

SUBMISSION NO. 2

Committee for the Western  
Bypass of Murrumbateman,  
80 Murrumbateman Road  
MURRUMBATEMAN  
NSW 2582

14 October 2003

Transport and Regional Services Committee  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

### **PRIVATISATION OF REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Committee for the Western Bypass of Murrumbateman applauds the inquiry announced by the Transport and Regional Services Committee and its objectives, and welcomes the opportunity to make this submission.

We represent the majority of a regional community. We exist to ensure that the public gets a good and safe design for the Barton Highway. We have contributed a great deal of voluntary effort and local knowledge. In the process, we have learned a lot about the existing government processes for the planning, construction and operation of transport systems and the involvement of regional communities.

Australians, governments and communities alike, expect that transport systems, planned, built and operated by the public sector, will be safe, efficient and accessible. Moreover, it is expected that the processes, in government hands, will be competent and honest. Australians would resist privatisation if it would lead to dilution of probity standards or expertise or community participation or safety or efficiency.

The community's expectations of the public sector development of transport infrastructure have not universally been fulfilled. Incidents of public sector incompetence, bias and corruption have become exposed. The work of our Committee has disclosed one such case and we have learned of others from experts and other community groups.

The documents annexed to this submission show the opportunities we have provided to the RTA and to the Minister to audit the process and correct the outcome.

We cannot say with certainty that the privatization of more Australian infrastructure will lead to improvements in these respects. What we can say that is relevant to the Inquiry conducted by your Committee is that the current public sector processes are not delivering the outcomes that the community expects.

Our community Committee discovered that the RTA of NSW has erred in advising the Minister for Transport and Regional Services to build the Barton Highway bypass through the town of Murrumbateman. The Committee's views are now strongly endorsed by the Highway Audit recently conducted by the National Roads and Motorists'

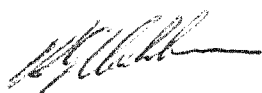
hazards for all motorists. We contend that the RTA has erred because its process failed to conduct a Road Safety Audit in accordance with the Australian Standard. It failed totally to acquit its principal duty to compare the road safety outcomes of the two alternative routes. The RTA is experienced in the planning of bypasses and we are advised by experts that the errors and omissions in its report cannot happen by accident. And yet, contrary to the public interest, the RTA's erroneous decision has so far survived all opportunities for review by the State of NSW and by the Commonwealth.

Unless and until this decision is overturned, there can be no grounds for confidence in the probity of the transport infrastructure processes of the public sector. On the contrary, it has been our experience that the RTA's processes have been marked throughout by bias and that the public consultation has been a cynical exercise of tokenism.

Another of our discoveries is relevant to the inquiry held by your Committee. The Federal system of Australian Government has represented a continuing source of disharmony, inequity and inefficiency in the implementation of transport infrastructure. We have learned that the Federal Government collects about \$12.5bn annually in fuel excise. This income is treated as general revenue and is not reserved for transport. However, to the extent that these resources are deployed for transport infrastructure, the processes are inefficient and inequitable. Federal and State Ministers are constantly at loggerheads and the outcomes are patently inconsistent. For example, the Commonwealth Government contributes to the Western Sydney Orbital but not to the Mitcham-Frankston Freeway. The media daily carry claims and counterclaims by the spokespeople for various governments about the inequitable treatment of other projects. The public, dependent on the efficient development of infrastructure, are the losers.

There is much evidence that the public sector processes are highly flawed in the achievement of society's transport objectives. There is good reason for your Committee to explore a greater role for privatisation, and hence competition in the provision and operation of transport infrastructure.

