



Julatten and Mt Molloy Association of
Residents and Ratepayers Inc
PO Box 30 Mt Molloy 4871

Presentation to Tableland Regional Council by JAMARR August 1st, 2013

Re: ITEM -20

MACKAY SUGAR LTD - SUGAR CANE HAULAGE ROUTES

AND CONSIDERATION OF IMPACTS TO COUNCIL CONTROLLED

ROADS ¹

Julatten and Molloy have over 1,300 residents.² We are a diverse people from different backgrounds but share a commonality: we all live here because we love it.

Council would be aware of this, through its *Preliminary Community Engagement Report, 2009*³ which lists our most valuable features as:

- Clean air and water
- A quiet, peaceful haven
- A great environment for children
- A lack of traffic

The same report describes the area as having

- Outstanding biodiversity
- Potential for small scale tourism

It also listed the major issue of concern as expansion of the sugar cane industry.

This concern was further identified as the primary planning and development issue.

The highway was then deemed too dangerous--due to high speed cane trucks--to be

¹ Tablelands Regional Council - Agenda Thursday 01 August 2013 p394

² Australian Bureau of Statistics Retrieved from:
www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/SSC30831?opendocument&navpos=220 Date Accessed 30.07.2013

³ Preliminary Community Engagement Outcomes Report October (2009) p36

used for recreational activities commensurate with the region: walking, birdwatching and riding bikes, motorbikes and horses. ⁴

Council would also be aware that the *FNQ Regional Plan 2025* includes the Rex Range through to Mareeba as part of the FNQ Cycle Network, which is of interest to cycling groups in Australia and internationally.

This same *FNQ Regional Plan* identifies that retaining the character and sense of place is vital to existing local rural areas. It also mentions maintaining the natural environment and regional landscape values and specifically states that by 2036 the population of the area will **double** driven by two things:

- A **diversifying** agricultural demand (not a monoculture)
- People looking for tree or rain changes. (not a traffic change)

In light of these government reports, we are struggling to comprehend the proposal before Council to allow B-doubles, not only through our small town, across a one-lane bridge and down the Rex Range, but on our local roads in residential areas.

Mackay Sugar has provided details of the proposed increase in traffic movements for the state roads, the equivalent to a truck every six minutes, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If that was not enough of an impact, they now need to put B-doubles and multi-lift trailers on our back roads as well.

Residents are rightly enraged that this may be allowed to happen, with no consultation until after the event and no impact assessment prior to implementation.

This increase in heavy vehicle traffic has documented evidence of impacts on communities:

⁴ Preliminary Community Engagement Outcomes Report October (2009) p17

1. Road damages

Council expressed concerns about road pavement. Researchers have shown that the **majority of road damage is caused by heavy vehicles**. The damage created by a 36 ton, 5 axle truck is the equivalent of 9,600 cars ⁵. The amount of damage is proportional to the number of heavy vehicles using the road. More trucks more damage. This results in increased costs to Council and inconvenience to residents while road repairs are done.

2. Stress increases

Slow speeds and unreliable estimates of traveling time cause stress. With this volume of heavy vehicles on our roads, we will have no idea of how long it will take to get somewhere. B-doubles on the range can add twenty minutes to our journey. The impact of noise cannot be under-estimated: it has recognized physiological and psychological impacts including an increase in mortality rates ⁶. It is worth noting here that, in relation to complaints regarding heavy vehicles on local roads, the first point of community contact is the Council⁷.

3. The Environment

Slow speeds, such as required for B-doubles to safely navigate the Range, can double the output of greenhouse gases and use twice the amount of fuel.⁸ Julatten is flanked by World Heritage and Wet Tropics and has Council Planning Overlays to prove it. We have to provide wildlife corridors to care for our native species: during cane season we have to scrape them off the road.

Meanwhile, as per the FNQ plan, residents are busy trying to build a

⁵ Marquez, Smith & Eugenio, (2005) Urban Freight in Australia: Societal costs and action plans. *The Australian Journal of Regional Studies* (11/2)

⁶ (Marquez et al., 2005) Noise levels above 65dB increase mortality by 20%

⁷ DTMR. (2008). Road Traffic Noise Management: Code of Practice. In D. o. T. a. M. Roads (Ed.), *Chapter 8 Managing noise complaints*: DTMR. Retrieved from: www.tmr.qld.gov.au/business-industry/Technical-standards-publications/Road-traffic-noise-management-code-of-practice.aspx
Date Accessed: 30.07.2013

⁸ (Marquez et al., 2005)

“diversified regional economy which complements the significant environmental issues of the region and one which does not add to climate change”⁹

Many of our residents work in or own businesses based on tourism, the environment and diversified agriculture, all dependant on our **significant** environment.

The expansion of a sugar transport network in our area is completely at odds with the Regional Plan and also at odds with the recommendations expressed in ITEM-20 section D of the agenda:

“ Council's role should be to foster economic development within the region while having reasonable regard to impacts upon amenity as well as the lifestyle of residents. It should not seek to pursue a course of action which promulgates preference of one particular interest group to the detriment of the others.”

