
Summary of Community Focus Group Meetings

Planning the Bypass Corridor through Johns River

A Summary of Community Focus Group Meetings from 1999 to 2005

Following are excerpts from the community focus group (CFG) meetings held in Kew, related to the Johns River Bypass and immediate region.

Full meeting texts are available from www.arup.com.au/moorland/consultation.html (in PDF Format) or via e-mail from the Johns River Community Progress Association at media@johnsriver.com.au (in Word Format)

December 1999 and March 2000

The first two community focus group meetings in December 1999 and March 2000 held at the Camden Haven school did not have representatives from Johns River, and only lightly touched on land use and planning issues relevant to Johns River, generally about the impact to residences and businesses in Johns River as well as a few agricultural properties.

The high significance of the Brother Mountains was considered at the second meeting, in particular that the Road adjacent to **Middle Brother** needs to remain in existing corridor. The **Stewarts River**, Stoney Creek, **Camden Haven River** and Herons Creek were all designated as significant waterways.

May 2001

At the third meeting in May 2001 at Camden Haven High School (which still had no representatives from Johns

River), the environmental impact of all the major route options were considered.

Value Management Workshops

The RTA introduced the establishment of Value Management Workshops was announced as part of the process to come up with preferred options for the Minister's approval.

Nominations were invited for the Value Management Workshops and community representatives from **Johns River** were invited to participate, as were those from Kew Council, industry associations and government agencies, about 30 – 40 in all.

Median Openings

Also generally discussed were the natures of the median openings catering for turns by **B Doubles** and the requirements/provision for school **bus** stops on the Highway.

July 2001

The fourth meeting, still at Kew, and still without Johns River representation, was again at the Camden Haven High School in July 2001.

Information Signage

Signage for the Kew Visitor Information centre was discussed, and it was resolved that the Tourist information 'I' **sign** posting will be provided at interchange sites and within the local road network.

Bus Bays

It was noted that **bus** bays will be provided along the rural sections of the Route in accordance with sections 3.4.8.1 and 2 of the Road Design Guide.

They are generally provided as a **light vehicle lay-by** (Fig 3.4.1 of RDG), with a

Summary of Community Focus Group Meetings

4.5m wide shoulder widening at/or in conjunction with property access points. No specific mention of bus bays in the Johns River area was made however.

A few members raised concern regarding the driving of new piles and construction of footings for new bridge over **Camden Haven River** on site of old bridge. Divers were to be utilised to determine the extent of the problem.

Johns River Bypass Options

After the new options were displayed at the **Johns River** General Store and elsewhere along the route, the RTA received 98 submissions, with there being no clear preference from 10 submissions from **Johns River**.

The RTA agreed to clarify the role of the CFG be clarified in the next Community Newsletter, so village residents would better understand the process.

The RTA was asked if studies had been undertaken on the impacts on by-passed towns such as **Johns River**, and the RTA responded that while larger towns survive well, smaller communities which were well-prepared survive better than others.

October 2001

The fifth meeting at Kew confirmed that the functions of the focus group would be discussed in Newsletter 4. It was also reinforced that cross roads would be generally avoided in design of the new route.

Bus Safety Pamphlets

The issue of **bus** stop areas on 110km section of highway was again raised and the design issue shown to be the subject of liaison with **bus** operators. The possibility of school **bus** safety

pamphlets was raised with the aim of providing them to schools for the advice of parents pick up/dropping children.

It was reported that divers had investigated the underwater remains of the former bridge at **Camden Haven River**, finding that rubble was present on the river floor but not anticipated to be a major problem should the new bridge be located on the downstream side (this option was not used).

A meeting with Rail Infrastructure Corporation (RIC) revealed a minor concern about a signal box at **Johns River**

Aquatic Ecological investigations commenced to EIS level at **Stewarts River** with terrestrial ecologists also doing EIS level baseline investigations to provide a broader understanding of ecology in the region.

Truck Stops

RTA has advised that a heavy vehicle inspection station may be required between Taree and Port Macquarie – combining this facility with the heavy vehicle **rest area** is under consideration. It was queried if, for example, the Kew Visitor Information Centre would meet the need of a **rest area** for the public. The safety pamphlets re traffic in school **bus** zones and whether the Sapling Creek truck **rest area** was adequate for RTA heavy vehicle inspection station were put on the agenda for the next meeting, along with whether the Kew Visitor Information Centre **Rest area** be nominated as an official highway **rest area** for light vehicles.

March 2002

New Johns River Members

Summary of Community Focus Group Meetings

Johns River got some members on the focus group with [Joe Malvicino](#) and [Daintree Gerrand](#) joining the CFG, along with [Merv Isaac](#) and [Brian Fletcher](#).

The issue of safety pamphlets re traffic in school **bus** zones had been referred to RTA road safety management staff for further reply.

