

**An Overpass is urgently needed
at the intersection of
Houston Mitchell Drive and Pacific Highway**



**Bonny
Hills**

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Summary

Bonny Hills residents have long been concerned about the dangers of exiting and entering Houston Mitchell Drive (HMD) at the Pacific Highway (PH) Intersection. As the risks have escalated in line with population growth and the increasing volume of PH traffic so has community anxiety and frustration.

Consultants GHD in 2018 advised Council that an overpass would be required by 2026 and Council has continued to press the State Government for action.

Some dangers are being reduced by the very welcome installation of slip-lanes at the intersection. These will make it safer for HMD traffic exiting to the south and entering from the north. However, they will do little to reduce the greatest hazard of crossing the Highway when exiting to the north or entering from the south. Drivers here must run the gauntlet of large volumes of fast moving southbound traffic, including many heavy vehicles, with limited visibility due to the crest of the hill.

The case for an overpass is argued in detail in the following pages.

Population statistics reveal an unpredicted rapidity of growth in Bonny Hills and Lake Cathie along with an increased attraction to tourists. Development of retail, industrial and recreation spaces will only add to the movement in and out of the area. This, together with the greater appeal of the recently upgraded HMD compared with the perennially inadequate Ocean Drive, will inevitably increase the traffic at the intersection.

Traffic data, including counts conducted by residents, are presented. These provide evidence of traffic volume and movement at the intersection. The limited accident data available to Bonny Hills Progress Association (BHPA) does not reflect known incidents at the intersection, nor does it adequately convey the personal experiences of residents collected via Facebook.

BHPA asks Council to also consider the recent decision of the Federal Government to fund an overpass at the intersection of Harrington Road and the Pacific Highway. We understand this was a result of the Mid-Coast Council and the State Government having designs in place, awaiting a funding opportunity. It has to be asked: why has this not happened at HMD as well?

BHPA urges Council to strongly press the State Government to move urgently to prepare designs for the HMD overpass, ready for the first Federal Government funding opportunity.

An overpass is needed now.

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Introduction

There have been community calls for an overpass at HMD and PH for many years with numerous media stories recording pleas from residents for attention to the intersection. We have been assured, for example, by Leslie Williams MP that “the RMS will develop a Pacific Highway post-duplication strategy once work is completed in 2020” (Port News 08.09.2016)

This work is now completed and it is time to see commitment and action from the State Government.

Transport for NSW provides the following description of the intersection (TforNSW website Sept 2021):

“The Pacific Motorway is the main north-south arterial connection between Sydney and Brisbane. It is a major freight route and provides a high-speed road environment.

Houston Mitchell Drive is a local collector road which provides access from the motorway to Lake Cathie, Bonny Hills and new coastal land releases.

This area is expected to experience high population growth in the short to midterm increasing traffic demand on Houston Mitchell Drive intersection. Houston Mitchell Drive is also utilised as an alternative route to Ocean Drive to access the regional centre of Port Macquarie.

Council have recently upgraded sections of Houston Mitchell Drive which makes it a more desirable route for commuters. “

Port Macquarie Hastings Council (PMHC) has advised BHPA that it continues to highlight the strategic importance of upgrading the HMD/PH intersection to a grade separated intersection with Transport for NSW. This push from Council has been consistent for at least the last six years and has been recognised by the current minister.

Paul Toole MP in correspondence to Leslie Williams MP on July 2, 2021 stated *“Transport for NSW will continue to work closely with Port Macquarie*

Hastings Council to develop an integrated road network in the Port Macquarie area, including strategic concepts for important Pacific Highway connections such as Houston Mitchell Drive.”

BHPA has come to the view that

- Nothing less than an overpass will mitigate the dangers of this intersection;
- The overpass will be needed earlier than the 2026 prediction by Council’s consultants, GHD;
- If that timeline is to be achieved, design work must begin urgently.

This view is based on

- Growth of the road-using population, residents, businesses and tourists;
- Consequent increase in traffic;
- The inadequacy of slip-lanes in managing HMD traffic crossing dual lanes of southbound Pacific Highway traffic.

Population growth - Lake Cathie / Bonny Hills

The villages of Lake Cathie and Bonny Hills have been identified as major growth areas with new residential, retail, recreational and industrial development forecast and currently happening with astonishing speed.

This growth will impact on the volume of traffic using the HMD/PH intersection.

1. PMHC Urban Growth Management Strategy 2017-2036 (p17) states:
“The area is anticipated to be the second fastest growing urban area in the Port Macquarie-Hastings, with population growing from about 6,300 in 2016 to around 9,000 residents by 2036, an average of more than 140 persons each year. Planned future development is oriented along the coast between Lake Cathie and Bonny Hills, including the master planned Rainbow Beach release area, which has capacity for around 1,300

dwellings, primary schools, playing fields and a village centre to provide retail and community facilities to serve the growing population. “

2. It is relevant to note that the Urban Growth Management Strategy was released in 2017. Figures are already out-dated and the rate of population growth is exceeding predictions. The impact of the COVID pandemic has also seen increased numbers of people move to the area and the uptake of new dwellings has been faster than anticipated.
3. Not included in the Urban Growth Management Strategy prediction is the development at the intersection of Houston Mitchell Drive and Forest Parkway known as Gem Life Over-50s Lifestyle Village which will have 178 dwellings. Working on advised occupancy with 25% as singles it is expected there will be 311 residents living in this resort by the end of construction in 2024.
4. The recent PMHC Draft Local Housing Strategy 2021-2041 adds further detail to this growth prediction describing Rainbow Beach as an emerging town centre (p18) with a forecast residential development in that area alone of 1,365 dwellings and a theoretical additional dwelling capacity of 2,212. (p 49,50). In addition there is capacity in both villages of Lake Cathie and Bonny Hills for infill dwellings and the possibility for future release of land for development.

Non-Residential Developments

Each of these developments has the potential to draw people from outside the area with highway traffic using the HMD/PH intersection as a point of access.

