Key Areas of Progress**

Will McDonald, Abigroup Construction Manager, indicated that his presentation for the evening would focus on the some key areas relevant to project progress: -

- The bridges generally.
- Traffic Switches.

Before starting his presentation though, Will advised the group of the monthly statistics: -

- The workforce had peaked at 408 people on site and averaged 380 on site each day.
- The project had now passed half a million man hours.
- 3000m<sup>3</sup> of concrete had been poured last month.

### **3.2 Southern Bridges**

Will stated that the bridges remain the major items of focus and also key components of the critical path to delivering the project according to the planned program.

Working from the South to the North, the two bypass bridges were advancing well, with the Southern bridge deck now completed and the Northern of this pair not far behind it with the abutment headstocks now also complete.

The project had also reached another milestone today with the completion of driving the 28 piles for the Tweed Street overpass bridges.

In this location, the piles had reached a depth of typically 33 to 35 metres before founding on bedrock. The piles on the southern abutment of these structures had now also been trimmed in preparation for pouring the southern abutment head stocks.

The next major component for this structure would be the placing of the Super T girders, which was now currently expected to occur between the end of July and mid August. In order to do this, Tweed Street would have to be temporarily closed for safety reasons as it was not considered to be safe to be placing the Super T girders while the road was under traffic. The closures would probably be in the order of seven to eight hours for two or three consecutive days, during which time traffic would be detoured via the southern Brunswick Heads interchange. There were other traffic management considerations for this work and the project team had already commenced discussions with the school bus companies to see if it was possible to undertake the closures after the buses had passed in the morning and prior to their return journey in the afternoon. While there were likely to be some small delays for pedestrian and cyclists, traffic controllers would be able to allow them through between the placement of the individual girders.

### **3.3 Brunswick River Bridges**

Will McDonald was very pleased to announce that there was significant visible progress on the Brunswick River local road bridge but there was still time to be made up if the program was to be achieved. To date eight segments had been poured on the southern side and three had been poured on the north side. The cycle time for each segment was now down to about 6 days per segment with a target of 5 days per segment as the team became more familiar with the mobile forms. At the current rate, it would be about six weeks until the last pour on the local road bridge. The sequence for the construction of these bridges would be to complete the local road bridge, followed by the northbound highway bridge. At that point the tower cranes would be relocated and the southbound highway bridge would be constructed.

In order to catch up to the program and not extend the project and subsequent impacts, Abigroup proposed to re-introduce the night works program on the bridges. Will reminded the group that we had in fact undertaken previous night shifts on the bridge earlier but had stopped it when there was a noise complaint. The complaint had subsequently been investigated and was found not to relate to the steel fixing works but some carpentry activities that had been introduced.

The proposal is to implement a night shift program that involved breaking the shift into two sessions (6.00 – 9.30pm and 9.30 – 2.00 am) with limits on the activities in each shift so as to limit the noise generation.

During the first part of the shift, equipment such as a tower crane, power saws, hammers, angle grinder, jack hammer, high pressure water compressor, concrete drills, generators and one reversing alarm from the Hiab may be heard.

Activities nominated for the second part of the shift would generate minimum noise, lower than background highway noise, however a surveillance officer would be appointed to monitor noise and act on any activity that had the potential to impact on local receivers. There would be no power tools used and work would be largely restricted to steel fixing and installing forms that were constructed earlier. The only noise sources involved would be a tower crane and power generator. All work would end at 2am. Should the night shift run out of low impact activities, work would cease for the evening.

Will then asked the CLG if this was a reasonable approach and acceptable to them as representatives of the community. While no issues were raised there were several questions relating to the proposed nightworks: -

Q How long are you intending to carry out the night works?

A At this stage, two to three months, but no work would be carried out after 2am.

Q What happens if there is a noise complaint?

A If we received a valid complaint the works would be re-assessed. At the end of the day we are still operating to our EPA conditions and it certainly is in our interest not to generate any complaints.

Q Why aren't you working from 2am to 8am?

A There are several reasons, not the least being that workers need a break and the proposed program allows the best continuity between shifts. There is also significant extra cost associated with additional staff and engineers to resource this proposed work arrangement.

