

Lochinvar's roads ticking time bomb

By GRACE JONES, BRITTANY SAFFRANKO and GRACEN BLISSETT

EDITORIAL

A CALL to review Lochinvar's traffic situation needs to be assessed immediately.

Over time, the traffic situation in and around Lochinvar has increased to the extent of daily traffic congestion. With three hours dedicated to school zones on five days of the week, traffic builds up around this time.

One road that is a problem is the New England Highway.

According to Maitland Mayor Peter Blackmore: "With the completion of the Hunter Expressway expected late this year, the Roads and Maritime Service have predicted that approximately 26 per cent of through traffic will be removed from the highway in Maitland".

Predictions are not always accurate and until the Hunter Expressway is completed, the traffic issue will still occur. With only one lane operating in each direction, this contributes to the daily congestion.

The most current statistics from the Roads and Maritime Services indicate traffic volumes have definitely increased. According to a RMS spokesperson, "the traffic congestion is not caused by school zones, but the large volumes of vehicles commuting on a two-lane highway".

The Lochinvar gridlock situation is mainly from the large amounts of traffic flowing through a road originally designed for minimal use, hence there only being two active lanes. Having three schools within 500 metres

from each other does not help the situation.

An investigation into the speed camera located along the Lochinvar road was conducted during the year as part of the inaugural NSW Speed Camera Performance Review. This review was to establish whether speed cameras would remain in the investigated locations.

It was widely thought that the speed camera was a revenue raiser, although at the conclusion of the inquiry the safety benefits of the camera were obvious.

"Lochinvar is planned to grow," Member for Maitland Robyn Parker said.

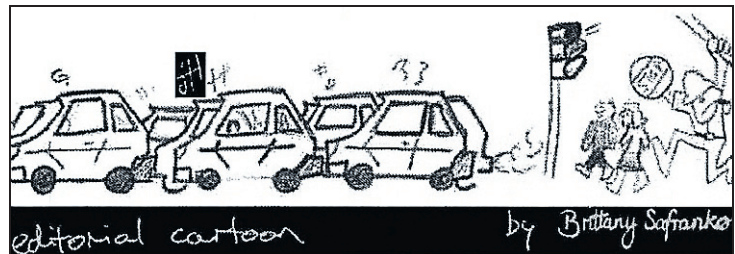
"I think it has got a lot of potential and now that the New England Highway and the Hunter Expressway extension is planned to be completed by the end of the year, that may encourage even more people to live in Lochinvar."

With the approval for 5000 lots to be released for residential purposes in the Lochinvar area, the New England Highway will have to adjust to this increased growth.

Cr Blackmore said "there will have to be an additional road built to relieve congestion in the existing main street".

Lochinvar's current traffic situation needs to be reconsidered.

Growth will occur and although the Hunter Expressway may lighten traffic to an extent, it may just be a temporary fix with the development scheduled for the next few years.



Cartoon: Brittany Safranko



Twirling their way to the top

By RYLEE O'ROURKE and TARA BERTHOLD

BATON twirling is a complex sport that involves the stamina and flexibility of gymnastics, the enthusiasm of jazz dancing and the ability and co-ordination of throwing and twirling the baton.

On September 8, 2013 in Sydney, the girls from the Hunter Valley baton twirlers, twirled their way to the state championships.

After placing in most events in the qualifying competition, Kristy-lee Padget, Megan Bernardino, Rylee O'Rourke, Emily Bernardino, Madeline O'Kane, Sienna O'Kane and Anne Parks made their way to the championships.

The girls said it was an awesome experience and a great way to meet new people and learn more skills.

Their coach, Jennie Dongaire, has been teaching the girls for more than two years at the Maitland PCYC every Tuesday afternoon.

"I have been teaching for 10 years and these are the most kind and hard-working bunch of girls I have ever met," Ms Dongaire said.

Tanishia Kelley, from the Platinum team, had this to say about the Hunter Valley baton twirlers: "HV twirlers are an amazing club, the easiest-going group I ever encountered".

The school wishes the twirlers the best of luck in their future aspirations and believe they will go far.

Mining employment to get back on its feet

By KIRRA SCHOFIELD, DANA ROMEYN and AMBER PILLAR

MANY miners in the Hunter Valley have lost their jobs in the past 12 months.

In March this year, the world's biggest coalminer, Glencore, merged with Xstrata, causing job losses for people in managerial positions.

Rae Schofield, who works at Xstrata, said: "The job cuts have affected the miners and their families greatly. I was

lucky to withhold my job."

While Mr Schofield was fortunate to hold on to his position, some miners, particularly the unskilled workers, were not as fortunate.

A significant number of families have faced financial difficulties as a result of the cuts, leading to increased stress within the home environment.

The mining industry has recently strengthened and stabilised its employment figures and the majority of workers feel safer in their jobs.



HOPE: The boom has fluctuated but may be climbing again in relation to job numbers.

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