Johns River Preferred Option

The preferred option of **J(A)** at [Johns River](#) was announced with detailed account of the adopted alignments, including the following points:

[Johns River](#)

- Property access (4) on east side of highway south of [Johns River](#);
- Separation of two segments of [Stewarts River Road](#), especially in relation to school **bus** operations (this staggered T option was later discarded)
- [Bulleys Road](#) will have a new T intersection with crossing to southbound lane (19m median) but no connection to [Wharf Road](#);
- Off ramp to south on existing highway at [Wharf Road Lake section](#).
- Minor amendments to avoid any direct impact on National Park. Road squeezed between existing reserve and railway
- New bridge on west side at [Stewarts River](#)
- There will be more noise at Ross Glen but additional studies indicate that impact will be insignificant
- [Algona Road](#) and [Watson Taylor Road](#) will have median openings.
- Rossglen Road will have median opening
- Rossglen Access point relocated to south for sight distance
- Access to airport – possible median opening (19m) opposite access to Rossglen

- Truck stop at Rossglen (northbound) to be relocated elsewhere within project area.

[Joe Malvicino](#) questioned the adequacy of acceleration lanes at intersection of [Stewarts River Road](#) and new highway

Village Businesses

- Business operators concerned that [Johns River](#) shop and service station will close – if shop goes, community will go!

It was also asked if there was a plan for a 5,000 population town on Crown Land to the east at [Johns River](#), to which **Ray Dallen** of the RTA said would be taken up with Graeme Gardener of the Greater Taree City Council.

It was agreed by **Ron Clapton** that they would need to look very closely at intersections, acceleration/deceleration. **Allan Kennedy** opined that while businesses will be disappointed with the JA bypass option, the general feeling is that the right decision has been made. **Merv Isaac** agreed with that view.

[Joe Malvicino](#) pushed for future **signage** north and south of [Johns River](#),

The issue of traffic decelerating by 70km when school **bus** lights flashing were brought up, with **Tony Smith** saying that the driver has discretion re flashing lights. [Joe Malvicino](#) again brought up problems with subdivision to east of [Johns River](#). Matters to be followed up included the adequacy of acceleration lanes at intersection of [Stewarts River Road](#) and new highway, as well as a school **bus** at Rossglen – lay by. Also, the problem with traffic decelerating by 70km when school **bus** lights flashing and the confirmation of the status of the subdivision to east of [Johns River](#) was promised.

Summary of Community Focus Group Meetings

June 2002

The seventh meeting saw Joe **Malvicino**, **Merv Isaac**, **Brian Fletcher** and **Daintree Gerrand** in attendance.

New Interchange Being Considered

John Hamilton with the RTA advised that the staggered T intersection at **Johns River** is under review primarily based on safety issues. One potential alternative under investigation is a grade-separated intersection. Ray Dallen advised that the RTA Safety Group would be reviewing the proposals for this intersection.

Lay-Bys Promised Every 1km

John Hamilton with Arup also advised lay bys are to be provided every one kilometre, which would also provide for stopping busses.

Tony Smith confirmed that in addition all driveway access points would be wide enough to allow busses (and mail and garbage vehicles) to stop away from the carriageway.

Ray Dallen confirmed that technically all traffic passing a **bus** with flashing lights must slow to 40kph. The requirement for highway traffic to slowdown when passing busses is not just particular to this project but is a state-wide road safety issue.

Alistair Kerle confirmed that no special **bus** interchange facilities will be provided on the highway.

John Hamilton further advised that Greater Taree City Council had no knowledge of a subdivision east of **Johns River**. **Joe Malvicino** to chase up any additional information.

After a request in some form by the RTA (unclear how) no approaches had been made from **Johns River**.

Alan Grady advised he is leaving **Johns River** and therefore also the CFG. As a CFG member he has actively disseminated information amongst the community following CFG meetings, including advising release of newsletters and the 1800 phone number. Would be concerned that members from specific sectors would "push their own barrow".

Merv Isaac Did not object to the inclusion of new members. However, questioned why they did not nominate when the CFGs were formed.

More Support Needed

Brian Fletcher believed **Johns River** required an additional 1 or 2 members, especially due to low representation from the **village**. He thought there would be some interested people. Brian thought that Col Anderson had withdrawn from the **Johns River** CFG.

Allan Kennedy No contact from other parties since early after the preferred route decision. Believes that there is little interest from people at **Johns River** to be part of the process.

Merv Isaac Stated that no one in **Johns River** had indicated that they wished to join the CFG.

Daintree Gerrand opined that if Col Anderson drops out that would provide the opportunity for a new member from **Johns River village**. Potentially Rod Heath, who is also a member of the community **hall** committee.