1. Light Industrial Area - corner of HMD and OD
 - Will attract delivery vehicles, employee vehicles, customer vehicles

- PMHC Urban Growth Management Strategy 2017 -2036 Vol 2 (p92) indicates a further area for industry is anticipated as the current allocated land *“has potential yield of around 4 hectares of land zoned for industrial development, excluding buffers and environmental zones, which means that an additional 4 hectares is required to service projected demand in the Lake Cathie and Bonny Hills area to 2036.”*
2. Shopping Precinct - within the Rainbow Beach Estate
 - Including cafes, shops, supermarket and business hub
 3. Rainbow Beach Sporting Fields - adjacent to the LC Public School
 - Will provide a venue for competitive events with visiting teams
 4. Lake Cathie Ambulance Station
 - The recently announced LC Ambulance Station brings to mind the fact that the most direct access from the area to the PM Base Hospital is via HMD and along the highway.
 - Safety is certainly an issue for an ambulance in an emergency situation negotiating this increasingly busy highway intersection.

Tourism

1. PMHC Draft Local Housing Strategy 2021-2041 (p15) acknowledges *“The coastal villages of Lake Cathie and Bonny Hills are popular tourist destinations.”*
2. Tourist accommodation is varied and not restricted to peak holiday periods. The mild climate and accessibility from both southern and northern regions makes it a desirable year round destination.
3. Towing vans and boats make for more long slow vehicles

4. The range of holiday accommodation includes

- Holiday Homes - It is forecast that there will be a 42% increase in number of Holiday Homes in the BH/LC localities by 2041.
<https://forecast.id.com.au/port-macquarie-hastings/household-types-map>
- AirBnB - 75 locations listed on AirBnB for BH/LC localities
- Caravan Parks - There are two Caravan Parks in Bonny Hills both of which have undergone extensive renovations and upgrading in the past two years, adding both caravan sites and cabin accommodation. There are three more in North Haven, some of which are likely to be accessed via HMD if arriving from the north. Access would be the same for the Laurieton and Dunbogan areas, both of which offer a significant number of accommodation types.

Traffic Volumes

The need for an overpass is supported in documents pertaining to traffic flow and road conditions.

1. Houston Mitchell Drive Upgrade 2016

In 2016 \$7 million was spent on upgrading Houston Mitchell Drive through The Roads to Recovery Program, jointly funded by PMHC and the Federal Government. (<https://www.portnews.com.au/story/3906146/new-life-for-ghost-road/>)

It would be assumed from the quality of the upgrade that a significant increase in traffic, light and heavy, was anticipated.

Transport for NSW website 2021 states *“Council have recently upgraded sections of Houston Mitchell Drive which makes it a more desirable route for commuters.”*

2. High Priority for grade separation by 2026

Recommendations are detailed in GHD Port Macquarie-Hastings Council and Roads and Maritime Services Port Macquarie - Hastings Local Government Area Traffic Study VOLUME 1 – Main Report June 2018

- The priority for a grade separation in 2026 is HIGH (p 134)
- This will be *“required as increasing volumes on the highway make turns out of Houston Mitchell Drive harder. Grade separation likely to be the most effective treatment and give the best road safety outcome.”* (p 130)
- *“The surveys taken at this intersection in 2016 indicate that approximately 250 vehicles per hour turn right out of Houston Mitchell Drive onto the Pacific Highway during the morning peak hour.”* (p80)
- The report goes on to predict that by 2026 there will be *“increases in through traffic on Pacific Highway of up to 650 vehicles an hour over existing volumes”* and *“the occurrence of suitable spaced gaps in the traffic stream for right turns out of Houston Mitchell Drive is diminished and as such vehicles divert onto Ocean Drive to travel north.”*
- The suggestion that motorists will use Ocean Drive (OD) as a preferred option is now questioned as
 - volume of traffic on Ocean Drive, even after proposed upgrades, will be significant
 - projected increase in number of intersections on OD north of HMD will divert more north bound traffic onto HMD
 - Upgrades to the Oxley Highway intersections will make HMD an attractive alternative route to Port Macquarie
 - Proposed intersection upgrades – Oxley Highway Strategic assessment consultation summary Sept 2021 Transport NSW p8
 - *“Using the feedback received, we will also work with Council to identify the preferred options for proposed Oxley Highway upgrades, particularly at Wrights Road and the Pacific Highway interchange, and also the relative timing for these upgrades.”*

3. Specific Vehicles

- Heavy Vehicles
 - these cause their own issues taking longer to travel through the intersection
 - Grants Head Quarry, Hy-tec Concrete & Aggregates Bonny Hills, is an example of one business which has vehicles regularly using this intersection. Advice from management indicates their trucks pass through this intersection up to 1,000 times annually.

- School Buses
 - three school buses currently travel through the intersection morning and afternoon carrying a combined 100 students each way
 - with a growing population and several popular private schools located on the western side of Port Macquarie it can be reasonably expected there will be a future growth in the number of students and hence buses travelling this route

Traffic Count conducted by BHPA

Traffic counts were conducted by community volunteers on two days, Monday 12 and Tuesday 27 April 2021. On the first day, traffic was counted in two-hour slots between 6.00 am and 6.00 pm. On the second day, counting was restricted to the time slots during which work and school traffic is concentrated: 6.00 to 10.00 am and 2.00 to 4.00 pm.

Traffic was segmented into categories:

Light vehicles: cars and SUVs; utilities;

Long and/or heavy vehicles: cars, SUVs and utilities with trailers; small trucks and vans; medium trucks; heavy trucks; caravans and campervans.

1. There was more traffic in school term than during vacation.

Total number of vehicles 6.00am-10.00am + 4.00pm-6.00pm	Vacation 12/4/21	School term 27/4/21	Increased traffic in school term %
Exiting HMD	1374	1629	18.6
Entering HMD	1443	1603	11.1

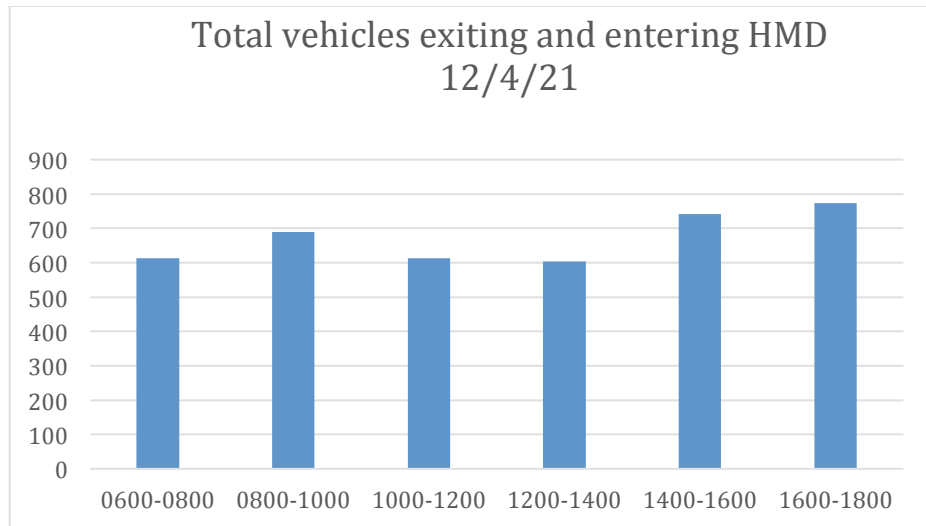
2. Traffic flows in and out of HMD are large as is the flow of through traffic on PH.

