

Blackheath Joint Submission



Mr Chris Barnett
Project Manager
Katoomba to Mount Victoria
RMS
PO Box 334
PARKES NSW 2870

Dear Chris,

**Supplementary joint community submission
Great Western Highway - highway safety improvements project Katoomba to Mt Victoria**

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and representatives of your project team on Monday 5 May at Blackheath. We appreciated the frank and open discussion in relation to the proposed safety improvements to the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Mt Boyce.

We the undersigned set out the following supplementary submission in relation to the Great Western Highway safety improvements project between Katoomba and Mount Victoria. This submission, which represents the position of all of the major stakeholder groups in Blackheath, is supplementary to our initial joint submission dated 12 March 2013 and addresses the proposals presented to us in early May 2014.

As previously noted, safety is a critical issue for local residents and business owners who are located between Katoomba and Mount Victoria. The Blackheath Highway Action Group ('BAG') has, along with the Blackheath community and the organisations named below, lobbied the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority ('RTA') and Roads and Maritime Services ('RMS') for safety improvements to the highway between Katoomba and Mt Boyce, particularly through Blackheath since 2008. These efforts have been publicly supported by the Blue Mountains City Council.

We reiterate our belief that the priority for the Australian and NSW Governments in relation to the Great Western Highway west of Katoomba should be to make the highway safer for local residents and the many tourists who visit the Blue Mountains, as well as other motorists who use the Great Western Highway to travel further afield.

Tourism is the economic base of Blackheath. Blackheath is also a key tourist destination on the Blue Mountains Grand Circular Tourist Drive. Highway safety is critical for tourism because a large proportion of visitors travel to Blackheath by car or tourist coach.

We also take this opportunity to remind both the Australian and NSW Governments of the need to address the movement of freight across the Blue Mountains between Sydney, Newcastle and Port Kembla and the NSW Central West. The Blackheath community is disappointed by the lack of action at all levels of government to address the ever increasing numbers of trucks using the Great Western Highway for the transport of freight. A long term transport plan that incorporates rail for the transport of freight such as petroleum products across the Blue Mountains between Sydney, Newcastle and Port Kembla and the NSW Central West is desperately needed.

1. Background

The Blackheath community unanimously called on the NSW Government at the RTA convened public meeting held on 22 December 2008 to develop and implement, in conjunction with the local community, a Blackheath Highway Safety Management Plan. The Blackheath Highway Safety Management Plan is a comprehensive approach to making the highway safer through Blackheath for local residents. The concept of the plan is to stop the previous ad hoc approach to addressing highway safety through Blackheath. The idea of a Blackheath Highway Safety Management Plan was first raised by Councilor Terri Hamilton, former Ward 1 Councilor, Blue Mountains City Council back in 2005. In September 2005 Blue Mountains City Council endorsed Councilor Hamilton's motion calling on the RTA to develop and implement such a plan.

Representatives from local community organisations including BAG again called on the RTA to develop and implement a Blackheath Highway Safety Management Plan at the RTA Community Consultation Meeting held on Wednesday, 18 March 2009.

Community representatives again raised the issue of the Blackheath Highway Safety Management Plan with representatives from the RTA at another RTA Community Consultation Meeting held on Thursday, 16 April 2009. Michael Paag, Chair of BAG, also met with Diana Loges and Geoff Cahill from the RTA on Friday, 12 June 2009 to discuss the concept of a Blackheath Highway Safety Management Plan and the need for highway safety improvements through Blackheath.

A copy of the BAG submission to the RTA dated 6 June 2009 is also attached for your information.

Our community's interrelationship with the Great Western Highway has major significance for local business, tourism, the public school and local residents.

As was mentioned to James Surprain from the RTA on Saturday, 27 June 2009, there are high levels of community concern regarding the current difficulties westbound traffic experiences in accessing the town from the highway via both the Govetts Leap Road and the Hat Hill Road intersections.

The community also has strong concerns about excessive speed through the town precinct, especially by large trucks. The high levels of truck noise which these trucks create is also a huge problem for businesses and residents in close proximity to the highway.

Local residents are also concerned about travelling around the town which is intersected by a highway, in particular moving from east to west and vice versa, and gaining access to and from

the highway, particularly at intersections such as Abbott Street, Bundarra Street and the Station Street rail overpass.

