

Blue Mountains Gazette - Letters To The Editor

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Highways Trucked

Two transportation issues have recently brought highway safety and our quality of life into focus for most mountains residents. The first of these was the drawn out examination of the Mt. Vic bypass, and the second was the cynical application by Clarence Colliery to massively escalate its coal output and to send this dirty material by road rather than via its existing rail facility.

Most mountains people have demonstrated their passionate rejection of any proposed increase in truck traffic, particularly the B-double behemoths, and point to the obvious rail alternative. The geography of our townships, strung out along a ridge, makes us particularly vulnerable to highway problems. We have also seen how unrelenting growth over many decades has degraded a string of charming villages, sliced into north and south sides, and heaven help any child who wants to play with a school friend on 'the other side'.

Extensive traffic analysis, largely by the RTA, indicates that such fears and resentment seem well founded and demonstrate that larger vehicles require more stringent controls. Large vehicles are markedly overrepresented in NSW road fatalities, many speed regularly, some over 115 km/h, and some use tactics like tailgating to obscure licence plates and hence avoid camera detection. All too often the various media bring us stories of car-versus-truck collisions, with the sad summary 'family wiped out, truck driver uninjured'. Being in the right was no protection for the car occupants.

No wonder we are worried.

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