



Hon. Diane Evers MLC
Member for the South West Region

Attn: Mrs Maddison Evans, Committee Clerk
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Committee Members,

PETITION NUMBER 093 – BUNBURY OUTER RING ROAD

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs regarding Petition No. 093 – Bunbury Outer Ring Road (BORR). I confirm that I wish the Government/Committee to inquire into the matters raised in the petition. To the best of my knowledge, the issues described in this petition have not been taken to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman).

The petitioners are “opposed to the proposed southern section of the Bunbury Outer Ring Road that will divide and impact unfairly on the community of Gelorup”. I support their call for the government to “go back to the drawing board to find an alternative route that would bypass the Gelorup community”, and ask the Legislative Council to “commit to securing an alternative route for this section of road, to protect this community”, and “improve the “safety of all future road users”.

I appreciate that the BORR is a significant infrastructure project aimed at providing an alternative route for freight and general traffic around Bunbury, and achieving a number of other objectives¹. However, the preferred route for the southern section was chosen decades ago, before the area developed to its current stage. Today, that route would bisect the Capel Shire community of Gelorup. It would be prudent to consider alternatives at this point.

Several residents of Gelorup have approached me to detail their concerns that a dual lane highway would divide their community and cause serious environmental damage. The highway will destroy Banksia woodland and habitat of the critically endangered Western Ringtail Possum and black cockatoos, as well as causing considerable noise and disruption to closely positioned homes.

I was pleased to note the Minister for Transport’s comment that “the State Government is currently in the planning phase of the project. Main Roads is working with key stakeholders to deliver the most efficient and safe route possible that delivers benefits for the south west”. This gives us ample opportunity to ensure that the community’s wishes are respected and that ecological disturbance caused by the southern section of the BORR is minimised².

¹ <https://project.mainroads.wa.gov.au/home/Documents/BORR%20Southern%20CRG%20Meeting%20-%20July%202018.pdf>

² [https://powanet.parliament.wa.gov.au/hansard/hansard.nsf/0/dd707ea136130c7948258358001ce991/\\$FILE/C40+S1+20181129+p8913b-8913b.pdf](https://powanet.parliament.wa.gov.au/hansard/hansard.nsf/0/dd707ea136130c7948258358001ce991/$FILE/C40+S1+20181129+p8913b-8913b.pdf)



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The Minister has also stated that: "The southern section of the BORR road reserve through Gelorup impacts upon Matters of National Environmental Significance. As a result, an alternative corridor is being investigated to assess whether there is a feasible alternative with lower environmental impact³". At a Southern Section Southern Community Reference Group meeting in July 2018⁴, Main Roads representatives noted that although an existing long term corridor exists that must be investigated following due process, the changing protection status for ringtail possums must be considered. This may require an alternative route. A Main Roads representative at that meeting did not rule out the possibility of a more southerly route when questioned about options⁵. Furthermore, the Minister has explained that the likely positive and negative impacts of the use of the existing corridor and the alternative corridor on issues such as local business, tourism, safety, liveability, and community development have not yet been compared⁶.

Residents of Bunbury have contacted me to highlight their concerns that the BORR will divert tourists further away from the Bunbury region. They argue that this is likely to impact on Bunbury's travel and tourism businesses, such as the Dolphin Discovery Centre, and other hospitality, entertainment, and accommodation providers. They are also worried that the very popular Bunbury Farmers Market may move closer to the BORR, as much of their trade is presently coming from out of towners/tourists travelling from Perth through to Margaret River/Dunsborough area and beyond. This would disadvantage Bunbury residents who depend on the Farmers Market for fresh produce.

I call on the Government to undertake best practice collaboration with the community to ensure these concerns are fully addressed. I am aware that Main Roads formed an integrated project team in April 2018 to "complete detailed planning and project development...which is "scheduled for completion by the end of 2019 and includes an extensive program of community and stakeholder engagement. Ongoing activities include two community reference groups; community drop-in sessions; landowner meetings; local government consultation; consultation with special interests, including freight industry, road user groups, community groups and Bunbury port; and regular project updates to members of the community". However, members of the public who have attended sessions to date have expressed dissatisfaction about the quality and effectiveness of the engagement process, and are therefore concerned that government decisions will not be fully informed. This is one of the reasons they have created this petition, and approached me to take up the cause.

It should be considered that any new route for the southern section of the BORR will have unacceptable environmental consequences, and that the existing roads may provide the solution, with upgrades to freeway-like conditions. For the southern section of the BORR, and to bypass the traffic lights and ninety degree turn at the hospital corner, there is the existing Centenary Road to the south of the hospital. The savings from not extending the BORR further south, could be used to upgrade the Bussell Highway. therefore ask the Government to consider alternatives for the southern section of the BORR such as the upgrade and use of existing roads, and bypass the Gelorup community.

Yours sincerely,



Hon Diane Evers MLC

³ [https://powanet.parliament.wa.gov.au/hansard/hansard.nsf/0/95e1b160a4e6a54848258339001783ac/\\$FILE/C40+S1+20181030+p7416d-7417a.pdf](https://powanet.parliament.wa.gov.au/hansard/hansard.nsf/0/95e1b160a4e6a54848258339001783ac/$FILE/C40+S1+20181030+p7416d-7417a.pdf)

⁴ <https://project.mainroads.wa.gov.au/home/Documents/BORR%20Southern%20CRG%20Meeting%20-%20July%202018.pdf>

⁵ The Environmental Impact Assessment undertaken by GHD revealed that "in the southern section of the Project Area (Gelorup section), road reservation acquired for the BORR has provided a vegetated linkage between privately owned remnant vegetation in the area and the reserves adjoining the western side of Bussell Highway. This linkage is presently used by the Western Ringtail Possum and Black Cockatoos as well as a number of native birds, reptiles and amphibians".

⁶ [https://powanet.parliament.wa.gov.au/hansard/hansard.nsf/0/a4869b89505122cc482583310011ad11/\\$FILE/C40+S1+20181016+p6993b-6994a.pdf](https://powanet.parliament.wa.gov.au/hansard/hansard.nsf/0/a4869b89505122cc482583310011ad11/$FILE/C40+S1+20181016+p6993b-6994a.pdf)