

# Munibung Hill Conservation Society

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Submission to the

## **Hillsborough Road upgrade**

### **Introduction**

There is nothing wrong with prioritising works to improve road networks. Reducing congestion on local roads, ensuring traffic flows smoothly so as to minimise time spent held up in traffic jams, reducing motorists frustration and making it easier and safer for residents to enter and exit the suburb of Hillsborough, are all good things. We agree with all of the actions to deal with these concerns.

But we contend that it is wrong to do this at the expense of the native animals we share our communities with.

We must at some time prioritise and devote a portion of our financial wealth to ensuring they receive a fair share of our budgets. In this instance it would seem their share of the moneys allocated to this project is minimal.

The upgrading to double lanes and the installation of traffic lights for the safe passage of motorists is necessary. We support these measures and make no objections.

### **Rationale, Justification and Stakeholders**

Our concerns are that this planned work is not inclusive of all the components that make for a healthy society, which is situated within larger ecological landscapes. The species mix necessary for human well-being is built on a foundation of plants and animals (90% of which are invertebrates). Roads that cut across their paths, while being necessary intrusions, need not be the disruptors of old, acting like prison walls – to cite a human example. Wildlife overpasses permit access, allowing for free passage / movement, that is essential for the health and ongoing viability of the local species of flora and fauna.

This disruptive epoch has been described as the Anthropocene (1), because we have now become an 'earth- altering species' on a scale never experienced by the other-than-human species with which we SHARE the planet. In spite of our self-appointed importance, and dominance, it is conditional; being totally dependent on the gifts of the biosphere, which is currently messaging via various climate-related events that the earth-altering comes with consequences that scientists have been speaking about and attempting to get onto the decision-making agenda for decades.

If this major upgrade of Hillsborough Road does not factor in the needs of the wildlife that inhabit the area, then it will be a glaring example of the Anthropocene worldview within a road building context. Measured alongside an energy context, the NSW state government is adopting renewable energy and other programs consistent with Circular Economy (CE) principles that align with transitioning beyond Anthropocentrism. Accepting that renewables and CE programs are pivotal to us achieving zero emissions and zero waste, demonstrates that the parliament is realising that business as usual, is flawed, being based on untenable suppositions. With all its negative impacts, business as usual contravenes basic ecological and United

Nations sustainable development principles, having delivered us a polluted atmosphere, eroded soils, over-cleared forests, microplastics dispersing into all forms of marine life, and planetary boundaries (2) stretched to the limits and in some cases breached. There is no bright lights future in continuing down this path.

The science is clear, the most knowledgeable people of our era are as one (3); we must change, and do it now.

It may well be that we are saving the tragic loss of human life by installing traffic lights at the Crockett Street and Chadwick Street, intersections. We applaud these pre-cautionary measures.

But it is not exaggerating to say the it would be tragic should Transport for NSW / Roads and Maritime Services, decline the opportunity to install a Wildlife Overpass during Stage One of the Hillsborough Road upgrade, since there is no doubt there would be multiple tragedies for wildlife by continuing to confine them to land locked areas within busier streets where their only escape routes are attempting to cross unfriendly urban roads – double the width created by the additional lanes.

The road kill of wildlife also has human impacts. Running over an innocent animal unintentionally can be traumatic for motorists as well as the animal. If the animal is not killed, wildlife carers and vets become involved when animals are severely injured. Just like emergency personnel who respond to car crashes involving people, wildlife carers and vets also experience the emotional stresses associated with severely injured wildlife. Larger animals such as wallabies can cause vehicle damage requiring panel beating and associated repairs and insurance claims. The wider the roadway – and this is to be four lanes – the more dangerous it is for wildlife, making it more urgent to incorporate an overpass into the project. This is an opportunity that won't present itself again for a long time, if not seized now.

If strategically positioned, lights at Chadwick Street, Hillsborough, would serve not only the Hillsborough residents' need to have safe and predictable access but also on the opposite side of the road, access for users of the Combined Newcastle Canine Club (CNCC) Showground. Again, to improve access and safe passage for domesticated animals without giving any or equal priority to native animals from which they have derived, is discriminatory and unconscionable in these enlightened times. Human rights and in this case animal rights i.e. the humane treatment of animals kept for human purposes, must extend to include animals in their native habitat. Indigenous leaders are calling on us to recognise native animals as kin (4) – to be respected – not passed off as expendable or an obstacle, a hindrance to human progress. When human community advancement is at the expense of other-than-human existence or advancement, then the ledger is not balanced and we undermine the next generations' opportunities to experience a quality of life equal to that which we have enjoyed.

