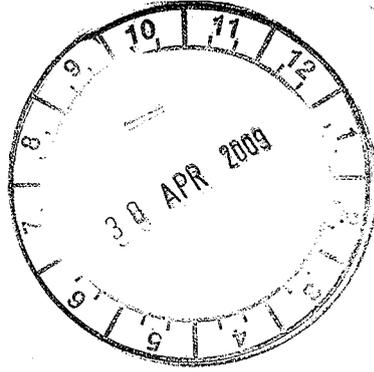


PUBLIC



Hon Dr Sally Talbot MLC

Member of the Legislative Council
South West Region
Parliament of Western Australia

Hon Sheila Mills MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Policy
Parliament House
Perth WA 6000

Dear Ms Mills

Petition No 21 – Regarding Roe Highway Stage 8 – Submission to Committee

Thank you for inviting me to provide a submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs in relation to this petition.

This petition reflects community concerns about the proposal by the Liberal National Government to build Roe Highway Stage 8, even though it is well known that any such action will cause the destruction of the world-renowned Beeliar Regional Park.

The State Labor Opposition shares these concerns. As Shadow Minister for Environment, I have made it clear that Labor will support the local community in the fight to stop the building of this road.

Roe Highway was first proposed in 1955 in the report "Hepburn-Stephenson Plan for Perth." The initial government plans for Roe Highway were first gazetted in 1963 as a part of the Metropolitan Region Scheme.

The Hepburn-Stephenson Plan for Perth gave the following reasons supporting the construction of Roe Highway:

- It would act as an efficient link between Fremantle and Midland and all the other main highways;
- It would provide a quick interchange between the main north-south highways;
- It would link Fremantle inner and outer harbours to eastern industrial areas, especially Welshpool; and
- It would draw heavy traffic away from the other roads, which pass through residential areas.

While most of Roe Highway has been built, there has long been opposition to the development of the final stage of the road: i.e. Stage 8 running directly through the wetlands.

Arguments against the construction of the final stage of the highway can be summarised as follows:

- There are good links existing between Fremantle and Midland which are used by heavy vehicles, and which can be improved upon;
- The existing east-west road network already provides quick interchanges between the main north-south highways;
- Trucks from the inner harbour already use the existing east-west road system to get to Welshpool, especially Leach Highway, which is the best linkage road between the outer harbour and Welshpool. The outer harbour today is quite different to that in the 1950s and the road network has evolved to cater for these changes;
- The Roe Highway as planned in the 1950s was well away from residential areas, but there are now new residential areas, not planned at that time, through which the proposed Roe Highway Stage 8 will pass.

In summary, it is abundantly clear that Roe Highway Stage 8 is an unnecessary road, the justification for which has long been overtaken by residential and commercial development in the area.

Turning to the environmental factors militating against the construction of the road, it is worth noting that the Environmental Protection Authority has consistently advised that the extension of Roe Highway Stage 8 is unfeasible as it will destroy native vegetation and bushland in this area. These wetlands sustain various species of flora and fauna, many of which are of significant importance.

The EPA's advice is based on the recognition that extending Roe Highway would destroy native vegetation and bushland in this area. Fauna including the iconic black swan, Carnaby's black cockatoo (an already-endangered species), other birds, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals will all be drastically affected as a result of their habitat destruction. Without a clean and safe habitat fauna will not be able to feed or breed successfully, potentially jeopardising the existence of these species.

The construction of this road could also result in Australia breaching international agreements to which Australia is a signatory, these being the Japan Australia Agreement for the Protection of Migratory Birds in Danger of Extinction and their Environment, the China Australia Agreement for the Protection of Migratory Birds and the Republic of Korea Australia Agreement for the Protection of Migratory Birds.

Pollution associated with the highway development across this area would be immediately detrimental to any remaining flora and fauna. Carbon monoxide, nitric acid vapour, toxic fumes and possible chemical spills could all adversely affect this naturally biodiverse area.

Beeliam Regional Park was created to manage the collective wetlands, swamps and lakes. 19 lakes and associated wetlands are protected and managed by the Department of Environment and Conservation. There is no doubt that the cost of constructing Roe Highway Stage 8 will be the destruction of this pristine and unique ecosystem. Such environmental cost cannot be disregarded.

Finally, it is worth noting that the wetlands remain a place of high cultural significance to the Indigenous people. The name "Beeliam" was given to the area by the Nyungar people who lived and hunted in the region.

While in government Labor was moving to delete Roe Highway Stage 8 from the Metropolitan Regional Scheme. This, I believe, is the only proper course of action if these wetlands are to be protected. As the evidence shows, this protection need not have a deleterious effect on the planning of transport routes through the southern corridors of Perth.

Thank you for your consideration of this serious issue. I would be pleased to provide further information to the Committee if required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally Talbot', written in a cursive style.

SALLY TALBOT

29 April 2009