Our community once again publicly expressed these concerns at the last RMS public consultation meeting held at the Redleaf Motel on Monday 18 February 2013.

The Blackheath community warmly welcomes the opportunity to work constructively with RMS and Blue Mountains City Council to positively address these issues for the benefit of both local residents and highway users.

We believe community engagement throughout the life of this project is critical to its success.

2 Highway Safety Initiatives through Blackheath

As noted at the RMS Blackheath stakeholder meetings held on Thursday 24 January 2013, and again on Monday 5 May 2014, which was attended by representatives from the Blackheath Highway Action Group, Blackheath Chamber of Commerce, Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre, Blackheath Public School Council, Blackheath Mt Victoria RSL Sub branch, Friends of Blackheath Pool & Memorial Park, the Blackheath Community Centre Committee, the Blackheath Streetscape Group, Blackheath RFS and Blackheath Rotary, there is a general community view that any safety highway improvements undertaken by the RMS should meet the following criteria:

- We don't need four lanes between Katoomba and Mt Boyce, and particularly through Blackheath, to address the safety concerns of the local community.
- Protect the corridor of trees along the highway, which have historical, economic and social significance for Blackheath.
- Any proposed works including hardscaping need to be sympathetic to the village amenity of Blackheath.
- Focus on improving highway access for local residents and tourists for both the eastern and western sides of Blackheath including for pedestrians and cyclists.

We once again call on the RMS to include the following initiatives as part of the highway safety improvements project between Katoomba and Mount Victoria, which are notably absent from the proposals put forward by the RMS in its May 2014 community update:

- i) Reduce the speed limit through the Blackheath town precinct from 60km to 50km;
- ii) Reduce the speed limit between the Mt Boyce Truck Checking Station and Ridgewell Road from 80km to 60km;
- iii) Install Safety cameras at the two signalised pedestrian crossings on the highway in Blackheath, and install a Safety camera at the traffic signals at the Govetts Leap Road highway intersection, and

- iv) Implement speed calming measures on the highway between Evans Lookout Road and Abbott Street (Hill 33) to reduce the incidence of excessive speeding along the west bound overtaking lane. This will improve safety for local traffic and pedestrians at the Abbott Street highway intersection.

Representatives from the local community strongly emphasised the importance of addressing excessive speed along the highway through the Blackheath town precinct at the RMS stakeholder meeting on 5 May 2014. As Michael Paag has subsequently mentioned to you, the issue of excessive speed is a major concern for our community. We wholeheartedly reject the findings of the speed survey included in the Traffic Impact Assessment as noted on page 48 of the RMS Potential Treatments Report – March 2014.

The success of this project rests upon the RMS dealing with the community's concerns regarding the issue of excessive speed along the highway through the town precinct, especially by large trucks.

We are also concerned the following initiatives are notably absent from the proposals put forward by the RMS in its May 2014 community update:

- i) Provision of footpaths/cycle paths along the highway;
 - a. Between Ridgewell Road and Radiance Avenue
 - b. Between Whitley Park and Sutton Park
- ii) Block direct highway access to the northern end of the slip road outside St Mounts Guesthouse so that the slip road is only accessible via Abbott Street, and
- iii) Implement safety modifications at the Station Street rail overpass including but not limited to:
 - a. Allow enough room for buses and larger vehicles to turn right from the highway on to the rail overpass. Currently there is not enough room for buses to use the right turn lane to turn right on to the overpass from the highway without blocking eastbound highway traffic.
 - b. Allow enough room for buses and larger vehicles to turn left from the highway on to the rail overpass.
 - c. Implement measures to stop traffic congestion at the intersection of the rail overpass and Station Street.

The location of the bus stops on either side of the highway at the Station Street rail overpass intersection must also be reviewed. Safe and easy access to bus stops on both sides of the highway at this location is very important for school children and local residents.

We believe the location of power poles at the Station Street rail overpass intersection must also be examined and modified to improve sight lines for traffic exiting the rail overpass onto the highway.