The local Julatten roads listed for inclusion as a B-double route are the access roads for 3 rural residential subdivisions. Many of the roads are at best single lane with grass verges; MacLean’s Bridge Road, Wetherby Road and Wessells Road are unsealed gravel roads of variable condition.

Mt Kooyong Rd has tourist accommodation. The entire area is internationally renowned for bird watching. The community uses these back roads for recreational purposes because of the heavy truck traffic on the main road. The local roads are currently the only roads that are safe to use for walking and cycling. These small roads provide access to creeks, which children regularly use, for fishing and swimming. The school and the community center are both located in this proposed route. Residents will be impacted by both noise and dust, not to mention the inherent stress of their children having to be on the road to catch the school bus.

Julatten has 668 residential households¹⁰, out of this 5 are canefarmers. Not 5% but 5 families. We have had, to date, a great relationship with our cane farming families: we respect their right to farm what they want and they respect our right to fight for

⁹ Far North Qld Draft Regional Plan 2025 Qld Government Dept of Infrastructure and Planning

¹⁰ TRC Retrieved from: www.profile.id.com.au/tablelands/household-size?WebID=130 Date Accessed 30.07.2013

environmental changes that benefit our whole area. The decision by Mackay Sugar to use B-doubles, and the associated impact on the community has already caused strife. The inept manner in which Mackay Sugar has conducted its affairs has already wasted hundreds of hours of productive time and energy as residents grapple with the implications of their proposal. Our community does not appreciate the divisive, polarising impacts of their behaviour.

In relation to the report prepared by Mr Adil for presentation later today (Item 20)¹¹ we would like to bring the following items to Council's attention:

Section A

*“The longstanding nature of **some** of the permitted uses of Council and State-controlled road assets relevant to cane haulage extends back over 20 years without any major incidents or pavement failures.”*

- This assertion is both misleading and questionable. Firstly, this region has never endured heavy traffic at the rates proposed for the next 5 years. Neither Council or the community have any experience to guide them under these conditions.
- Secondly, we see no evidence of systematic road condition monitoring to justify the implication heavy trucks have not caused any pavement failures on Council roads.
- Thirdly, the community has a longstanding objection to heavy vehicles running on the back roads. In 2003 Council quite rightly reversed their thinking on B-Doubles in Julatten, and we remind Councillors that there are even more motivated, passionate community members in the region now.
- Lastly, given the significantly increased usage proposed by Mackay Sugar, we ask Council to clarify what pavement monitoring regime it will undertake, and who will be expected to pay for these costs and the repair bill in the event that we discover 36 ton B-doubles and 24 ton multi-lifts actually do damage the roads.

¹¹ Tablelands Regional Council - Agenda Thursday 01 August 2013 p396

Section B¹²

“Should Council look to arbitrarily rescind any approval/s for haulage operators on any of its road/s without valid and legally defensible reasons, then it may leave itself liable to claims for damages”.

- Our request for Council to rescind permit BD1386 is **not** arbitrary but based on the significant economic, environmental, and public safety impacts on our community.
- Councillors should be aware that ensuring public safety on Council-operated roads is a very serious matter indeed. Allowing massive trucks to operate on small rural residential roads poses far more grave risks than the alternative. The sugar industry is entirely capable of adjusting its production methods to accommodate responsible, reasonable levels of public safety.

In summary, we request that Council:

1. Provide details of its pavement monitoring program and test data on approved B-double routes.
2. Provide a plan and costings on an appropriate monitoring program for the proposed B-double routes.
3. Clarify how road repairs will be undertaken and funded in the event that the increased truck traffic is causing an increase in pavement damage.
4. Withhold approval on Permit BD1386 until an environmental and social impact assessment has been conducted by an independent consultant, the costs of which should be borne by the Permit proponent.
5. Provide details of any traffic safety studies undertaken or planned to be undertaken at key intersections in the proposed haulage network.
6. Provide the underlying traffic count data on the road network to help the community develop their understanding of the proposed impacts.

¹² Tablelands Regional Council - Agenda Thursday 01 August 2013 p396

We are also aware that, immediately following this presentation, Mr Haydn Slattery of Mackay Sugar's Mossman Mill will probably highlight the economic benefits to the region, and provide a rationale for supporting the sugar industry. That is his job.

All industries are worthy of public consideration until the public can assess them on their merits. The sugar industry has a long history in our region, but looking forward, sugar production it is only one possible future amongst many. In their proposed methods it would appear that the sugar industry is actually crowding out other economic strategies for our region. By turning our roads into an industrial hazard zone for locals and tourists alike, by imposing their infrastructure damages on the ratepayers at large, by putting unfettered corporate profits ahead of community concerns, Mackay Sugar has clearly failed to earn its social license to operate in our region.

I would like Council to consider that transporting sugar cane through our community brings **NO direct financial benefit to us whatsoever**, and indeed contradicts Section D of Mr Adil's report which states Council will not **preference one particular interest group to the detriment of the others**.

Our community will not be held to ransom by any industry. Our sense of place and identity are crucial to our sense of well-being. No industry has the right to take that away.

Diana Abiad

Vice-Chair

JAMARR

Julatten and Molloy Association of Residents and Ratepayers