

“Bonnie Braes”
WATTAMONDARA
NSW 2794

27/9/09

The Secretary
Bells Line Expressway Group
C/- Bathurst Regional Council
Private Mail Bag 17
BATHURST NSW 2795

Dear Sir,

On behalf of the Central West Transport Forum I thank you for the copy of the BLEG Balance Sheet, 2008. We note however, that it does not provide information as to where the finance was derived or where it has been spent.

We also thank you for the copy of the Western Research Institute Ltd, BYPASS: a new lease on life?

This extensively researched report, along with previous WRI reports, undoubtedly provides valuable evidence supporting the campaign for better highway access between the Central West and Sydney. However, it does not provide the information necessary to determine the most efficient and cost effective option. Your excellent report shows WHY an expressway over the Blue Mountains would be beneficial, BUT, it does not research WHAT would be the best option. The assumption that the BLEG option would be the best is simply that – an assumption.

We are somewhat curious to know why the BLEG have chosen to commission such a report as it would seem that a Bells Line Expressway, the only option that the BLEG appears to support, would entirely remove access to the 70,000 people presently living across the existing Great Western Highway (GWH). That would not be a bypass but effectively an exclusive road to service only western and Hawkesbury region traffic.

The report would seem to have more relevance to an alternative route proposal following ridges south of the existing GWH that would bypass most of the eighteen towns along the GWH. Such an option, an investigation of which we have been seeking for many years, could enable connections to the upper central and lower Blue Mountains towns, resulting in much higher service potential and consequent cost justification than a Bells Line Expressway.

We have received advice from the RTA that this option has never been researched, despite a number of high cost reports having been conducted into the feasibility of the Bells Line option. We also note that the findings of those reports do not favour construction of a Bells Line Expressway.

The failure to examine the full picture for possible expressway options gives us further concerns, considering the current \$560M program of piecemeal upgrade projects being applied to the GWH across the Blue Mountains.

We are also alarmed at the most recent decision to drop investigation of Newnes Plateau options that would enable a bypass of Lithgow and an efficient approach to a bypass of Mt Victoria. We believe that any work to improve the existing GWH within the Hartley Valley will only be counterproductive in the long-term.

We also draw your attention to similarly related town bypassing issues currently under consideration by Bathurst Regional Council, Cowra Shire Council and Orange City Council.

We believe that planning events that have taken place in recent years, particularly in relation to the GWH, are evidence of serious systemic deficiencies in the organization of current highway planning. These essential land use issues (including your BLEG proposal,) are not receiving the priority and guidance in planning that is warranted from State Planning. While the RTA has responsibilities to ensure efficient road development, the State Planning Department, under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, clearly has a responsibility to provide efficient and effective planning instruments and protocols to ensure comprehensive planning procedures that would result in minimum waste. This responsibility has been neglected.

Local Government bodies are often influenced by parochial interests without having any reference to wider regional planning. Liaising with the State Planning Department is essential.

Enclosed is information taken from our website www.centralwesttransportforum.org outlining some of our concerns relating to planning for an expressway road crossing of the Blue Mountains.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Dun
Central West Transport Forum