Brian Fletcher At earlier community meeting (year or more ago) lots of concern was expressed that no one from **Johns**

Summary of Community Focus Group Meetings

River village on the CFG. Presumed lack of information had been sent to these people. Believed someone from the **village** was needed to fill any vacancy.

Alistair Kerle Suggested that the vacancy be advised through a letterbox drop in **Johns River**. Meanwhile, suggested Brian Fletcher and **Daintree Gerrand** to scout for potential nominees.

Ray Dallen Saw that there were obvious community sectors that could be represented on the Kew CFG, however, recognised that **Johns River** was a much more diverse community and there were no obvious groupings.

Joe Malvicino Advised he would chase up Col Anderson on his membership status.

Later, it the issue of interchanges was raised, in particular the need for **Gateway signage** (Johns River is the "Gateway" to the Manning Valley).

The Urban Design Process

Daintree Gerrand asked if the CFGs would participate in the urban design process, and how that worked for **Johns River**, to which Ray Dallen advised that the recommendations could be discussed at future CFG meetings.

The Impact of the Highway Bypass

ERM and Arup announced that they had taken highway user surveys to explore the socio-economic impact of the bypass at Kew and Johns River. The surveys to identified who is stopping, why and for how long (Kew 92, **Johns River** 30). The outcome is to understand the users, assess impacts and identify mitigation measures (incorporate with the urban design if applicable). A business study to 27 businesses in Kew and **Johns River**

has been issued and currently awaiting responses.

Reviewing access issues, primarily along the bypasses was brought up, along with the need to cater for access but not necessarily direct access, with the option for a grade separated interchange at **Johns River**.

CFG members asked if there has been any feedback from the community to the display of Preferred Option, to which **Joe Malvicino** said there was no comment from **Johns River**.

It was resolved to try to identify potential new CFG members to fill any vacancies and to consider the bussing of school children as an urban design principle. CFG meeting schedule was slated to include participation in the urban design process. Also, an air quality assessment was scheduled to take into consideration impacts of dust on water tanks.

November 2002

The November 2002 meeting at the Camden Haven High School saw Allan Kennedy, Merv Isaac, **Rod Heath** and **Joe Malvicino** in attendance.

It was decided that no new members are required for the focus group.

Lay-Bys for School Busses

John Hamilton with Arup advised that lay-bys are to be provided at regular intervals throughout the length of the project generally, which would also provide for stopping buses.

Tony Smith with the RTA confirmed that these would, largely, coincide with driveway access points which would be

Summary of Community Focus Group Meetings

wide enough to allow buses (and mail and garbage vehicles) to stop clear of the through traffic on the carriageway.

RTA boss from the Grafton Office **Ray Dallen** confirmed that technically all traffic passing a **bus** with flashing lights must slow to 40kph. The requirement for highway traffic to slowdown when passing buses is not just particular to this project but is a state-wide road safety issue that RTA is to resolve.

The Urban design program was said to be implemented and ongoing. The CFG will be involved in the process as the urban design work is produced.

Flooding investigations are being undertaken for the **Camden Haven River**, and **Stewarts River**.

Johns River Interchange

Stewarts River Road grade separation was proposed, with **Stewarts River Road** passing above the Bypass on a flyover. The change followed a review of the cost and the traffic safety improvements which would result over the life of the project.

- Cost of grade separation is estimated at an additional \$1.5m (approx.) which can be justified in comparison with accident cost savings over the expected life of the project.

- The proposed roundabout where the northbound off-ramp and on-ramp would connect to **Stewarts River Road** would be relatively small, with a central island diameter of about 20m.

- Fill for grade separated intersection would possibly come from the cutting at Kew or a cutting to the south.

Wharf Road & Bulleys Road

Wharf Road is to be realigned at the western end to connect to the Highway

off-ramp leading into **Johns River**. The realigned **Wharf Road** would remain within the existing road reserve.

Southern end of **Bulleys Road** to be realigned to a T intersection with the Pacific Highway. Median break would allow north or south movement of traffic and access to the southern ramp entry into **Johns River village**.

However, traffic travelling from **Johns River** or **Wharf Road** would not be able to make the reverse movement. Northbound access to the upgraded highway and **Bulleys Road** would only be possible using the flyover on **Stewarts River Road**,

Truck Stop North of Johns River

- It has been determined that the Northbound Heavy Vehicle **rest area** would be a **rest area** only (not a vehicle inspection area). New proposed location is at intersection of Charles Yard Road (forestry road in **Middle Brother State Forest**), approximately 1km south of existing heavy vehicle **rest area**

Southbound Heavy Vehicle **Rest area** would remain unchanged, with the existing **rest area** retained at the same location.

Bulleys Road North would access the Highway at Yaralin Close (left in/left out only).

Studies have demonstrated that existing noise levels are higher than the predictive models indicated. (Due to higher than previously predicted numbers of **trucks** at night).