There were no objections to the proposal.

The CLG agreed to Abigroup proceeding with the night works as proposed.

Will also advised CLG members to get back to Abigroup if they had any issues or became aware of any issues associated with the works at any stage in the coming weeks.

### **3.4 Northern Bridges**

Will McDonald explained that at the moment, available resources were being moved around to ensure the efforts were going into various structures that were critical to the program. For example, work had slowed down on the Bonanza Drive underpass with resources being diverted to bring the Yelgun interchange bridges up to the same status.

Starting from north of the Brunswick River, the STP access bridge was now basically ready for the erection of beams as they became available. Further north, considerable work had been undertaken on the abutments of the overpass at Coolamon Scenic Drive and that structure was now progressing with girders expected to be placed around the end of June. The Bonanza Drive bridges were also now about 60% complete and the panels for the abutments would be placed just after the long weekend with the beams expected near the end of July.

Just north of Bonanza Drive, the Billinudgel pedestrian bridge was also taking shape but not without some issues. The piling process there had turned out to be louder than expected and this was due largely to the fact that steel piles were being utilised.

A lot of effort was being expended on investigating and experimenting with noise attenuation systems for this type of rig but this had met with limited success.

While Will McDonald apologised to nearby residents and business owners on behalf of the project team, he was able to report that this aspect of the work would hopefully be completed by next Friday.

At Marshalls Creek, the kerbs on the local road bridge were almost completed, with just the traffic rails left as the last significant component before completion. On the current progress, both the Marshalls Creek and Marshalls Creek Overflow bridges would be completed by the end of June.

At the northern end of the project the bridges were progressing very well. At the interchange the piles had been done and the false-work was being installed to support the pouring of the superstructure, which would require in the order of 700m<sup>3</sup> of concrete. Will McDonald explained that the flyovers were of a “post tension” construction. This basically meant that after each pour, internal steel tendons would be placed under tension to provide structural strength and effectively allow greater span than otherwise was possible. The Stock Route Road bridges were also approaching completion and it was anticipated the realigned Stock Route Road under these bridges could be opened to traffic in mid July, once the road itself had been sealed.

### **3.5 Traffic Switches**

Will McDonald explained that there had been two significant traffic switches since the last meeting, each representing another project milestone. While the Yelgun switch onto the new local road had proceeded smoothly there had been some traffic delay issues with the switch onto the temporary alignment just north of the bridge and this was due to a number of factors: -

- The difficulty of doing the necessary surface “tie ins” or connections under highway traffic; and
- Varying surface levels of the existing road and the new temporary alignment.

### **3.6 The Months Ahead**

In terms of major items coming over in the next month, Will indicated there were several key items in terms of traffic changes.

#### **Balemo Drive Closure**

The northern connection of Balemo Drive to the Pacific highway would be closed for about a month to facilitate the installation of improved drainage infrastructure and road surface. This work, which was outside the project works, was being undertaken on behalf of Byron Shire Council. The time period had been selected after consultation with Council and the service providers to align with the school holidays in order to reduce the impact on local school bus services.

#### **Billinudgel Traffic Switch**

The other major traffic item discussed was the staging of works around the entry to Billinudgel. Will McDonald explained that an interim traffic arrangement had been planned that would see the new Bonanza Drive entry take the place of Wilfred Street as the highway connection until the opening of the upgraded Pacific highway, when Wilfred Street would be re-opened as a left-in, left-out arrangement for accessing the northbound lane of the upgraded highway.

Under the current program this interim stage would possibly be in place for 10 or 11 months commencing around the end of July. A round of one-on-one consultation had been undertaken with Billinudgel business owners and residents to identify potential issues and as a result of that, some refinements were being assessed. While some of the businesses with a highway trade component had asked if the Wilfred Street intersection could be opened for a period over Christmas, Will McDonald stated that he had been looking at this option but it did not appear to be feasible because of the nature of the works to be undertaken at the Wilfred Street intersection. Will McDonald also made reference to the planned introduction of the one way traffic circuit around Bonanza Drive and Lucky Lane and indicated that it was likely to be installed prior to diverting traffic through that precinct.