In addition to the items raised above we also request that the following measures be included as potential treatments as part of this project:

- Review signaling arrangements to better protect pedestrians crossing the highway against traffic turning right on to the highway from Govetts Leap Road.
- Move the taxi rank that is currently located on the highway outside the railway station to the drop off zone and use the existing taxi rank for more parking spaces.
- Fund the implementation of the BMCC landscaping plan for the area adjacent to the highway in front of the Blackheath War Memorial.

The preferred option for the treatment of the Gardiner Crescent intersection is Option A, which we believe has widespread community support. Access to Gardiner Crescent from the highway is important because of the location of the Community Hall, the Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre and the CWA facility, which also serves as the Blackheath Baby Clinic.

We reject any proposal to extend the westbound overtaking lane east of Hill 33 on the basis that any increase in length of the westbound overtaking lane will only compound the issue of excessive speed along the highway through the town precinct. Funding for this initiative would be better invested in the completion of the bike track between Medlow Bath and Blackheath to a standard that would permit use by emergency vehicles and to fund the installation of a safety camera / speed cameras along the highway through the town precinct.

Possible tree removal as part of the potential treatments along the highway is a concern. As highlighted above and at numerous RMS stakeholder meetings the corridor of trees along the highway is an important landmark of historic, social and economic significance for Blackheath. We therefore request that any possible tree removal be reconsidered in view of this submission and the comments made at the various RMS stakeholder meetings. Whilst the community is supportive of some of the suggested potential treatments, this support is based on the notion that such potential treatments will deliver safer access for local residents and tourists. Any potential treatments that result in the loss of trees along the highway corridor, which do not meet the criteria of providing safer access for local residents and tourists would be widely rejected by the local community.

The above suggested initiatives have come about as a result of extensive consultation between BAG and its supporters, local community organisations noted below, local business owners and local residents.

3 Highway Safety Initiatives between Medlow Bath and Evans Lookout Road, Blackheath

Accidents on the Great Western Highway between Medlow Bath and Evans Lookout Road cause major disruption to our local community, Blue Mountains tourism and emergency services because there are no alternative routes or vehicle access points between Medlow Bath and Blackheath.

Accordingly, we welcome proposals by RMS to implement the following safety initiatives as part of the highway safety improvements project between Katoomba and Mount Victoria:

- i) Straighten the three sharp bends on the highway near Medlow Bath and improve the camber and alignment of the highway at this section.
- ii) Complete the process to improve signage, road surface and drainage along the highway between Medlow Bath and Evans Lookout Road.
- iii) Provide a right turn lane at the intersection of the Great Western Highway and Bellevue Crescent.

The proposal put forward by the RMS for the Evans Lookout Road intersection, particularly the removal of the eastbound slip lane is not welcomed by our community. As highlighted at our meeting with you on 5 May 2014, Evans Lookout Road is an important intersection for local residents to access the highway. We believe the removal of the eastbound slip lane at this intersection will not improve safety for local residents. However the realignment of the start of the eastbound overtaking lane on the highway east of Evans Lookout Road will improve driver certainty and therefore safety for local residents using this intersection to access the highway.

We once again call on RMS to implement the following safety initiatives as part of the highway safety improvements project between Katoomba and Mount Victoria, which are notably absent from the proposals put forward by the RMS in its May 2014 community update:

- i) Implement proactive speed control measures along the highway.
- ii) Realign the start of the two eastbound lanes on the highway east of Evans Lookout Road to improve driver certainty.
- iii) Install electronic warning signs at Katoomba and Mount Victoria to alert motorists if there is a major incident on the highway between Katoomba and Blackheath. These signs should be sympathetic to the surrounding locations.

Whilst we welcome the proposal for a bike track along the western side of the railway line between Medlow Bath and Blackheath, we strongly believe this needs to be further upgraded to provide an alternative local road between Medlow Bath and Blackheath for use by emergency vehicles and local residents only.

4 Next Step in the Consultation Process for the Great Western Highway highway safety improvements project between Katoomba and Mount Victoria

As noted at the RMS Blackheath stakeholder meetings held on Thursday 24 January 2013, Monday 5 May 2014 and in subsequent discussions between Michael Paag and yourself, we would be pleased to meet with you and your team to review and discuss the RMS recommendations and design proposals for the Great Western Highway highway safety improvements project between Katoomba and Mount Victoria.