Urban Planning and Taree Council

Helen Weston advised that the urban design issues are being refined. In general terms where the road has views of the

Summary of Community Focus Group Meetings

Brother Mountains and the Rivers, these would be protected.

A meeting was held with Greater Taree City Council (GTCC) in September to discuss business impacts at [Johns River](#). A further meeting is to be organised by Council with the [Johns River](#) business community to progress the issues. The discussions are aimed at identifying mitigation measures such as advanced [signage](#), streetscape design.etc.

The "[Gateway](#)" issue and the [rest area](#) also need to be addressed.

Allan Kennedy asked how erosion and sediment controls at [Stewarts River](#) will be addressed in the urban design context. **Helen Weston** and **Tony Smith** advised that efforts are being made to reduce impacts by locating sediment basins between and under the twin bridges to the south of [Stewarts River](#).

June 2003

[Rod Heath](#) made it to the meeting.

[Stewarts River Road](#) interchange – no major changes, continuing discussions with urban design group. Northbound heavy vehicle [rest area](#) moved further south towards Charles Yard Road, with the new Charles Yard Road intersection also moved further south.

Drainage/hydrology – [Stewarts River](#) – no major issues

Ian Ferguson asked for an update on the predicted project completion date. **Ray Dallen** advised that there is no political commitment at this stage, though it is noted that the project is one year behind the original program, which results in a predicted commissioning date in 2011.

[Rod Heath](#) advised that the people of [Johns River](#) were looking forward to no **B-doubles** passing through the main street as well as reduced traffic noise particularly sleep disturbance issues from braking and differing tones from the various road surfaces.

[Rod Heath](#) believes that if adequate [signage](#) is provided people will continue to stop at [Johns River](#).

Ian Ferguson requested that the Kew [Gateway](#) Subcommittee be invited to the next meeting between RTA and Hastings Council.

December 2003

Merv Isaac, [Rod Heath](#), [Joe Malvicino](#) and Brian Fletcher in attendance.

Questions of whether local roads need to be designed for **B doubles** in the local council areas. **Bob Higgins** with the RTA said that approximately 30% of heavy vehicle traffic serves the local area and that road must be designed to accommodate these movements.

Road improvements to the Pacific Highway have provided time savings for these movements. In fact, movements of heavy vehicles onto the Pacific Highway from the New England highway have also occurred as a result of improvements to the Pacific Highway. **B Doubles** must be catered for in any new Pacific Highway projects.

Summary of Community Focus Group Meetings

Brian Bremner: Talked about how **Gateway** Sub-Committee wanted to beautify and improve the area.

There would be full reliance on advance **signage** to indicate the Kew exit. For vehicles approaching from the south, both options would have full reliance on **signage** to indicate the Kew exit – no views of the town would be possible before the exit.

July 2005

At the ever-delightful Steaks on Kew, **Rod Heath** Merv Isaac **Joe Malvicino** assembled with **Daintree Gerrand**. Mostly EIS issues were addressed, until the new Johns River options were discussed.

Bulleys Road Realignment

Bulleys Road – now connects through to **Stewarts River Road** in **Johns River**. This is safer, especially for truck traffic from the **quarry**.

Where possible, changes made to provide access connection roads for properties to limit the number of intersection points with the highway, and the intersection for **Watson Taylor Road** made safer.

Charlies Yard Road adjusted to move it away from the northbound **rest area** and Rossglen Road. All three access points are now separate (based on discussions with Forests NSW).

Frontage – where possible provision made for future local access/service road facilities.

Interchanges at Kew and **Johns River** will be provided due to the significantly higher traffic and the fact that the

bypassing of these two centres provides a suitable opportunity at minimal extra cost for the provision of interchanges as part of the current work.

*What is the design of the Kew **Gateway** sign?* Response – This will be resolved during the final design phase in consultation with Council and the community. However, there are set standards that apply to the design of signposting.

Johns River The only change to the previously displayed layout is the intersection arrangement for **Bulleys Road**.

*Is provision made at **Wharf Road** for semi-trailers that access Gibsons engineering and the timber mill?* Response – This is a Council issue as the current proposal does not change the existing arrangements for **Wharf Road**.

Local Businesses – Highway related trade at Kew and **Johns River** was recognised. With the reduction in highway traffic through these towns, it is acknowledged that there will be a negative impact. To some extent this impact will be off-set by the design of the proposal, as well as future planning by Council and the community to deal with the changed circumstances.

*The work of this CFG finished up as the approvals process ended, and was replaced by the Community Liaison Group (meeting in Kew beginning August 2007) for the construction phase of the project. **Johns River** is currently well-represented there.*

Please contact media@johnsriver.com.au if you have any issues or questions for the Progress Association or the CLG.

At the time of publication, we lack the meeting minutes for the local Values Management Group which met at the Johns River Public School; these should follow shortly.