Ensuring that essential elements are factored into the planning equation is a primary motivation for Munibung Hill Conservation Society (MHCS) contributing to this community consultation. We submit that wildlife are important stakeholders that deserve a seat at the table. To dismiss them as insignificant or less than worthy of a slice of the planning and budget allocation pie, not only shortchanges future generations of wildlife, but also future generations of human life, who are already expressing serious concerns about our treatment of nature, i.e. Greta Thunberg and others. To omit wildlife as a stakeholder would be an act of impoverished thinking.

Human society functions most effectively when civil society principles are practised in real world terms. Reciprocity is a core component. Reciprocity is an apt concept to raise in the Hillsborough Road upgrade case. One good turn, that of improving the community amenity for motorists and local residents, deserves another good turn, that of improving the connectivity amenity for nature and local wildlife. To do one without the other, would be a case of gross injustice toward those that have no voice\*\*, other than those groups within the community who advocate for wildlife as integral to our being human.

This segues into our next justification for broadening our planning scope to include, not only nature, but those who were the keepers of songlines and country for thousands of years.

The NAIDOC Week theme: *Heal Country* would be given real substance in this instance, if the Hillsborough Road upgrade was expressed in a tangible Heal Country manner with a Wildlife Overpass [Bridge] (5)(6)(7)(8) that re-united two areas of land that prior to European settlement, for 65,000 plus years, was one indivisible whole within the Awabakal nation.

And this provides one additional opportunity. Within the arch of the Wildlife Overpass, there is a 'canvas' on which local artists could demonstrate their skills, depicting cultural heritage and the importance of local wildlife as kin. As keepers of storylines, this installation could act as a bridge – literally and metaphorically – between ancient wisdom and more recent thinking. The installation of interpretation boards at the site would provide opportunities for walkers and visitors to learn how the 'slow' of the pedestrian within an indigenous context and the 'fast' of the motorist, intersect at this location; that while most places are walkable, not all places are driveable. This would open up avenues for dialogue about community futures, the choices, the consequences, the upsides, the downsides, the need for diversity of thought, the feeling of community empowerment that the future, in a healthy democratic society, is participant driven.

## Requirements and Proposal

We submit that:

- this project be subject to a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment, that includes a flora and fauna study \*\*\*(9),
- adequate values be given to nature and wildlife, sufficient to ensure these aspects will be protected and their future viability and well-being will not be sacrificed as a consequence of the project works, and therefore to this end, that:
- a Wildlife Overpass (in the form of a vegetated bridge) be constructed as an integral part of Stage One of the Hillsborough Road upgrade.

This small infrastructure project over Hillsborough Road, near the Crockett Street intersection, would:

1. provide a native animal connecting corridor between the conservation area to the north west (South Cardiff) and the bushland around Charlestown Golf Club to the south east (Warners Bay),
2. provide for safer pedestrian and walking track connectivity, and a possible extension of the Great North Walk,
3. permit an Aboriginal Art installation on the inner lining of the Wildlife Overpass,
4. reduce road-kill of wildlife, and injuries to wildlife requiring veterinary hospital intensive care,
5. reduce wildlife crossing attempts leading to road-kill trauma for motorists, damage to vehicles requiring panel beating repairs and insurance claims.

The proposal as it stands includes a public transport stop to the west of Crockett Street, South Cardiff. The positioning of this bus stop under the overpass makes for the perfect place for commuters to access what we propose will be:

- a) an extension of the Great North Walk,
- b) safe access to an Aboriginal Art installation,
- c) shelter / rest area with water refill station for walking track visitors especially families, since this would be a strategic half way point,
- d) anticipating an electric vehicle future, a nearby parking bay with charge points would reduce congestion at other sites nearer the lake.

We look forward to receiving your written response to this submission and the opportunity of meeting to discuss further the contents and proposal as noted above.

Thank you for your time and attention to our concerns.

Stuart Carter  
President  
Munibung Hill Conservation Society (MHCS)  
5 August, 2021



Artist impression of the vegetated Wildlife Overpass across Hillsborough Rd near Crockett St intersection, South Cardiff. Picture credit: Fiona Bartley

## Notes and References

\*\* This voiceless group includes the next generation of young people, who while not having a voice in a voting sense, have been expressing their concerns about our treatment of the earth and other than human species, through forums such as Students for Climate, etc. We also speak on their behalf with this submission.

\*\*\* Environmental impact assessment on NSW North Coast, resulted in the Highway route being moved to protect an endangered species of invertebrates (see reference 9)