Total number of vehicles 6.00am-6.00pm	12/4/21
Exiting HMD	1971
Entering HMD	2063
Pacific Highway to south	8597 (does not include HMD traffic)

3. Two-thirds of traffic in and out of HMD is to and from the north.

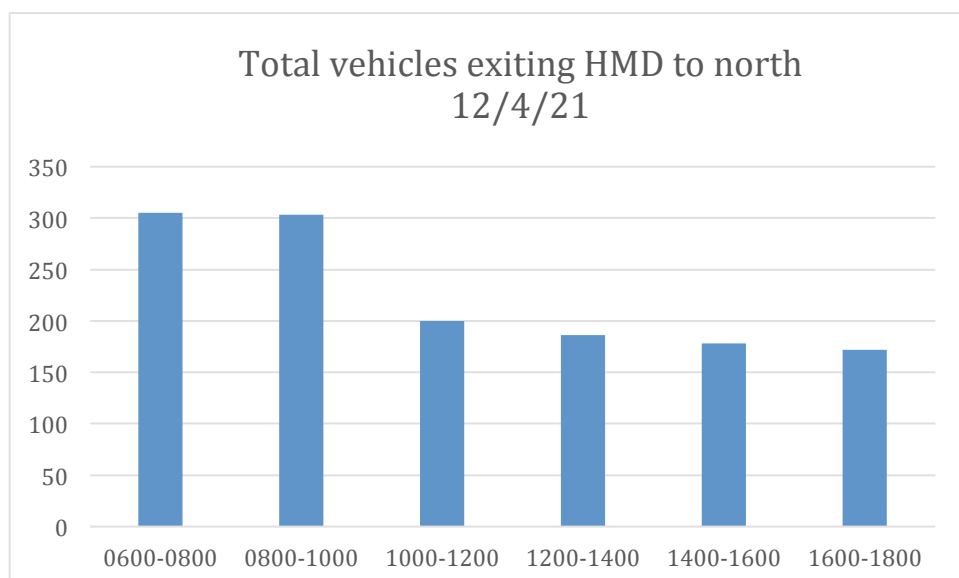
Total number of vehicles 6.00am-6.00pm	12/4/21	Vehicles as % of total vehicles exiting and entering HMD
Exiting HMD to north	1344	68.2
Exiting HMD to south	627	31.8
Entering HMD from north	1449	70.2
Entering HMD from south	614	29.8

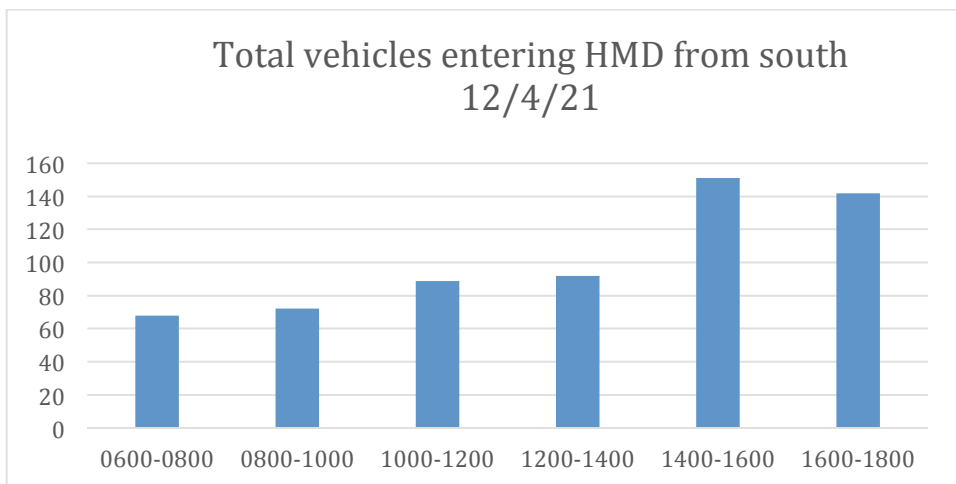
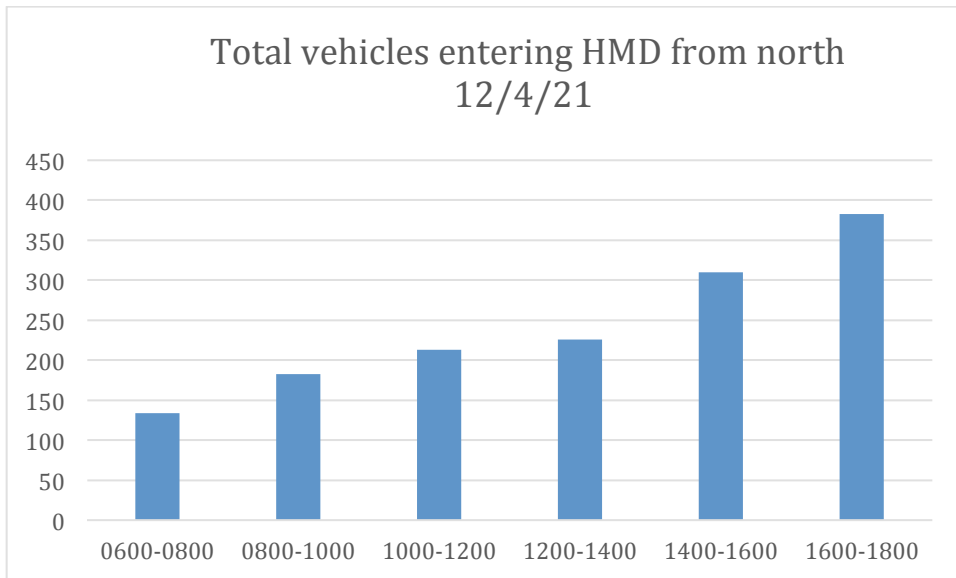
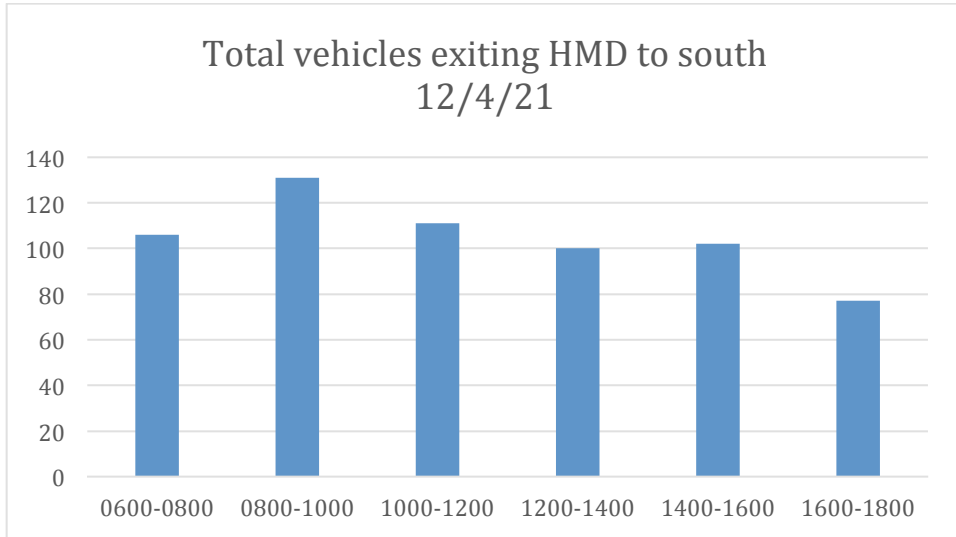
4. Traffic out and in of HMD varies little until rising in late afternoon.



