

Moruya Bypass Action Group raises widespread concerns over community consultation and selection process for the Moruya bypass

The Moruya Bypass Action Group represents members of the Moruya community who have come together because we are concerned about the processes involved in the selection of the preferred Moruya Bypass corridor, as well as the impacts of this corridor on productive agricultural land, properties, local businesses, the environment as well as the amenity and social fabric of our town.

Our group believe that the Moruya community deserves the best bypass solution possible. We are greatly concerned about the tokenistic community consultation that has been undertaken by Transport for NSW on the Moruya bypass, which is without doubt the most significant project ever undertaken in our town. The community has been given insufficient and at times conflicting information about the various corridor options, with little time to consider whether the preferred option is the best one for our town and community.

The sense within the community is that this project is being rushed through based on an inadequate and poorly timed community consultation. The initial consultation occurred just a few weeks after the catastrophic “black summer” bushfires had ravaged our community, and during the first lockdown period from the COVID-19 pandemic. This was not the time to ask the community to provide feedback on a project of such long-lasting and strategic importance.

It was hoped that answers and additional information would be provided by Transport for NSW at the recent community information sessions held between the 22nd and 27th May, but this did not occur. Instead, the community was confronted with stock answers drawn from an inadequate options report, together with a dubious questionnaire designed to deliver support for the preferred option. No additional information was provided, and many critical questions were unable to be answered. Transport for NSW finally released 14 pages of supplementary information on the 10th June, only 4 days before the closing date for submissions.

The supplementary report refers to several workshops held to consider the various route options for the bypass corridor. Only one of these workshops included community representatives, and it is not clear who the community representatives were or how representative they were of the community. These representatives were also required to sign a confidentiality agreement before participating in the workshop, preventing community access to any outcomes and associated information.

We are concerned that the consultation process so far has not provided any real information on the future maintenance and management of the existing

bridge crossing the Moruya River, which has significant implications for Eurobodalla Council's own ratepayer-funded infrastructure works program.

The Moruya Bypass Action Group notes that Transport for NSW has recently responded to concerns raised by the Shoalhaven community regarding the proposed route for the Milton-Ulladulla bypass by announcing the creation of a co-design committee for that project. This will be an independent committee of community stakeholders, residents, government agencies and Transport representatives. It will identify and recommend an option for the bypass. Once identified, that option will be shared with the wider community for feedback.

We think that the complexities and impacts of the Moruya bypass are of sufficient scale and magnitude to justify a similar co-design process for the Moruya bypass, which would run on a similar basis and terms of reference to those announced for the Milton-Ulladulla bypass co-design committee. This committee would also examine the future management and maintenance of the existing bridge over the Moruya River, as this is a vital community asset whose longer term future must be assured.

Our community will only get one chance with a major project like this, so we need to make sure that Transport for NSW invests the time and resources to get the bypass corridor selection process right.

Our town and our community deserve no less.

The Moruya Bypass Action Group

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Images below show the Kempsey bypass which is what we have been told the Moruya bypass will be modelled on.



Kempsey bypass under construction.

Source: <https://www.iqpc.com/media/7117/13618.pdf>



The Kempsey bypass on opening day.

Source: <https://www.portnews.com.au/story/1428598/kempseys-new-bridge-named-a-name/>

