

EUROBODALLA SHIRE COUNCIL

PUBLIC FORUM

All members of the community who have registered have been advised that they have a **maximum of seven minutes** to put their case.

Ordinary Meeting of Council on **9 March 2021**

Name	Subject/Comments
Public Forum – 9.30am	
Lei Parker	IR21/008 Funding Offer - Road Safety Program - Bus Stop Relocation Hector McWilliam Drive, Tuross Head

Public Forum – March 9th 2021

IR21/008 FUNDING OFFER - ROAD SAFETY PROGRAM - BUS STOP RELOCATION HECTOR MCWILLIAM DRIVE TUROSS HEAD

Councillors,

Before you today is a report that starts with:

*“Eurobodalla Shire Council **has worked** with the Tuross Head Progress Association to advocate for the relocation of the bus stop currently located on both sides of the Princes Highway south of the Hector McWilliam Drive intersection.”*

To the casual reader of Council agendas, and to anyone in decades to come, who look back at the history of the Tuross Head intersection and bus stand it might appear from this single line that primary credit goes to Eurobodalla Council for its advocacy.

Whilst it might be true that Council wrote a letter directly to Transport for NSW and the local Member for Bega Hon Andrew Constance MP, on behalf of the Tuross Head community, to provide the full construction cost of the relocation because they had no intention of funding the project themselves the fact is that the funding came from neither Transport for NSW nor the Member for Bega but instead came via the Australian and NSW Governments’ Road Safety Program that identified 261 other priority projects to be delivered concurrently across NSW.

This list was based on risk and priority and any favouritism that an advocating letter might suggest.

Announced in March 2021, the Australian Government’s funding for the Road Safety Program is subject to ‘use it or lose it’ provisions to deliver life-saving treatments on regional roads and to protect vulnerable road users across NSW.

The ‘use it or lose it’ provisions require States and Territories to use their notionally allocated funds within a timeframe, or the funds can be reallocated to projects in other jurisdictions.

There is no favouritism in the allocation of this money. It is purely risk related and assessed under the Federal Road Safety Program.

Through the continued, and vocal lobbying by the Tuross Head Progress Association

and its community members the Eurobodalla Council, the NSW State and the Federal Government have been long aware that the bus stop at the Tuross Head intersection with the Princes Highway presented a high motorist and pedestrian risk, especially to our older community members.

In the British House of Commons on Jan. 23, 1948 Winston Churchill said: *“For my part, I consider that it will be found much better by all parties to leave the past to history, especially as I propose to write that history myself.”*

In the case of the Tuross Head Intersection and bus stand it appears that Council wishes to write their own version of the history.

Today I offer a version of history that few would discover in Council’s archives. It is a version of history that should also be recorded.

In October 2015, the Tuross Head Progress Association requested the Eurobodalla Council Traffic Committee to consider the risk of the highway intersection.

The THPA suggested that the sight distances were at a minimum. The Traffic Committee was advised that the intersection had an anecdotal record of many minor incidents, many near misses and many formally reported and attended collisions.

It was considered by many in the community that vehicles approaching the intersection from north, or south were often speeding. Those most vocal and most intimidated by the intersection were older residents and their perception of speeding reflected their own response times.

The Traffic Committee were advised that, by NSW speed zoning guidelines there was an opportunity for the RMS to consider placing an 80km zone over the area. By that guide, an 80 km/h speed limit may apply to rural roads in semi urban/rural fringe areas (with pavement width greater than 5.6 metres) with limited adjacent development.

The Chair of the Traffic Committee at the time dismissed the THPA concerns, stating it was an RTA matter and that if the THPA wished to pursue it they should take it up with the Minister for Roads, adding that it would require State funding and would not be supported by Council.

In an email to the Progress Association in 2016, Council’s Director of engineering

confirmed any changes to highway infrastructure was a matter for the RMS and was outside of the remit of council's traffic committee.