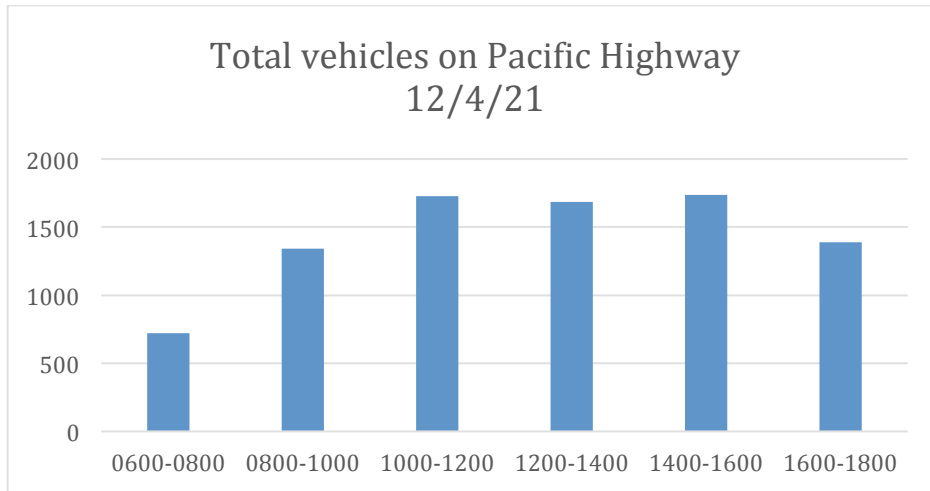
5. Traffic out of and into HMD peaks when people go to work and return home.

Traffic built up on HMD in the morning and queues of up to 17 were often observed waiting to turn right.

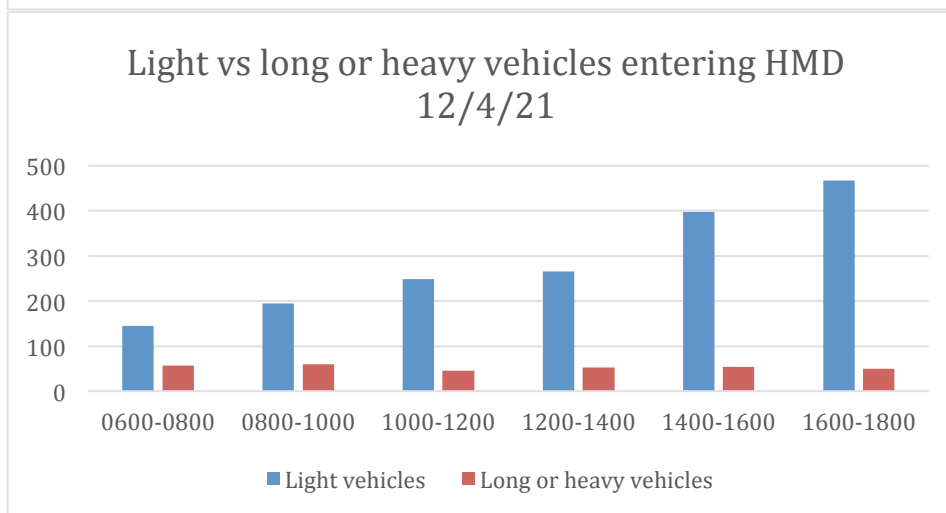
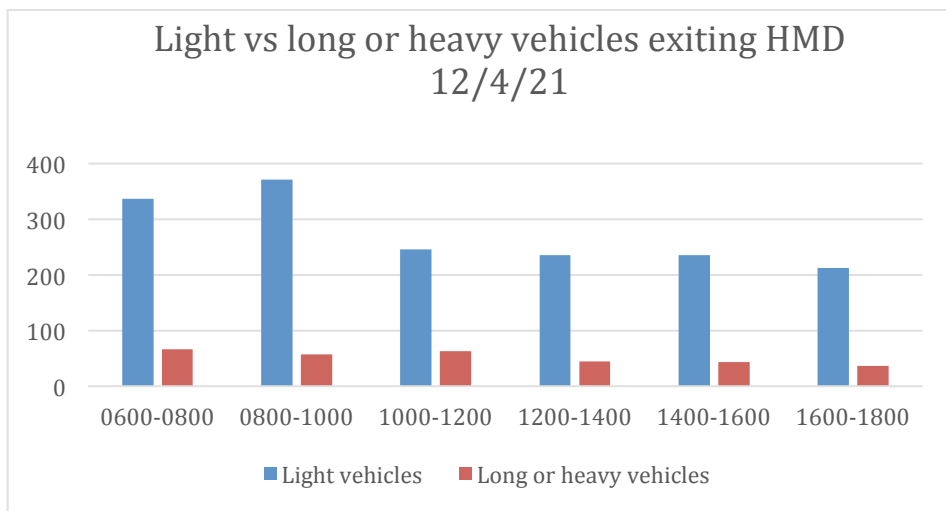




6. Pacific Highway traffic to south peaks in the middle of the day



7. Long and/or heavy vehicles comprise a significant percentage of total vehicle numbers. The longer and heavier vehicles were observed to take substantially longer to cross whether exiting HMD to the North or entering HMD from the South.