Other items being considered in the development of the Traffic management Plan for this traffic switch were: -

- The Pacific Highway speed zone – most likely would adopt 60km/hr;
- Intersection arrangement with the Pacific Highway;
- Traffic Controllers;
- Bus and concrete truck movements; and
- Pedestrian and cyclist movements.

### **Batch Plant**

Will advised the group that after the Review of Environmental Factors (REF) had been undertaken for the original batch plant site on the Jagwen property a decision had been made on environmental grounds to locate the batch plant in the Yelgun Rest Area site instead. As the rest area was under construction and involved the construction basically of a large, level pad it was considered to have less environmental impacts than other options.

At this time, the batch plant is expected to arrive around the end of June. It would take in the order of one month to assemble. On completion of the paving the plant would be demobilised and the rest area completed.

### **3.7 Questions and Discussion**

Q How high are you intending raising Balemo Drive?

A Only in the order of 200 - 300mm and the increase in height would be compensated for by improved drainage, with the installation of more pipes. This will avoid any “damming” effect.

Q When will the Billinudgel pedestrian bridge be finished?

A Probably by the end of January.

### **4.0 Project Website**

Wendy Dooley was able to give the attendees a quick tour of the project website with special emphasis on providing input or seeking information through the feedback process. Wendy Dooley pointed out the level of information and number of background documents available on the website, and advised the group to always try the website first if they were looking for specific information or access to background documents. All the CLG meeting notes were available on the website and the photo gallery was being updated every two weeks, also providing a useful resource.

While the “Brunswick River bridge by night” webcam view at eight o’clock in the evening was not particularly enlightening, Wendy assured group members the daytime images were far more interesting and progress of the construction of this key project feature could readily be followed by anyone, anywhere with internet access.

Wendy advised members of the group that they could reach the website by going to the RTA website ([www.rta.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au)) and following the prompts through the Pacific Highway menu.

#### **4.1 Questions and Comments**

Q Has there been a general theme emerging in the comments received through the website?

A Not really as we actually receive few comments as such. Most of the contacts via the website have been questions of an extremely broad nature. All website contacts are captured in our stakeholder contact logs.

#### **5.0 Occupational Health and Safety on Site**

Project Safety Manager, Michael Polito provided an overview of how Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) was dealt with on site and how the project had been performing in relation to OH&S. Safety was one of the “invisible” components of the project that to a casual observer would be easy to overlook but in fact, there were three full time staff dedicated to delivering a high level of safety to all workers on site. Michael Polito also pointed out though that it was reinforced on site that safety was everyone’s responsibility.

Michael then provided some of the safety statistics for the site: -

- Nearly 1,800 site specific inductions had been carried out.
- Over 500 tool box (training) talks had been given to workers.
- Over 2000 activity specific Job Safety Analysis (JSA) sessions had been conducted.
- Weekly OH&S inspections are carried out by superintendents, foremen and safety co-ordinators.
- At the half million plus man hours on the project, only 52 first aid treatments had been required, mostly for minor injuries and of these, only 10 had required medical treatment.
- There had only been a total of 4 Lost Time Injuries (LTIs), (meaning injuries where workers lost a complete shift and take time off work).

- The NSW Construction Industry Lost time Frequency Rate (LTIFR) is 19, but this project's LTFIR is 8.03, well under half the LTI's one could expect for this kind of project, based on a statistical comparison.
- There were only 4 notifiable incidents to date in the entire project.

The excellent safety record on the job is attributable to a range of initiatives, including extensive and ongoing training and also working very closely with the likes of Workcover, the RTA and safety specialists in planning sessions and site inspections.

## **5.2 Questions and Comments**

Q Do you have issues with workers being exposed to the sun for long hours?

A All Abigroup employees are issued with long sleeved shirts and we have sunscreen stations throughout the site.

Q I have noticed the guys on the piling rigs do not seem to be wearing ear muffs.

A That is true. Most workers now prefer to use small but very effective ear plugs. They are equally, if not more, efficient and far more comfortable. They also comply with Australian Standards requirements for protection. Some sample ear plugs were passed around the group.

Q Do you have difibulators and Oxy-vivas?

