

**RMS submission proforma re Concept Design and Safety
Upgrade**

**(Feel free to draw on elements of this proforma to
assemble your own personalised submission)**

**The General Manager
Mt Victoria to Lithgow alliance
Reply Paid 164
St Leonards NSW 1590**

?? October 2012

Dear Sir

**RE Mt Victoria Lithgow Highway Upgrade
Concept Design and Road Boundaries report**

As stated on many occasions, the Hartley Valley is a landscape of enormous heritage significance to European and Indigenous Australians alike. It is a landscape that still shows the marks of first settlement by Europeans, a valley dotted with buildings that are relics of early settlement in a landscape where the earliest land grants are still visible, marked by tree lines and boundary trees. It is a place where history is tangible, the more so for the relatively intact nature of the context in which such history has unfolded. This essence is felt deeply by its residents and visitors who are committed to its preservation as a treasure house of heritage.

The abovementioned emotional connection to country has resulted in the community being deeply disquieted by the Concept Design now being considered. People have been appalled by some of the features of the concept design and there is a general feeling that the community has not been heard or is being ignored.

We share that disquiet and object as follows;

Concept design –

The Blue Mountains topography is such that the existing Great Western Highway can never be an adequate highway for moving freight across the Blue Mountains. Little wonder that so much freight from the Central west already reaches the coast by the Hume and Golden Highways despite the alluring shorter distance via Katoomba. Freight transport on both the Hume and Golden

highways in both directions, should be encouraged and facilitated as should the use of rail.

To be extending the inadequate road over the mountains with a super highway through the valley and creating a whole parallel road system is a hugely over engineered proposal. Its proposed overpasses, bridges and viaducts would be a visual blight on this heritage landscape. Based on the statistics the current road with safety enhancements is adequate to accommodate traffic for many years into the future, we do not need a dedicated super highway between Mt Victoria and Lithgow.

If highways are going to be the way for moving freight post 2030, and the Inland Railway is not properly committed by then, the Great Western Highway will be inadequate for obvious reasons. It seems madness to spend some \$2billion on this eighteen kilometres extension of that inadequate freight road, when for less you could build an upgraded road via one of the Newnes options, a road that could ultimately be the Western end of an future upgrade of Bells Line of Road. Huge fuel savings would accrue from the use of the Newnes upgrade.

Truck parking-

This valley is a heritage precinct, to be creating any truck park in it would be a travesty. Truck parking could easily be accommodates up around Mt Boyce or to the west in pine forest country, both in situations where neither neighbours or heritage values or vistas would be compromised.

Heritage Precincts-

The proposal to run a service road right through the two defined heritage villages Little Hartley and Hartley is quite objectionable and causes huge concern. Within these sites are buildings that need special preservation and protection, but more importantly their context needs preservation. These are places that need to be reserved for quiet enjoyment as places of reflection on where we have come from and the future that we rush to. They also represent a powerful promise in a future economy where the story of our past can build wealth in the valley. To desecrate them by making them a transit lane is not acceptable and we object to their use in that way in the strongest terms.

Community-

The Concept Design will have a huge impact on the valley community. No longer will it be easy to slip across to visit friends or do business on the other side of the highway. This issue will divide our community in the valley, resulting in one community

north of the road corridor and one south.

Safety enhancements-

We have reviewed the safety enhancements outlined in your October 2012 community update and as outlined in the displays held in the area last week. We commend the RMS for the good work being done.

We are in agreement with all of the proposals that have been tabled except the proposal for the Mt Victoria railway bridge and the Forty Bends upgrade. Widening road margins adjacent to the various commercial premises is the only enhancement we would propose. We will watch with interest the rollout of further detail, appreciating that items like the management of roadside tree risk in the middle of the valley are yet to be fully fleshed out.

We will not comment specifically on any of the Mt Victoria upgrades other than to say we support them all. We do have concern however regarding the Mt Victoria railway crossing and the bend that leads into it from the west. The slight improvement proposed is inadequate. Unless this bridge is widened and better angled this will continue to be a danger blackspot.

The Forty Bends upgrade seems premature at best, and a flagrant waste of taxpayers money. Since the last round of enhancement, this stretch of road has been relatively free from cold weather incidents and its performance could still be enhanced by use of technology for the management of inclement weather risk. The upgrade proposed seems excessive in the extreme, particularly the White Creek Bridge. We believe this money could be spent for much better effect in the valley or for enhancements between Katoomba and Mt Victoria.

We are conscious of the increased risk associated with the Fernbank corner. We appreciate that the point to point speed control may alleviate this risk. If that facility does not control car speeds then enhancements of this bend may be required.

I would be pleased if you would provide us with an insight into the Benefit Cost Ratio calculation that would apply to the Forty Bends upgrade as proposed.

The recent announcement of the intention to install point to point speed control is a great decision. We thank the RMS for proposing this long sought enhancement and the government needs to be congratulated on agreeing to proceed to implement this recommendation. We look forward to reviewing the detail of

this installation in due course. We believe this facility should be used to control the speed of both cars and trucks and recognise that this facility, coupled with the revised speed limit through the valley, has the capacity to make this road really safe.

We note that the work on Victoria Pass is not yet complete and that further enhancements, previously proposed for the bottom bend, still need to be implemented.

Yours Faithfully

(Original Signed)