Accident Data

- Information sourced on line through TforNSW site lists only incidents for 2015 to 2019

2015	rear end	non casualty
2016	right near	moderate injury
2018	rear end	minor/other injury
	right near	moderate injury x 2
2019	right near	serious injury

- Changes to the way non-injury crashes are reported occurred from 2015 resulting in a reduction of cases being recorded. (PMHC and Roads and Maritime Services Port Macquarie - Hastings Local Government Area Traffic Study VOL 1 – Main Report June 2018 p33)
- Additional information which is not currently listed on TforNSW site

July	2001	double fatality	motor vehicle
June	2020	serious injury	motorcycle
March	2021	fatality	motorcycle

Personal Stories

Statistics fail to capture the tragedy behind accidents.

As a means of hearing from the community a Facebook group “Ghost Road Death Trap” was set up in March 2021. Ironically this went live only 24 hours before a motor cyclist lost his life at the intersection.

The Ghost Road is the name used before this road was given the gazetted title of Houston Mitchell Drive. It is the name still used by local residents.

Following are a selection of the many comments which have been posted. Note the date the comment was posted is not necessarily the date of the incident.

Accident reports from the community

These are not included in the currently available TforNSW Crash Data. These accidents did not result in fatalities but the repercussions for many have been long and life changing.

Rad Hammond 3 March 2021

My husband was involved in a dreadful, life changing accident in June 2020, at the Ghost Road intersection with the Highway. It was NOT his fault. He almost died (Police stated they thought they were retrieving a dead person)! Over 8 months later, my husband has not been able to work since and is quite broken physically AND emotionally. Speed was NOT an issue; he was actually doing 10km's lower than the speed limit. My husband continues with intensive rehab, possibly has to have further operations (he had to have another one in January this year) and at this stage, it is questionable if he will ever be able to work again. I cannot express how badly this has affected us. It has put us and our family in intense hardship and under considerable stress and strain, to say the least. To be honest, it's our worst nightmare come true. My husband is in constant pain and his emotional state is terrible. It's honestly been life changing for us. Since the accident, I am astounded to learn of the number of incidents which have occurred at this site. Something needs to be done and change needs to be implemented urgently!!!

I strongly appeal for an overpass to be URGENTLY built at this site. PLEASE get behind this to implement change and help keep us all safe.

In my opinion, I feel lowering the speed limit will not (& obviously after the tragic fatality at the same site today) make a difference. Only recently, the speed limit has currently been lowered to 100km from 110km along the highway and this tragic fatality today, proves that it did not help.

Do more lives have to be lost before action is taken??? This could have been your lover, mum, dad, brother, sister, family member, friend or loved one!!! Please take care, people! Stay safe, all.

Nicole Galea 5 March 2021

I just wanted to share that my son was involved in an accident at the Ghost Road and Pacific Highway on 29th November, 2020 -fortunately both parties walked away, but it could have been catastrophic.

My son was stopped at HMD and turning right onto the highway to go to the donut to get some lunch for the family. He thought he was clear to go. There was a car turning left from the highway into HMD which completely obscured his view of oncoming traffic. He made a mistake - an error of misjudgement which could have had very serious consequences.

The crest on the highway has the ability to allow a vehicle to hide perfectly in the blind spot of a car turning into HMD - this is a deadly intersection. Humans make mistakes but this intersection is a death trap.

My son's car was hit at 110km by a vehicle travelling south on the highway. When he saw the vehicle at the last second, he accelerated and fortunately, he was hit in the back door. Had he not accelerated, he could have died.

The accident has had a lasting impact on him and our family, not to mention the other driver and his family. Thankfully the accident was not a fatal one.

My son hasn't driven a car since that day. Since that day, there have been multiple serious accidents at the intersection and now including the catastrophic accident earlier this week that took the life of the motorcyclist.

Enough is enough - this intersection needs immediate upgrading now to make it safe particularly given the volume of traffic that is ever increasing.

NO MORE LIVES LOST!!

Penny Ryder 3 March 2021

Three years ago, a friend of mine, (67 years old) returning to Dubbo on his motorcycle was hit by a car turning from the ghost road north onto highway. He was very lucky, unlike the poor gentleman today, his bike was destroyed, he was hospitalised and to this day he has constant ringing in his ears, headaches, balance issues and leg pain. Unfortunately, the driver took off, leaving him on the road.

Overpass is the best solution.

Tyrone Marshall 6 March 2021

I've had an accident at this intersection myself on my way to school one morning!

I stopped at the line to turn left (southbound) and a car also waiting behind me rear-ended me that hard that I was out off school for a week due to back pains and my car

was a total right off! He said to me "I thought you had gone so I was moving forward getting ready to enter the highway" the word of "thought" was concerning but we both managed to get off the highway after I was pushed into it with a truck approaching.

This was back in the first half of 2019! (About 2 years ago)

Meryl Wood

My 80 year old friend is still recovering from an accident at the intersection on 11th Sept 2020. She spent eight weeks in hospital. She was a passenger in a car coming out of the Ghost Road.

Rachel McCudden 28 May 2021

Just passed an accident at the Death Trap intersection

Bronwyn Lloyd

I drove thru a big crash there on my trip from up north in December- in heavy rain, car on its roof, people running to help, shrapnel all over the road- terrible scene.

Brodie Douglas 4 March 2021

*I can't remember exact date but was posted on another page * I was driving along the highway heading towards Kew/Kendall in the left lane heading towards work.

There was someone waiting to turn right to go to Port,

As I approached I slowed down but when I was about 6 metres from this car she pulled out at the last second and to avoid her I slammed on my brakes and turned left and missed her by about the length of a shoe and slide straight into the left hand side bank.

I braked that hard and that quick that I warped my front right hand side brake rotor.