Yours sincerely,



K. G. HOULAHAN



P HALLEY



R HEHIR



M ANDERSEN

Telephone: 026 241 8400 BH

Committee for the Western  
Bypass of Murrumbateman,  
80 Murrumbateman Road  
MURRUMBATEMAN  
NSW 2582

**PRIVATISATION OF REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

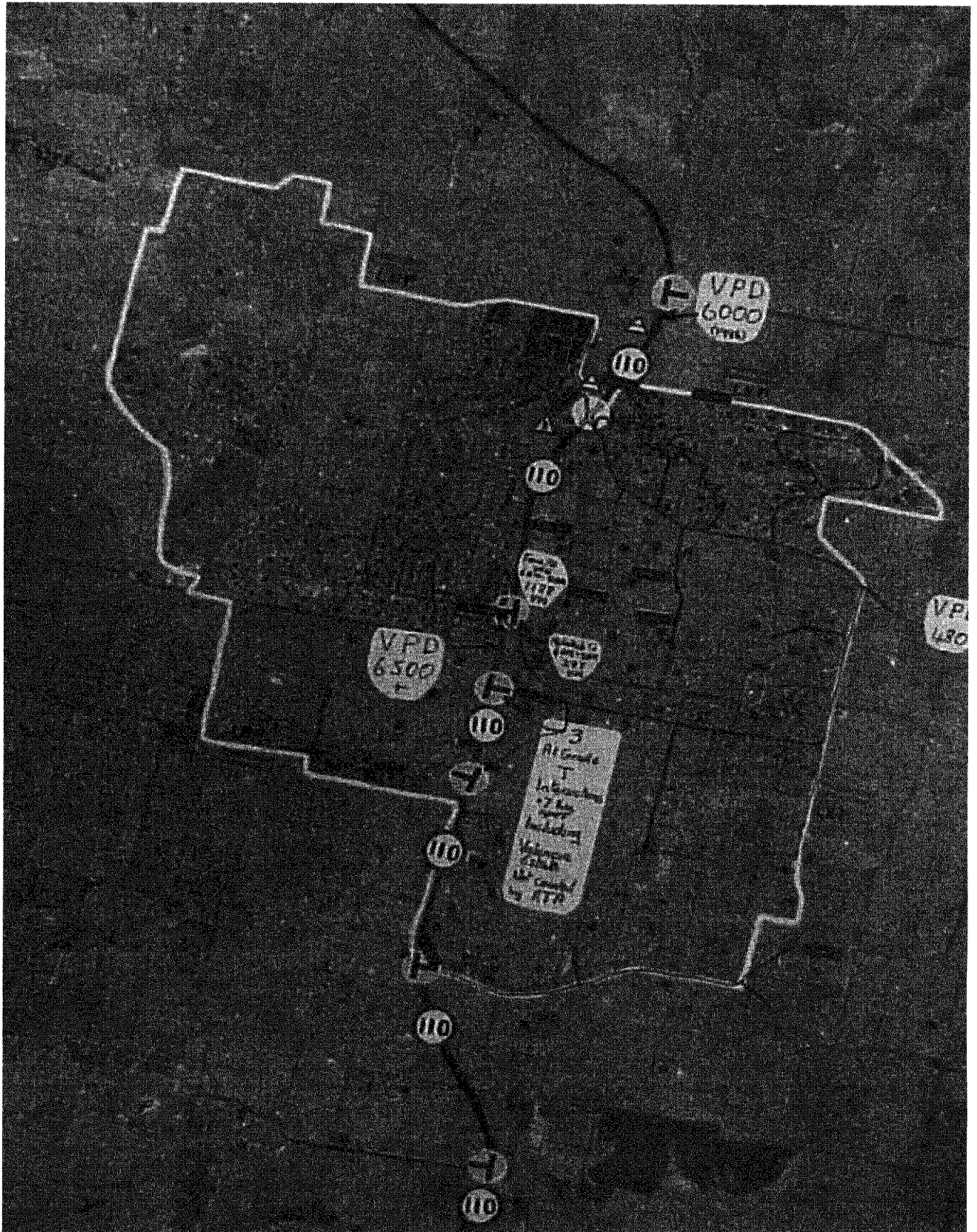


A submission to the  
Transport and Regional Services Committee  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

**The map on the next page shows:**

**INTERNAL BYPASS AS PROPOSED BY RTA**

- 1 White border is the boundary of the Council's Local Environment Plan for Murrumbateman.**
- 2 Numbers "VPD" are Vehicles Per Day at locations shown.**
- 3 "At-Grade" intersections and interchanges are illustrated.**