A We do have Oxy-vivas on site but because of our proximity to ambulance services and the rescue helicopter service we do not need to keep the difibulators on site. We have used oxygen twice and that has been to assist with general road traffic accidents, not our workers.

## **6.0 General Business**

### **6.1 Habitat Box Funding**

Terry Paxton advised the group that the NRAC had been in touch and were currently processing the approval of the funding for the habitat box project. In order to advance this, an Australian Business Number had been applied for. It now appeared certain that the funding was becoming available and it was important that the community actually got behind the project to make it a success.

Terry Paxton advised the group that he would be leaving the project and Rebecca Walker-Edwards, the project Environmental Officer would be taking over the management role for this project, if there was enough community interest to maintain the impetus and activate the processes that had been put into place.

Terry Paxton advised that a meeting would be held next Thursday 15th June 2006 for interested parties to attend to look at the next steps in delivering the project. Rebecca Walker-Edwards would invite some of the other main players in the project to attend that meeting, including representatives of Landcare, Mullumbimby High School and also Southern Cross University.

With the funding apparently approved, there was no reason the project could become something the entire group could be proud of, but it really did require continued community support to make it a success.

## **6.2 Rest Area Information Boards**

Terry Paxton advised the group there had been an approach to the project team by a representative of the Northern Rivers Tourism Inc, in relation to the content of the information boards at the Yelgun Rest area. That representative had requested a separate meeting be called with interested parties to progress a submission to the RTA on the content of those boards. Terry Paxton asked the group to consider if they thought this was the best way to address the issue and if so, to contact Wendy Dooley, who would now be taking the management role of the community relations team, if they were interested in attending or knew someone who may have an interest in involvement. It was hoped that from that meeting would come a formal submission to the RTA in relation to Rest Area information board content.

## **6.3 Erosion of Batters**

A member of the group asked if there was a strategy in place for replacement of soil eroded from the batters. It was his impression this was more apparent on cut batters, rather than fill batters. Rebecca Walker-Edwards advised that although there was always an issue with erosion until the vegetation could be fully established, there was an erosion and sediment control regime in place across the entire project. This regime included weekly inspections of the site by the project erosion control specialists, the Superintendents of works, government agencies and the environmental team. At the end of these inspections the project was given a “report card” with an action list and identified remediation actions generally happened within two days of the inspections.

The RTA’s Representative, Peter Borrelli also pointed out that the RTA had some quite specific contractual items relating to the erosion and soil on batters captured in the Project Deed. Rebecca Walker-Edwards also stated that she would be very happy to discuss any particular area if members had specific concerns.

## **6.4 Plantings**

The issue of timing of plantings was raised. From a growth perspective, the best part of the season was rapidly passing and the CLG member felt that an opportunity was being lost. Rebecca Walker-Edwards pointed out that the planting would be undertaken in a staged approach and some areas had already had specific plantings carried out. There was also an issue with the landscaping plan, the detail of which had yet to be finally approved. The objective was to get it right in terms of species, locations etc. The plan was approaching finalisation and tenders were being called for suitably qualified organisations to undertake the bulk of the plantings. Rebecca Walker-Edwards also mentioned that the hydro-mulch also contained some native seeds and while there were some native germinating on the batters, it was likely this was seed that had been captured in the top soils. Lime had also been added to the recent hydro-mulch mix.

## **6.5 Fauna Fencing**

The issue was raised of when the final fauna fencing would be installed. Rebecca Walker-Edwards reported that the fauna fencing would be installed prior to the final plantings.

## **6.6 Riverside Crescent**

A question was raised in relation to drainage on the new Riverside Crescent alignment. How was the water to get away when it appeared that an existing drain at the rear of the caravan park had been partially filled? It was advised that the final drainage would not be installed until after the formation had fully settled. This was standard industry practise as there was always the risk if the pipes were installed prior to settlement, they would in fact settle "up hill" and not function ie., drain as designed to do.

## **6.7 Farewell**

The RTA's Representative, Peter Borrelli asked members of the group join him in farewelling Terry Paxton from the Community relations team, thanked him for his work on the project and also congratulated Wendy Dooley on taking over the Community Relations Manager role.

## **7.0 Close and next meeting**

The meeting was closed at 8.30pm and next CLG meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 5th July 2006.