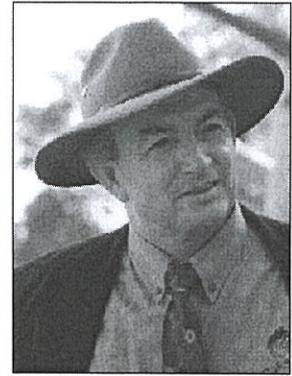
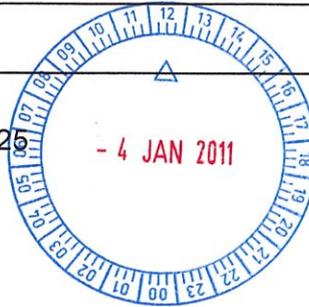


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Thursday 16 December, 2010

Hon Brian Ellis MLC  
Chairman  
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
Parliament House  
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Hon Mr Ellis,

**Submission: Petition No 103 – Proposed Kununurra Heavy Vehicle Route, and the Construction of a Bridge over Ord River**

The residents of River Farm Road Kununurra have put together this petition objecting to the proposed placement of a new the bridge over the Ord River some 800 metres from their properties and to request that the Government consider an alternate site.

The complaint has not been taken to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman).

This submission supports an enquiry to be held into the issue as summarised below.

**Background:** The proposed site for the bridge over the Ord is largely undeveloped in its natural state, with the plants and aquatic weeds helping keep the river healthy and assisting with the stabilisation of the banks.

**Petitioners:** The residents of River Farm Road have serious concerns about decisions being taken on a proposed new Kununurra heavy vehicle route coming close to blocks they occupy as residences and on which they conduct horticultural activities to the west of the township of Kununurra on the eastern bank of the Ord River.

The pressure of economic activity has increased upon the north east Kimberley, not only as part of the normal expansion of the population of the state and increased pressures from the resources industry, but also from tourism and, now, the expansion of the Ord irrigation scheme.

One of the consequences is that the old diversion dam crossing across the Ord River adjacent to Kununurra is no longer considered to be sufficient to meet the traffic pressure of the area. For many years there has been an expectation there would need to be a new heavy vehicle route. The old diversion dam is on the site of the earliest agricultural research that was done in the area by Kimberley and Bill Durack in the 1940s. The government constructed the diversion dam in the 1960s providing only a single laneway for traffic. The construction has height and width limitations that can no longer adequately cater for the transport pressure on that area.

A pamphlet was circulated in June 2010 to some of the interested parties in the north east Kimberley area describing a project overview of the Kununurra heavy vehicle route. Instead of being addressed to individual residents, the pamphlet appears to have been distributed as a "To the Householder" in that area. In areas of the Kimberley and other regional areas of Western Australia, householder mail from government agencies that is not directly addressed to residents or is not correctly addressed either by name or postal address is not delivered to the post office boxes of many people, with the Post Office making sure that junk mail does not come their way. The

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pamphlet prepared and distributed in collaboration between the Australian and Western Australian governments as a project overview was not delivered to the parties most affected by this proposal. Many of them remained oblivious to the fact that a proposal was coming their way to deliver a new road alignment and a new 180-metre bridge over the Ord River adjacent to these well-established homes and properties along River Farm Road.

Recent exploratory drilling for this bridge puts it very close indeed to people who have not been consulted about this proposal. The residents always knew that there would be a need for a new road and a new Ord River crossing, and were conscious that a proposal was due and were anticipating the opportunity to influence and shape the discussion. However, in view of Main Roads Western Australia's failure, the residents appear to be the one group not consulted.

A long-term resident Mrs Diana Oliver, who was away from Kununurra at the time the original brochure was distributed to householders, only became aware of its existence in June this year. She raised this issue with me and with my assistance she immediately prepared a petition alerting the Parliament and the government to the concerns of the River Farm Road residents, including the fact that they had not been consulted and were not aware of the emerging preferred alignment for the new road construction north of the bridge over the Ord River that was looming as a likely construct so close to their homes, businesses, lives and families.

In July, Mrs Oliver contacted MRD in Perth advising she had not received the brochure. MRD advised the brochures were sent to all post office boxes in Wyndham and Kununurra. However, as she and others have "no junk mail" directive on their boxes, they did not receive the brochure. After her discussion with MRD, MRD contacted the Shire for the names and addresses of all Riverfarm Road householders and the brochure was then sent to residents accompanied by a letter inviting comments. The letter from MRD advised that "after the comment period, all feedback will be collated and reviewed, and the preliminary design will then be finalised".

Other people in the community have been involved in the consultation process and have, it would appear, shaped Main Roads thinking about the direction the road alignment might take if the current proposals are signed off by the minister on behalf of the government and construction were to occur. Happily, that has protected the interests of a couple of the parties, but, unbeknown to a larger group of people the proposed alignment is now slap bang up against the properties of a number of people who were not consulted.

The residents of River Farm Road are of the view that as the project is in the pre-construction phase the government now has an opportunity to take on board their legitimate concerns. Main Roads Western Australia's proposal even includes a planned parking area adjacent to the alignment that would hover over these people's homes and farms.

This road will link Victoria Highway to Great Northern Highway, which starts at Guildford and finishes at the port in Wyndham. The existing road through Kununurra will not meet the current, let alone the future, transport needs of the area. The residents recognise that the new route is needed and are aware that various routes have been considered. People have considered the old Ivanhoe Crossing and whether a road link through Mantinea Plain - a beautiful alternative road route that would link the people from Kununurra to Wyndham. A reasonable alignment closer to Dobson's block would link up on the western side of the Ord River and would lead traffic naturally back onto the Victoria Highway in a way that would be far less disruptive to the community of the north east Kimberley and to the lives and families of the horticultural block owners and residents along River Farm Road.

On the basis of this submission, I ask your Committee to conduct an inquiry pursuant to the tabling of this petition to ensure that the rights of all sections of that community are protected.

Yours sincerely



**Tom Stephens, MLA**  
Member for Pilbara

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