This road is a deathtrap, and whenever I drive that way now I stay in the right lane to give me more of a chance at living if someone decides to pull out in front of me again. This road has literally given me PTSD.

Mark Priddis 4 March 2021

2 years ago I was involved in a nasty accident turning out of the Ghost Rd to go to Port, I was a passenger, a car was turning left into Ghost Rd and the person driving the car I was in did not see the other car heading south next to the car turning. Lucky there was no serious injuries, all it took was a split second of inattention and yes we were in the wrong and the driver had over 50 years experience with no accidents

Near Misses reported by the community

These are a selection of the near misses reported on the Facebook group.

Brad Gow 3 March 2021

Was heading south yesterday and a Bloke that had been heading north turned into Ghost Road in front of the car in front of me, almost a massive crash, so close.

Shany Smith 4 March 2021

I drive this road everyday. I'm extremely cautious when I come close to this intersection as have had 3 very close calls there each time from someone just pulling out straight in front of me. Two times someone with a caravan attached and one time a car. All 3 times would have been horror crashes and all 3 times I believe the drivers thought there was an entry lane onto the freeway. Locals just assume now that someone will pull out in front of them so they make exceptions but tourists have no idea what is happening there or how dangerous that intersection is. Let's stop the casualties & put an on/off ramp there. No one else needs to die.

Trish Joyce 6 March 2021

We were driving back from Port a few weeks ago and as we crested the hill to turn left onto HMD we watched a semi trailer pull out of HMD turning north. The length of it blocked the 2 southbound lanes and everyone in front of us had to jump on their brakes to avoid hitting him. It was a ridiculously stupid move by the truck driver and almost caused a major accident. He seemed oblivious that he had stopped traffic on a major highway and went on his way.

Julie Krige 9 March 2021

Was nearly another fatality this morning 8.20am 9th March.

Lisa Smythe 3 March 2021

I had a near miss at this intersection 12 months ago. I was heading home to Kew from Port. Had my 15 year old son in the passenger seat. Someone pulled straight out in front of me. I hit the breaks hard and swerved over to the right lane so I wouldn't hit them. Lucky the lane was empty. I honestly don't know how we didn't crash but it frightened the life out of us. I get extremely nervous every time I drive past now. We were one of the lucky ones

Joanna Franklin 4 March 2021

We have only lived in the area just over 4 months and already we have had 2 near misses at this intersection. When turning northbound from HMD it is very difficult to watch for traffic on the main road and to ensure there is no traffic turning in front of you. The amount of traffic with only infrequent gaps encourages risk-taking.

Claire Briggs 4 March 2021

We had a near miss on Saturday morning turning north. We sat and waited, finally a gap. A bit of spray coming off the road with the rain. No cars visible and we crossed. As we crossed the outer lane a white Suzuki Swift with no lights appeared out of the spray. Obviously going faster than 110. It was close. We are both careful drivers who don't rush. Bu the line of sight is awful, plus road spray, plus fast moving vehicle and no lights. If we had been going any slower we would have been clipped. So it's not all about poor driving/ not waiting/ being impatient. The volume of cars on the highway and HMD has increased. I am surprised at all the people that say there's nothing wrong. There's 1000s of homes being built between Cathie and Bonnys so traffic will only increase. HMD was upgraded by council to encourage traffic out to the highway. Ocean Drive won't cope.

Keiran Rogers 29 April 2021

Today, I was nearly taken out by a quarry truck with a dog trailer as it entered the highway, heading north from HMD as I waited in the northbound slip lane to enter HMD from the highway.

Don't give us a mediocre 'fix' to a much larger issue! Long-term, an overpass is the only logical and viable solution to fix this death trap of an intersection.

Meryl Wood 4 May 2021

On returning from Qld about to turn into Ghost road a car pulled out of the Stop sign about to cross when another car came flying across give way. Ute travelling south just missed both vehicles. Welcome home. Noticed on trip similar intersections on M1 but plenty of overpasses.

Shirley Bennett 14 May 2021

Near Miss. 14/5/21. A car pulled straight out of HM drive as a car turned in off the Highway Northbound at 8.11 am. I don't know how they missed colliding.

Kylie Moss 31 May 2021

Near miss for me at 4.38pm coming South bound from Port on highway turning left into Ghost Road and a car coming North bound turning onto Ghost Road just pulled straight out in front of me when I was almost on the corner! My heart is still racing

Ian Campbell March 2021

My experience was last July, bringing my grandson back to spend some time with us. Turning from the Highway into the Ghost Road after stopping and checking traffic had stopped in Ghost Road then checking no traffic coming from north direction was clear I proceeded to cross and next second a ute slammed into the front of our vehicle coming from Ghost Road. A few seconds later and I wouldn't be writing this.

Jess Fenton 31 August 2021

Today I nearly had an incident. I was heading south on the highway. There was a car turning into ghost road coming from the north like I was. I slowed down for precaution. This white car pulled out of ghost road heading north!

I had to fully slam on my brakes to stop from hitting the lady, mind you had a child in the car. I wasn't speeding and even slowed down past the 100km/h. I had to pull over to calm myself down after the shock and anxiety that hit afterwards.

Melanie Horrigan

Yes my husband and I witnessed a very close call travelling south on Monday afternoon at 4.10pm. A 4WD towing a horse float pulled out of HMD into oncoming traffic turning right. The ute in front of us was practically skidding sideways on the brakes and narrowly missed colliding with the float. Ute driver and his female passenger very visibly shaken and in shock. I would have liked to have stopped properly to see that they were ok but it wasn't safe for us to do so. It was a very scary thing to witness so can only imagine how the driver of the ute and his passenger must have felt. Terrifying.

Congestion explained by the community

Dangerous situations repeatedly arise as vehicles in HMD bank up waiting to turn north onto the highway but are continually delayed by the need to give way to vehicles which are coming from the south and turning right into HMD.

Donna Jackson 19 April 2021

School hasn't gone back yet and I've experienced terrible congestion at the Pacific Highway intersection. The oncoming traffic while I was waiting to enter Pacific Highway from HMD (heading north) were not doing 100km (way faster) and there was sooooo much traffic. The moment I had a break, along came 2-3 cars wanting to turn into HMD from the south. I must have been at the intersection for 5 minutes today. I held my breath every time someone from south cheated death crossing in front of the speeding south bounders. I've never seen it so busy.... says me who has been doing the same route at the same time for the past four years.