- (1) (a) *Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene*: Will Steffen, Johan Rockström, View ORCID ProfileKatherine Richardson, Timothy M. Lenton, Carl Folke, Diana Liverman, Colin P. Summerhayes, Anthony D. Barnosky, Sarah E. Cornell, View ORCID ProfileMichel Crucifix, Jonathan F. Donges, Ingo Fetzer, Steven J. Lade, Marten Scheffer, Ricarda Winkelmann, and Hans Joachim Schellnhuber. <https://www.pnas.org/content/115/33/8252> (b) *The nine planetary boundaries*, Stockholm Resilience Centre, <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries/the-nine-planetary-boundaries.html>
- (2) THE STORY OF OUR LIVES: Netflix feature documentary, *Breaking Boundaries: The Science of Our Planet* narrated by Sir David Attenborough. Stockholm Resilience Centre co-founder Johan Rockström and centre media strategist Owen Gaffney are both associate producers of the film which will be launched on Netflix during the summer of 2021. The 75-minute production follows the scientific journey of Johan Rockström and his team's discovery of the nine planetary boundaries we must stay within, not just for the stability of our planet, but for the future of humanity. <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-news/2021-04-30-new-netflix-documentary-brings-the-planetary-boundaries-to-the-world.html>
- (3) David Attenborough, *A Life on Our Planet*
- (4) *Indigenous Kinship: The heart of Indigenous society*. A person's position in the kinship system establishes their relationship to others and to the universe, prescribing their responsibilities towards other people, the land and natural resources. <https://australianstogether.org.au/discover/indigenous-culture/kinship/>
- (5) *Wildlife Bridges: How They Make the Road Safer for All* <https://rvshare.com/blog/wildlife-bridges/>
- (6) *How wildlife bridges over highways make animals—and people—safer*, By Starre Vartan, Published April 16, 2019 Bridges for bears and tunnels for tortoises have significantly reduced the number of wildlife-car collisions worldwide. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/wildlife-overpasses-underpasses-make-animals-people-safer>

- (7) *Bonville Fauna Overpass*. The following examples of overpasses were researched in the design phase of the Bonville Upgrade fauna overpass. <https://roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au/documents/projects/northern-nsw/port-macquarie-to-coffs-harbour/bonville-upgrade/bonville-cig-overpass-presentation.pdf>
- (8) *Animal Welfare a Priority with Our First Fauna Bridge*. <https://annualreports.mainroads.wa.gov.au/AR-2019/overview/our-stories/animal-welfare-a-priority-with-our-first-fauna-bridge.html>
- (9) NSW Roads and Maritime Services  
*Woolgoolga To Ballina | Pacific Highway Upgrade  
 Threatened Invertebrates Management Plan*  
 Version 1.0 November 2013  
<https://www.pacifichighway.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/media/documents/2018/Woolgoolga%20to%20Ballina%20Upgrade%20Submissions%20-%20Preferred%20Infrastructure%20REPORT%20-%20Appendix%20K%20Threatened%20species%20management%20plans%20%289%29.pdf>

### **The Compton Road Effect - Saving our wildlife**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWOM6PGZ27U&t=55s>

October 26, 2016

Griffith University's Professor Darryl Jones has sparked a revolution in road design that is saving our wildlife. His research at Compton Road, south of Brisbane, centred on the implementation of a range of different structures to allow animals to cross a busy road that bisects one of the largest areas of remnant bushland.

The area has been recognised as of national significance with Compton Road carrying 70,000 vehicles a day.

In the 10 years since the structures were built there have only been 3 marsupials killed on the roads—and that was due to someone cutting a hole in the now well-documented and copied Compton Road fence.

One of the structures used is a purpose-built raised ledge in culverts to allow koalas to safely cross under the road. A range of animals also uses this system.

The Compton Road land bridge is the most studied land bridge in the world and has been copied around the world.

It is also sparking a wave of new research on the movement of individual animals, including microbats, birds and koalas.

### **No humans allowed: Main Roads building WA's first animal bridge**

By [Hamish Hastie](#), July 26, 2018.

How did the bandicoot cross the road? With WA's first-ever fauna bridge, of course.

<https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/no-humans-allowed-main-roads-building-wa-s-first-animal-bridge-20180726-p4ztre.html>

### **Wildlife using new fauna bridge, W.A.**

<https://www.96fm.com.au/local/check-out-this-local-wildlife-using-perths-new-fauna-bridge/>

### **Wildlife Movement Solutions**

From 50 Amazing Animal Bridges and Crossings that save thousands of animals every year.

[https://www.boredpanda.com/bridges-for-animals-around-the-world/?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=organic&utm\\_campaign=organic](https://www.boredpanda.com/bridges-for-animals-around-the-world/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic)

- Wildlife Crossing in Belgium
- Ecoduct, Singapore
- Ecoduct, Duinport, The Netherlands (between Zandvoort and Haarlem)
- Wildlife Crossing, New Jersey, USA
- Ecoduct, Germany
- Ecoduct, The Netherlands
- Ecoduct, In Overijssel, The Netherlands
- Wildlife Crossing, Alberta, Canada
- Ecoduct, Harm Van De Veen, The Netherlands
- Ecoduct, In Boblingen, Germany
- Wildlife Crossing, Crompton Road, Brisbane  
<https://www.griffith.edu.au/research/impact/compton-road-wildlife-corridor>
- Wildlife Crossing, The Netherlands.