The map on the next page shows:

## **WEST IS BEST**

**SAFER**

**SHORTER**

**CHEAPER**

**GREENER**



The following text is the submission (with attachments A,B,C) of the submission to the RTA by the Citizens for the Western Bypass of Murrumbateman:

## **Introduction**

**Members of the Citizens for a Western Bypass Committee have examined the Connell Wagner Route Selection Study. We note with concern the narrow focus and lack of vision that the study portrays. We also note with concern instances of slanted analysis and the selective use of evidence that appears in the study.**

**There is no doubt that as a result of the above blemishes the study has poorly based conclusions significantly impacting on the bonafides of the investigation and the credibility of the authors.**

**Mr Neville Potter the former Assistant Secretary, Roads, Department of Transport and Regional Services recently described the draft of the study as "of an unacceptable standard". Given the minimal changes to the report since these comments in December 2000 the Western Bypass Committee reaffirms this comment. The study is still of an unacceptable standard and must be revised or otherwise discarded.**

**Annexed to this response are the following documents:**

- 1. Copy of a presentation made to Yass Shire Council on 13 June 2001**
- 2. Copy of a letter to the Australian Heritage Commission analysing the heritage report prepared for this study**
- 3. Copy of the response prepared by the Western Bypass Committee of the original (December 1998) report by the RTA.**

### **Route Selection Study Response**

**The proposed Barton Highway upgrade including a Bypass of Murrumbateman has profound and long term implications for all the people of Murrumbateman, for the next generations, our children and their children and the ever increasing number of daily road users (currently 7000 per day).**

**Unfortunately the Route Selection Study does not advance on the previous report completed by the RTA in 1998. We feel the report has been written with a distorted and predetermined leaning to the East Outer ('INTERNAL') Route. We feel the selective reporting throughout the document favours minority interests who live in the west and leaves the whole process including this study lacking in credibility. This is highlighted by the omission in the Route Selection Study of all previous**



information provided by the Western Bypass Committee and the Murrumbateman community which clearly identified the Western Bypass as the only legitimate Bypass of Murrumbateman.

Since the 1996 Value Management Study, the RTA and it's associates appear to have been influenced by a small vocal group with significant self interests who have not considered the long term implications of the internal route for the safety of our children now and in the future as well as the community at large. This is evidenced by the failure to include in the report any submissions, responses or similar documents from supporters of a Western Bypass. This small but vocal group claim they represent the Murrumbateman people, the business's and Yass Shire Council.

The Western Bypass Committee also believe that Yass Shire Council's Eastern Routes have been "deceptively branded" since 1994. These options clearly pass through the middle of the township (as defined by Yass Shire Council's Local Environment Plan 1987) splitting the town and the community in half. As previously pointed out this was overlooked by the RTA report in 1998 and by the Connell Wagner study in 2001. This is highlighted in the Route Selection Study which states that the Eastern Route would provide a high standard of road "around Murrumbateman". This is clearly "deceptive" and goes to the very heart of why this Route Selection Study is lacking in credibility!

Of further concern to the Western Bypass Committee is the apparent skewed emphasis, demonstrated repeatedly, which gives a high rating to flora and fauna but does not address overall quality of life for the people living in the region.in any route selection process for a town to be bypassed by a National Highway the primary objectives that should be identified include:

- The long term quality of life including safety of the community to be bypassed
- The need to reduce traffic conflict to nil or as close to nil as possible
- The need to cater for the perpetual growth of through traffic inherent with a National Highway

The route selection study fails to identify these fundamental objectives. It goes off on a tangent satisfying what seem to be predetermined conclusions originally arrived at in the already flawed and discredited 1998 RTA report.

Given the RTA's long term working relationship with Connell Wagner and their need to justify previous Barton Highway work from 1996, the conclusions referred to above are hardly unexpected. The Albury Wodonga "bungle" has further fuelled the interdepartmental political fire and this is at the expense of the Murrumbateman community.