Keiran Rogers 29 April 2021

I should also mention that when attempting to travel to PMQ on Wednesday, I encountered AT LEAST 20 vehicles queued up HMD trying to use the intersection

Kylie Moss

8 in front of me around 8.20am 3 of which did not stop at the sign & 5 cars crossed from the South into HMD & a big truck.

Donna Jackson

This morning I was only one in line but waited for a staggered 5 vehicles turning right into HMD from the south as there was traffic constant from my right and I refused to make the merge until both sides were completely clear

Andreia Campiao

Last Friday 8.15am I was the 17th car waiting to turn right onto the highway!!!

Lucy McNally

At 8.30am this morning there were approx 10 to 15 cars lined up waiting to turn right towards Port Macquarie. It's like that every weekday morning as I drive the road the same time everyday and always see a large line of cars waiting.

Lynne Alchin

Monday morning 15th March at 9.40am - I was the fifth car in a line of 8 waiting to turn onto the Highway into Port, and 3 cars were waiting to turn into HMD from the south!

Uncertainty and dangers faced crossing highway traffic

The uncertainty motorists experience when faced with traffic on both sides of the highway trying to cross double lanes is well explained by these posts.

Trevor Hart 4 March 2021

Ok so this is my experience. I travel through this intersection daily. In the morning I turn left out of Houston Mitchell and head south, so I come to a complete stop, wait for a sufficient break in traffic and have to get from zero to 100 km as quick as I can before traffic and sometimes trucks heading south are bearing down on you. This is at 6am in the morning and you are surprised how much traffic can be around at this time. In the afternoon I come from the Bago end heading north on the highway then turning right into Houston Mitchell. I try and make eye contact with the person turning right out of Houston Mitchell and pray they understand that they are required to give way to me as well. One of the problems is that while I'm concentrating on the on coming traffic waiting for a break, so are the people turning right out of HM concentrating towards the right. It's a game of chicken at times. Countless school buses turn right out of Houston Mitchell daily, it's such a worry. There is a family mourning today after an awful tragedy. Emergency services, Police and first responders have had to deal with an horrific scene. With so much development proposed for the area we have to come together and push for a solution as soon as possible.

Richard Lowe 11 March 2021

I have just driven northbound from Sydney tonight and arrived at the HMD turnoff at approx. 9 pm. I have lived in Lake Cathie for 30 years and know the turn off and the road intimately. Having vehicles travelling at 110 kmh and faster at night, while turning into this road is crazy. I hope this group will bring a rapid solution to an overpass at this intersection. The RMS has a Traffic Volume Counter at Ryans Road This data should be used to fast track an over pass solution.

Ian Richardson

As a Bonny Hills local and one who recently contributed with others in 2x 2hour counts of vehicles using the Houston-Mitchell intersection, I too believe it is imperative to keep campaigning. Really hope it will result in meeting with both State and Federal Roads Ministers for the north and south overpass. Needs support of everyone in the district.

Comparison with Harrington Road Intersection

The announcement in May 2021 that Federal funding was allocated to an overpass at Harrington Road (HR) left the Lake Cathie and Bonny Hills communities wondering how this intersection with its clear lines of sight, well placed slip lanes, street light illumination and significantly less traffic could be considered ahead of the HMD intersection.

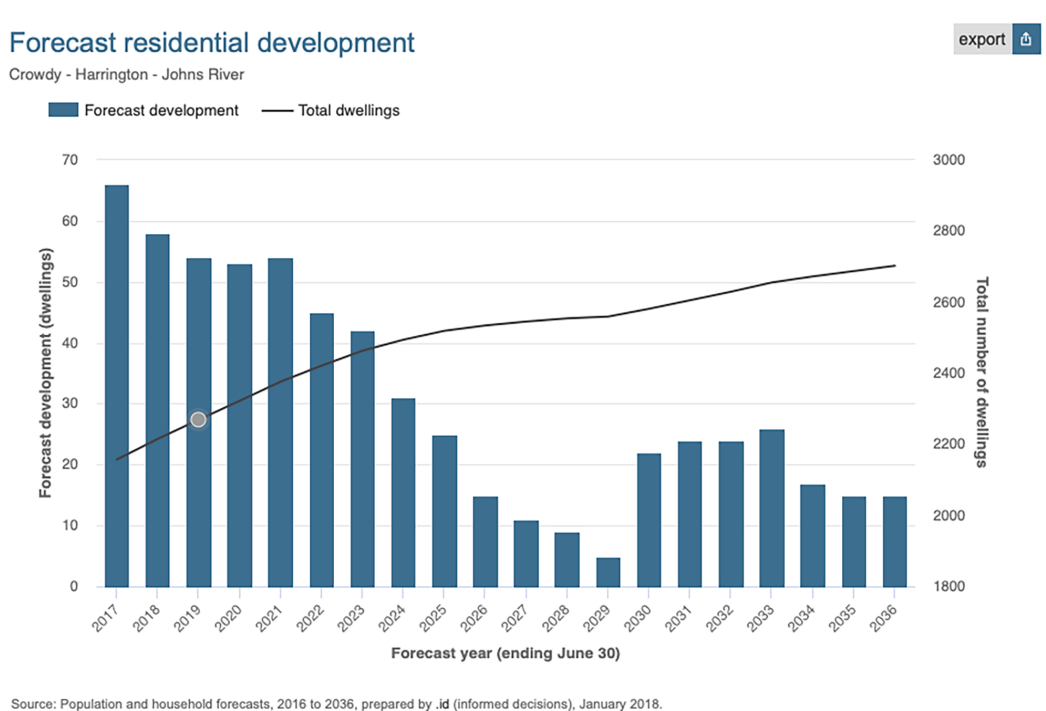
An explanation in the form of a phone call from MP Dr David Gillespie’s office clarified how this had come about. Preparation and planning by the State Government in past times meant this intersection was “shovel ready” when Federal funding became available. No such preparation or planning has been commenced for HMD.

A comparison between Harrington/Crowdy Head and Lake Cathie/Bonny Hills shows the enormous difference in population, expected growth, facilities and traffic volume moving to and from the highway.

1. Population Growth

Population for the Harrington area is forecast to stagnate for the next decade before slowly increasing again. The graph below is a stark contrast to the expected and planned growth in the LC / BH localities.

