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## Minister for Transport; Planning

Your ref: Petition No. 105  
Our ref: 72-18676

Hon M Swinbourn MLC  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
Parliament House  
4 Harvest Terrace  
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Mr Swinbourn

### **PETITION NO. 105 – BUNBURY OUTER RING ROAD**

I refer to your letter dated 11 April 2019 providing details on the recent petition regarding the alternative environmental investigation corridor being considered as part of the Bunbury Outer Ring Road (BORR) planning process.

With regard to the comments made by the Principal Petitioner, since July 2018 the BORR project team has been investigating two possible corridors for the southern section of the BORR Project – the existing road reserve within the Greater Bunbury Region Scheme (red corridor) and an alternative corridor located further to the east (green corridor).

This investigation was undertaken following the Commonwealth's elevation of the conservation status of the Western Ringtail Possum from "vulnerable" to "critically endangered" in May 2018 and the presence of other Matters of National Environmental Significance such as the Black Cockatoo and Black-stripe Minnow.

Detailed environmental site surveys have been completed in both of the corridors and Environmental Impact Assessments prepared. Additionally, due to the uncertainty regarding the total population of the Western Ringtail Possum, which was a factor in the elevation of its conservation status, regional surveys were commissioned to more accurately estimate the population size and determine the potential impact of the BORR project. The methodology for these surveys was agreed with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and the Western Ringtail Possum Recovery Team.

The results of both of these pieces of work were considered in the context of the ultimate planning for the Greater Bunbury Region and with a focus on the objectives of this priority project.

Given the complexity of this issue, in addition to environmental considerations, the comparison considered a range of factors including those of a social, heritage, land use planning, engineering and economic nature. This also included consideration of the impact on agricultural businesses, raw materials and mining tenements.

It was confirmed that both alignment options have environmental impacts, although of a different scale and nature. The existing (red) alignment has a higher impact upon the Western Ringtail Possum and native vegetation, whereas the alternative (green) alignment has a significantly higher impact upon wetlands and endangered aquatic fauna.

The regional surveys of the Western Ringtail Possum revealed that the population is in fact significantly higher than previously estimated. This is highly positive news for the species and changes the decision-making context. The increase in the estimated population is such that the overall impact of either alignment on the species is less than originally anticipated.

On this basis, Main Roads has decided to proceed with the project development of BORR south within the existing (red) road reserve, which has been included in the Greater Bunbury Region Scheme, and the preceding Bunbury Wellington Region Plan for several decades. The alternative (green) corridor will no longer be considered for the BORR alignment.

The southern alignment will be referred to the Environmental Protection Authority and the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy for environmental review later this year. These processes also offer the opportunity for further public comment.

With regard to the response to the comments made by the Tabling Member, during 2017 and early 2018, in response to major changes in land use which would have severely compromised the objectives of the previously planned road alignment, an alignment selection study was undertaken for the northern section of the BORR. As part of this study, consultation was undertaken with local members, potentially directly impacted landowners, local residents including the Meadow Landing community, and key stakeholders including the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, the local governments of Bunbury, Capel, Dardanup and Harvey, Bunbury Ports, the South West Development Commission and the Bunbury Wellington Economic Alliance. The eastern alignment was supported by the Western Australian Planning Commission in May 2018.

As referenced in the alignment selection report, which has been provided to the parties listed above, the BORR planning process has considered a broad range of desktop assessments and tested a number of traffic modelling scenarios, it has also taken extensive community feedback into account.

Outcomes from consultation to date have resulted in a number of changes to the concept and include:

- New north facing ramps at Raymond Road interchange, which will reduce the volume of traffic using Raymond Road near Meadow Landing;
- Locating the northern alignment as far east as possible within the selected corridor to mitigate noise impacts; and

- A commitment to working with the City of Bunbury, and other local stakeholders, to develop an Urban and Landscape Design Strategy for the project which will help realise the opportunity to create a northern gateway to Bunbury. This will include signage and visual cues to highlight access to the city from the new interchange at Forrest Highway.

The Bunbury Outer Ring Road project team has remained committed to wide ranging engagement with local government, the freight industry, business groups and local communities over the past 12 months and this will continue into early 2020 as the project is further developed for construction. The extensive program of community engagement included the initiation and facilitation of two Community Reference Groups, which have met several times between July 2018 and March 2019.

Thank you for writing regarding this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rita Saffioti', written in a cursive style.

**HON RITA SAFFIOTI MLA  
MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT**

06 JUN 2019