The Western Bypass Committee also believe safety and the lack of its assessment is the most significant failing of the route selection study. A "Safety Audit" of the

proposed routes must now take on critical importance before the route selection can be finalised. Indeed, the Austroads Road Safety Audit handbook (RSAH) states that "Road safety audits are applicable to all types of road projects, to all types of roads and to all existing roads". New freeways are cited as a prime example of projects that should be so audited (RSAH, p 18).

Furthermore, "The road safety auditor must be independent of the designer so that the design is viewed with fresh eyes" (RSAH, p 19). This would rule out both the RTA and Connell Wagner from any involvement in a road safety audit of the proposed upgrade to the Barton Highway.

Austroads states that "It is easier, quicker and cheaper, to change a pencil line on a drawing than to have to move concrete and asphalt after the job is built" (RSAH, p 15).

The Western Bypass Committee have already pointed out many of the above issues to the RTA and Connell Wagner.

The Barton Highway Route Selection Study is reckless in its disregard for motorists, residents and their safety. It recommends a route requiring eight at-grade intersections over a 14.5kkm distance with six of those intersections in a 6km distance. This will mean that through traffic at 110km/h will be confronted by a T intersection approximately every 30 seconds. The high risk of serious fatal accidents is further compounded by numerous private property driveway and access gates. This Internal, second best option puts lives at risk and will be a financial burden to the national economy due to the increased cost of accidents and claims for negligence. (attachment A)

The Western Bypass Committee also believe the Route Selection Study fails to follow the necessary integrated planning processes as it ignores a number of related planning documents which pertain to the region, including:

- Bureau of Transport Economics report 1979
- NSW Road Safety 2010 program
- Australian Standards HB 43-1994 for road safety audits
- ACT Sub Regional Planning Strategy, (the proposal splits the town of Murrumbateman)
- The 1999 Yass Healthy River Valley Project, which supports the ACT Sub
- Regional Planning Strategy

All these documents must be considered to achieve accurate conclusions in the route selection process.

The route selection study is based in part on information gathered from selected government agencies. In part this information is over generalised, superficial and at

**times irrelevant and inaccurate. The weight given to this information by the authors of the report has then contributed to unsound conclusions.**

**This route selection study, like the previous RTA report in 1998, recommends that the Western Corridor should be excluded from further investigation. Yet the CSIRO report entitled Route Selection from the ACT Border to Barton Highway Connector (February 1998) and commissioned by the RTA itself appears to have been ignored. The CSIRO report concluded that any western route would be shorter and cheaper to build than any eastern route.**

**The Western Bypass Committee believe the Route Selection Study distorts the cost comparison of the alternative routes by ignoring:**

- the western routes are 1.6km shorter;**
- the initial land acquisition costs will be significantly less**
- the construction cost is lower;**
- the maintenance cost is lower;**
- the operating cost is lower.**

**The RTA has an obligation to provide a road network that best facilitates the future growth of Murrumbateman and the safety of the community. The road should on a cost benefit analysis be net positive to -the national economy as well as providing an efficient road network.**

### **Conclusion**

**Our assessment of the route selection study shows that 8 of the 12 criteria favour the A-L Western Bypass (attachment B). The study also includes a number of other flaws (attachment C). The Committee still prefers the D-L alignment as the safest and only 100% bypass of Murrumbateman.**

**The Western Bypass Committee therefore recommends to the RTA, Connell Wagner and the Department of Transport and Regional Services That the West D-L route be selected for further investigation through a detailed Environmental Impact Statement**

**The Community of Murrumbateman should not and will not accept second best as the legacy of this route selection process. Safety is by far the most important issue in this process. The RTA and Connell Wagner have admitted to this in the route selection study. Anything less than the safest option will not only result in the death of innocent travellers but will also expose NSW taxpayers to liability for acts of negligence.**

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION HELD BY THE COMMITTEE**

### **ATTACHMENTS TO SUBMISSION NO. 2**

- A. Safety the most important issue
- B. Revised assessment table for the Route Selection Study 2001
- C. Further flaws of the Route Selection Study - Various papers.