

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee

My name is Paul Gale-Baker, and I am President of Sustainable Macleod Inc. I have lived in Banyule for over 30 years, and in Macleod for 13 years.

Sustainable Macleod is a community organisation with paid membership of over 120 and a mailing list of 622 households in and around Macleod.

Sustainable Macleod began in 2011 with the intention of helping build a strong, resilient and sustainable community. In 2014 Sustainable Macleod took over derelict tennis courts attached to Macleod College and began building Macleod Organic Community Garden. The Garden has become a key focal point for community activity in Macleod and has introduced many families, including children, to gardening and the principles and practice of living sustainably. Sustainable Macleod members and their families range in age across the lifespan.

Sustainable Macleod has fostered a strong association with other groups within Macleod and Banyule generally and has built a strong relationship with the Macleod Village Traders, supporting them through publicising their services and encouraging residents to shop there. In addition, Sustainable Macleod members are involved in assisting other members of the local community in a range of ways. As an organisation, we offer a wide range of food, gardening and sustainability workshops to the community.

Our efforts in helping build a strong, cohesive community have been recognised by the awarding of grants for works through Banyule City Council, Bendigo Bank and the Commonwealth Government. In 2016, Robin Gale-Baker, then President of Sustainable Macleod, was named the Banyule Local Hero in the Banyule and Darebin Sustainability Awards for her work with Sustainable Macleod. In 2018, she was made Victorian Senior of the Year, Healthy and Active Living for her work in promoting a healthy and active community.

Members of Sustainable Macleod value Macleod as a place where residents of all ages can meet and share gardening, food, companionship and sustainable practices. Macleod has a well-developed, village character that Sustainable Macleod and members of the community have striven to develop.

Members of Sustainable Macleod have voiced their concern that the North East Link, as currently proposed, will have a devastating effect on them and other community members. The Link will affect every member of Sustainable Macleod by disrupting road access, creating many years of noise and air pollution during construction and disrupting what is currently a quiet and safe community.

Members are also alarmed at the way in which the Link will divide the community, since we have members drawn from the East side of Greensborough Highway and from Watsonia.

We are particularly concerned about the loss of trees and bushland that are integral to the character of Macleod. There will be a permanent loss of wildlife, particularly small birds, who need shrubs and low growth. We are appalled that eight genetically unique trees are to be removed. Replanting will not replace these unique trees, nor will it reestablish the current biodiversity which we enjoy.

Sustainable Macleod accepts that the North East Link will be built, and supports the SMART Taxpayers Design prepared by Fred Buono in conjunction with the Banyule Community as the preferred design for the North East Link between Lower Plenty Road and the M80 freeway.

This design, by extending the tunnel, alleviates many of the concerns of residents. It will leave much of the area intact, allowing green spaces to remain and the community to remain connected. It will also reduce noise, dust and the impact of heavy vehicles moving around Macleod. Should the SMART Taxpayers design prove more expensive than the

current proposal, we believe this would be money well spent. Cost should not be the determining factor when the future of our community is at stake.

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