"The advice from the RMS so far had been that the intersection layout was appropriate for the highway environment, including having adequate sight distance, and that the speed zone on the Princes Highway was appropriate at 100km/h."

The Chair of the Traffic Committee advised, informally, that "there was no point whinging because there was nothing wrong with the intersection".

With such a negative response the THPA initiated a campaign that lobbied the Minister for Roads and the local member. The Minister for Roads provided a standard response saying there was no funding and even if there was the intersection had not been identified as a Black Spot and the RMS were satisfied with it. The local member offered no reply at all.

It was around this time that Tuross Head resident, Mr John Tilbrook, became a vocal and active member of the Tuross Head Progress Association.

John, in his capacity as Secretary of the Association, put the spotlight on the intersection and forced the RMS to look closely at sight distances and approach speeds. By their review it was revealed that the sight distances were at the minimum required and that the perception of speeding through the highway intersection, by north and south bound traffic, was substantiated. Even with this information the Eurobodalla Traffic Committee failed to yield from its position and would not offer any support by way of endorsement to consider any intervention.

John decided to go to the top and contacted the Federal Member for Gilmore, Ann Sudmalis. Ann saw firsthand the issue. She visited the site and she observed. Through continued correspondences between THPA and the Federal Member the issue of the intersection forced its way into the attention of the RMS and finally, having found Federal Funds, the project to improve the intersection went ahead.

This was brought about with full credit to the Federal Member, to John Tilbrook, and to the many in the Tuross Head community who stood behind and believed in the project.

The Member for Gilmore paid tribute, in a speech delivered to the House of Representatives on 20th June 2018 to the THPA, to Gary Cooper, John Tilbrook, Fitzroy and Mylene Boulting, and to the Tuross Head community for their tireless

advocacy over many years.

It is important to recognise those who were NOT acknowledged and missing from her Parliamentary speech. There was NO mention of Council nor the Member for Bega.

Not content with the vastly improved intersection (*built with savings in allocated Federal funding for George Bass Drive and Beach Road*) John Tilbrook then sought improvements be made to the bus arrangements that continued to put motorists and bus passengers at risk.

The limits of the Federal funding however, found by Ms Sudmalis, did not stretch to the bus stand improvements on the eastern side that John had in mind.

His was a vision of a safe bus stop to be located on the safer eastern side of the highway, accessed from Hector McWilliam Drive like that constructed further north at the intersection of Sussex Inlet Road and the Princes Highway.

John pressed on requesting the RMS improve the highway carpark area and consider relocation the dangerous bus stand.

In late 2018 the RMS advised the THPA that the extra cost to expand the proposed carpark to accommodate a bus shelter and drive-through area for buses was \$120,000. RMS advised the \$120,000 was not available to them.

On 25th September 2018 the RMS re-affirmed verbal advice that the \$1.4M in funding for intersection improvements was to reduce crash risks which would be achieved within the current scope of works.

They advised that a change to the carpark to include a bus stop would be outside the scope of the project, requiring additional approvals, development, and funding. RMS then advised Transport for NSW of the request for additional bus and transport facilities at the intersection.

Proactively though, the RMS gave consent to Council to stockpile suitable recycled materials from other local works to contribute to the provision of the required earthworks of an extended carpark and bus stand at a lower cost.

Finally, after years of lobbying, letter writing, meeting various politicians, councillors and agencies on site the bus stand that John Tilbrook dreamed of, that would safely

provide for Tuross Head passengers of all abilities, will be constructed with the recent Federal and State grant of \$362,233.

For Council to write as a recommendation in the report before you *“Write to the Tuross Head Progress Association thanking them for working with Council to advocate for the new bus facility”* grossly, and I believe intentionally overplays any role that Council has played in advocating for the intersection project and facility, and sadly underplays the role that John Tilbrook has passionately and diligently played, with his persistence, his tenacity and his daring to dream of something better for his community.

Give credit where credit is due.