We believe it is critical that further consultation continue to be undertaken in relation to the project's recommendations and proposals so that the local community, through the Blackheath stakeholders, i.e. the community organisations noted below, have the opportunity to provide feedback and input into the finalisation of the design before any works are undertaken.

Please do not hesitate to contact Michael Paag, Chair, Blackheath Highway Action Group on (m) 0423 596 240 or by email, blackheathhighwayaction@gmail.com if you require further explanations and or additional information in relation to our submission.

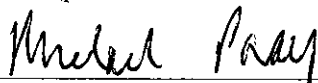
Yours sincerely,



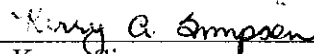
Bob Weaver
President
Blackheath Chamber of Commerce



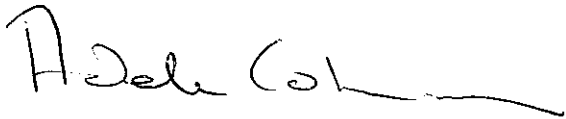
Judy Finch
Manager /Community Development Worker
Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre



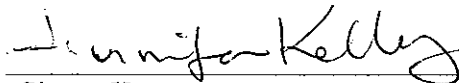
Michael Paag
Chair
Blackheath Highway Action Group



Kerry Simpson
Hon Secretary
Blackheath Mt Victoria RSL Sub Branch



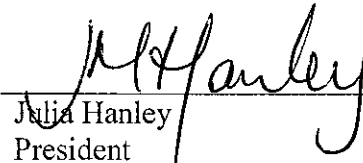
Adele Colman
Convener
Blackheath Streetscape Group



per Simon Hare
Convener
Friends of Blackheath Pool & Memorial Park



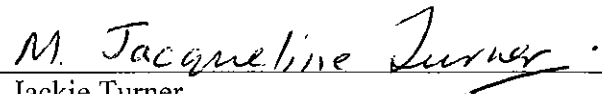
Wayne Kelly
Chair
Blackheath Community Centre Committee



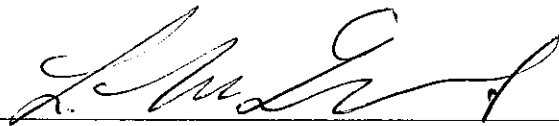
Julia Hanley
President
Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society



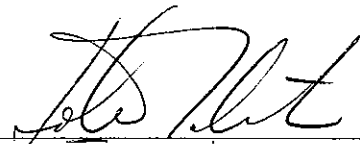
Russell Brown
Group Manager
Blackheath Scouts



Jackie Turner
Committee Member
Blackheath & District Horticultural Society



Name: LINDA McLAUGHLIN
Position: DIRECTOR
Organisation: BLACKHEATH CHOIR FESTIVAL



Name: JOHN ISBISTER
Position: PRESIDENT
Organisation: ROTARY CLUB OF BLACKHEATH



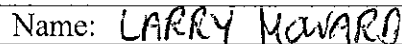
Name: JOHN PARK
Position: PRESIDENT
Organisation: BLUE Mtns CROQUET CLUB



Name: Jenny Tooke
Position: CWA of NSW
Blackheath

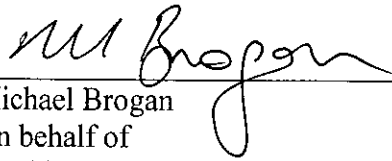


Name: Raelene Allen
Position: owner
Organisation: Blackheath Hub



Name: LARRY HOWARD
Position: CAPTAIN
Organisation: BLACKHEATH MI VIC RFS

- cc. Office of Roza Sage MP, State Member for Blue Mountains
Office of Louise Markus MP, Federal Member for Macquarie
Councillor Robert Stock, Ward 1 Councilor, Blue Mountains City Council
Councillor Michael Begg, Ward 1 Councilor, Blue Mountains City Council
Councillor Don McGregor, Ward 1 Councilor, Blue Mountains City Council
Councillor Mark Greenhill, Mayor, Blue Mountains City Council
Blue Mountains Tourism Ltd
NPWS Blue Mountains Heritage Centre



Michael Brogan
On behalf of
Blackheath Public School Council

Mark McGrath
President
Blackheath Public School P & C

Name:
Position:
Organisation:

Name:
Position:
Organisation: