

Julian

We are following up on correspondence that Julie Morgan received on behalf of The Moruya Bypass Action Group from yourself detailing the commitments Transport would make after meeting with us on 5th November 2021. Nearly 3 months have now passed and we are yet to be engaged in any meaningful way that satisfies the outcome of discussions held that day.

In light of our review of your correspondence and our own notes from the meeting, a number of questions have been raised that we believe deserve further clarification. Ideally, there will be some form of alignment between T4NSW's intentions and our expectations prior to the release of the Community Consultation Report, which you acknowledge needs amendments. Taking each point you have listed:

1. ***We will develop and implement a plan to engage more deeply and fully with the Moruya community and its varied stakeholders.***

Given you acknowledged that T4NSW timing of initial consultation, given the Black Summer fires, flood and then Covid, has meant that engagement with the Moruya community was less successful than it could have been, this statement, no matter how well intentioned, causes great concern to us. We would like to understand, in detail, how T4NSW proposes to undertake this exercise so that an accurate picture of the community's understanding about a proposed landbridge bypass of some 8kms in length together with its connectivity to the town and the hospital will be achieved. Again, we have yet to see any evidence of this. To date we have heard and seen nothing from T4NSW. We believe it would be prudent to inform the community first and foremost about how you plan to engage more deeply and fully with the Moruya community, its varied stakeholders and the wider Eurobodalla Shire. Our petition, which continues to grow with approximately 900 signatures opposed to the orange route, clearly indicates your preferred corridor is not supported by the Moruya community. Discussions with varied stakeholders, including the business community contacted during our ongoing survey work, clearly show the preferred corridor is not supported by town businesses. When information about the proposed bypass is disseminated to the wider Eurobodalla Shire community (through our website moruyabypass.org and in person) the general reaction has been one of shock, with a number of residents voicing concerns about the size and impact of the land bridge, and in particular Batemans Bay residents voicing concern about poor access to the new hospital.

2. ***We will seek to expedite our release of the community consultation report following guidance from the Government – noting that some of the commitments arising from our meeting may mean it needs some amendment.***

Once again, carefully worded prefacing, that being, "seek to expedite", causes concern. If the current version of the community consultation report was based on historic engagement, or lack thereof, and outdated assumptions which have now led to the need to develop a plan to "***engage more deeply and fully with the Moruya community and its varied stakeholders***" then it will definitely need amendments, to the point where it may need a complete rework. You stated that there were no easily identifiable stand-out routes, which was evidenced by the conclusion at the end of the series of workshops, that more work needed to be done on the corridors,

including the hybrids. Furthermore, how can the community consultation report be released when the amendments that are to be considered must involve an improvement in accordance with the first commitment you made? This is not just a few changes to text, or as stated at the meeting "**once the language has been tweaked**". This surely involves a greater scrutiny of data that will take some time to be undertaken.

3. *We will continue to work with local media, including The Beagle Weekly, to ensure updates on the project are disseminated accurately to the wider community*

Again, updating the public is not necessarily informing the public of what information source is used to support the update. As an example, the Rhelm flood study has not been released for review. And what are the results of the drilling program?

4. *We will work to release a wider suite of technical information to the community*

Surely the work that has been undertaken is able to be released to the public for review. Why does T4NSW need to work to release it, when it will be a publicly funded project. Our group has been requesting technical information since the release of the Corridor Options Report. What are the reasons for not releasing it sooner?

5. *We will ensure additional information is available to allow comparison of options considered by Transport for the Moruya bypass*

You can understand that such wording causes further scepticism about the information that is released, i.e., information supporting the Orange route. As you stated there were no easily identifiable standout routes in the case of the Moruya Bypass. It is therefore vitally important that rigorous work is done to justify the preferred corridor, and if additional factual inputs are incorporated into the modelling that weigh the outcome to a different route, then that needs to be done. As an example, you now have the latest bushfire zone mapping data to use rather than the outdated reference source from 2011. This is critical in the evaluation process. We acknowledge you for having the flood work reviewed by a third party. We would, however, appreciate an understanding of the brief that has been provided to the third party.

6. *We will continue to better understand our potential environmental impacts, and seek to reduce those impacts*

We have had no response in relation to any environmental concerns raised so far, so how does T4NSW intend to address these unresolved issues? For example, how will the like-for-like offset be implemented, especially given the region lost 80% of its forests in the Black Summer bushfires? A comparison of environmental impacts across each route and how they will be reduced must involve community consultation, not just a distant group undertaking a review of third party mapping. We appreciate your attendance at the meeting and willingness to discuss the project. We are hopeful of improved engagement between the community and T4NSW.

Our community requires truthful and detailed answers to the significant number of questions that have been raised since the preferred options corridor report was released. We are frustrated not only by the lack of response from T4NSW, but also

when a response is provided it has so very little substance within it. We note this has been a pattern across other similar projects, to the point where it has been raised at a NSW Legislative Committee Estimates hearing.

We are engaged with other communities along the South Coast experiencing similar frustrations with the consultation and route selection process and through a collaborative effort, and we will ensure our united messages are heard at both the State and Federal levels. We are, after all, the community that has to live with the outcome for decades to come.

We will continue to inform our community about the proposed project and ensure an exhaustive due diligence is undertaken. We request your department assist our community to achieve this goal.

Kind Regards
Moruya Bypass Action Group