

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Petition Number: 541
Petition Sponsored by: Mrs Ann-Marie Hermans MP
Directed to: Minister for Transport Infrastructure
Tabled on: 14/10/2024

Petition Grievance:

The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that the Level Crossing Removal Authority (LXRA) has announced that it is removing the level crossing in Progress Street, Dandenong South. To do this, it will be permanently closing Progress Street.

The closure of this vital and extremely busy access to the vibrant Dandenong South industrial estate will be very dangerous and detrimental to local businesses and workers. Unlike all other level crossing removals across Melbourne, no rail or road bridge is to be built. By closing Progress Street and permanently removing direct access to the Princes Highway and the Monash Freeway, businesses in Progress Street and the surrounding industrial estate will incur many millions of dollars in additional transport costs and delays.

It will also create an enormous amount of road congestion in nearby streets and possibly force some businesses to close. Traffic will be forced to use Fowler Road for access, a road that is too narrow and unsuitable for the increased traffic volumes.

No provision for pedestrian or bicycle access is included in the LXRA's plans, also adding to the danger. The LXRA is not solving traffic problems with its approach, but rather creating traffic problems and increasing the risk to pedestrians and cyclists who use this area. Halting the closure of Progress Street and leaving the existing level crossing in place will enable continued safe and efficient access to the area and protect the hundreds of jobs and businesses which are being unnecessarily put at risk.

Petition Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to halt the announced closure of Progress Street, Dandenong South and to leave the existing level crossing in place.

Reply:

I thank the Member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region and her constituents for raising this matter.

The Level Crossing Removal Project (LXRP) has removed 84 level crossings to date, including eight level crossings either removed or in planning in Greater Dandenong, saving 5.6 hours of boom gate down time in the morning peak, directly benefiting businesses in this busy industrial area.

The Allan Labor Government is committed to closing the level crossing at Progress Street and building a new road bridge connecting Progress Street to Fowler Road, removing safety risks and delays at the level crossing. Major construction is now underway.

Removing the level crossing at Progress Street, Dandenong South, contributes to making the Pakenham Line level crossing free in 2025 and is critical to realising the benefits of the Metro Tunnel Project, which will be completed in 2025. Once operational, the Metro Tunnel will enable immediate service uplifts and future capacity increases for the Pakenham Line as demand grows across Melbourne.

In selecting the best design to remove the Progress Street level crossing, multiple options were considered including rail over road. Ultimately, this option was ruled out for several reasons, including that it would have resulted in:

- large extent of rail works causing significant disruption to the rail network and time required to complete the project.
- major impacts to sensitive flora and fauna within the rail corridor.

In response to feedback from the local business precinct and Construction Liaison Group (CLG), the project scope on Fowler Road has been amended to include:

- a new footpath along the south side of Fowler Road (to be delivered by Greater Dandenong City Council at the conclusion of the project);
- upgrading Fowler Road with indented parking, which will increase the driveable width from 8 metres to 10 metres;
- reducing the speed limit to 50km/h; and
- installing new lighting to improve visibility for pedestrians and road users.

Adopting these additional measures reflects the project's ongoing commitment to engagement and safety and responding to ongoing feedback via the CLG and individual stakeholder meetings.

Based on safety assessments, the project provides a better overall safety score, and is considered a safer outcome, when compared to existing conditions within the precinct.

The project will continue to work with the road management authorities to conduct traffic monitoring at each stage of the project, to ensure all relevant safety and accessibility requirements are met and comply with design standards.



Hon Danny Pearson MP
Minister for Transport Infrastructure

27/11/2024