(Midcoast Council id community demographic resources)



- The Harrington area is surrounded by reserves and national parks with limited prospect of large future population growth, whereas LC/BH area is described as the second fastest growing urban area in the PMH LGA.
- In 2016, the total population of Crowdy Head-Harrington-Johns River was estimated to be 3,594 people. It is expected to increase to 4819 in 2036. By contrast the LC/BH population of 6,300 in 2016 will increase to around 9,000 residents by 2036.

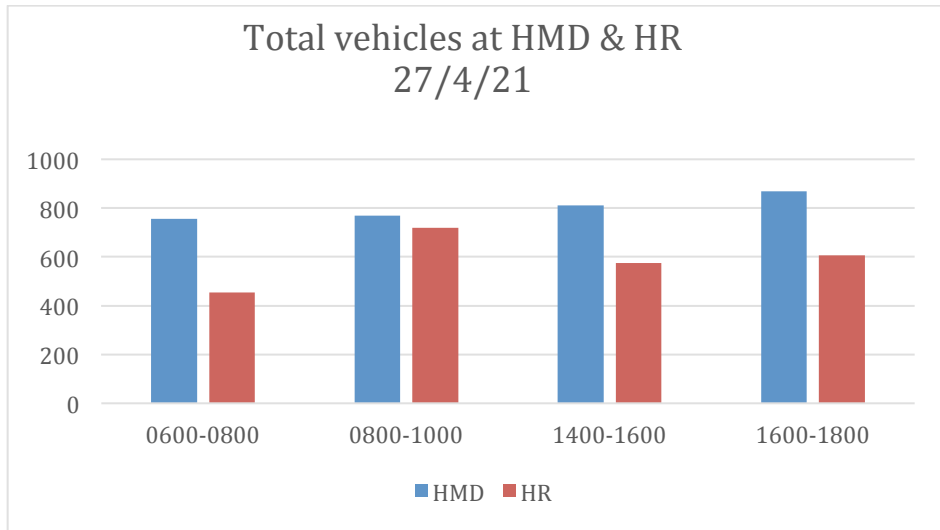
2. Traffic Count

Concurrent traffic counts were conducted by BHPA at Houston Mitchell Drive and Harrington Road intersections with the Pacific Highway.

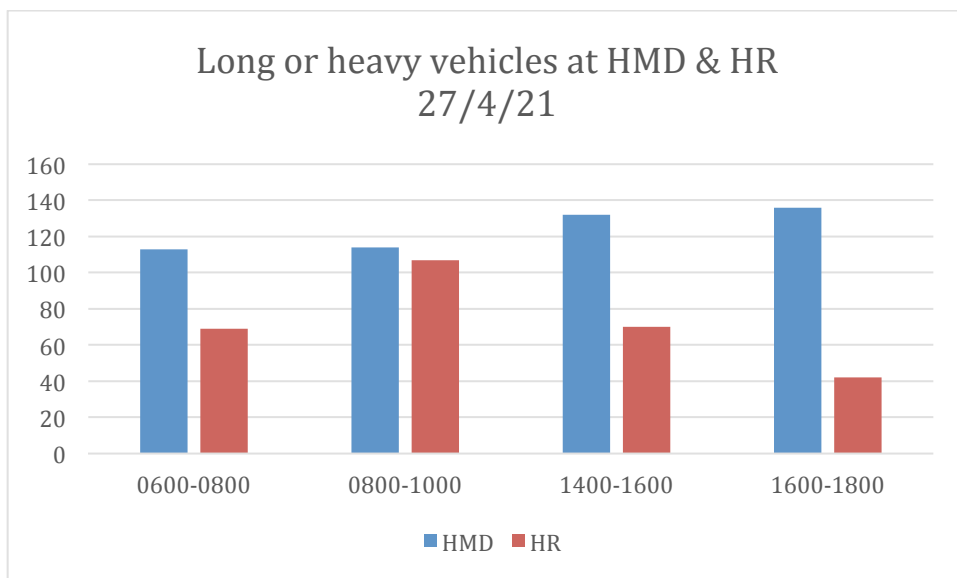
A. There is substantially more traffic at the HMD intersection than at the HR intersection. The traffic exiting and entering HR was less than three-quarters of that at HMD.

Time	Houston Mitchell	Harrington	HR as % of HMD
6.00-8.00am	757	453	59.8
8.00-10.00am	770	719	93.4
2.00-4.00pm	812	576	70.9
4.00-6.00pm	870	607	69.8
Total	3209	2355	73.4

This is represented graphically below:



B. The traffic at Houston Mitchell Drive had a higher percentage of long or heavy vehicles at all times compared with Harrington Road.



3. Tourism impacts

Harrington has two Caravan Parks, one Hotel, one Motel and a few holiday rentals, while at Crowdy Head there are several holiday rentals listed.

Again this is in stark contrast to the LC / BH area with its extensive choice of holiday accommodation options attracting more motorists entering and exiting at the highway.

Conclusion

BHPA strongly believes there is an overwhelming case for an overpass. We urge the relevant authorities to commit to planning for it now if there is any hope of realisation of the 2026 target date.

Residential growth has surpassed that anticipated in the GHD study thereby emphasising the urgency of the task. Significant non-residential developments in the area will also increase traffic at the HMD/PH intersection. Tourists further contribute to the numbers and nature of vehicles using this intersection at all times throughout the year.

Transport for NSW documents acknowledge an increasing amount of traffic for the intersection. BHPA traffic count data indicates the current volume and movement of vehicles impacting those who rely on the intersection for travel to and from the area. This is only going to increase placing even greater demand on the intersection.

The fatalities, injuries and traumas sustained at this intersection are already too many. Accident statistics should not be the benchmark by which safety decisions are made. Recounts from community members of their experiences at this intersection add the personal perspective of how lives have been changed or tragedies narrowly missed. The experiences and the resulting impact cannot be ignored.

From the data we have collected, and the anecdotal evidence presented, there is overwhelming community support for an overpass at this intersection.

Funding has been allocated to enable the installation of an overpass at the intersection of Harrington Road and Pacific Highway. We call upon the relevant authorities to give the much larger communities of Lake Cathie and Bonny Hills the same opportunity for safety at the Houston Mitchell Drive and Pacific Highway Intersection.

BHPA requests the opportunity to collaborate with PMHC in furthering this matter and urges Council to proactively liaise with Transport for NSW, and all other government representatives and bodies deemed appropriate, to bring this much needed project to fruition.

Kathy Regan on behalf of BHPA

Vice President

October 20, 2021

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