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David M. Davis, M.P.

Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council
Shadow Minister for Environment and Climate Change
Shadow Minister responsible for Scrutiny of Government
Member for Southern Metropolitan Region

Friday, 18 July 2008

Cr Coral Ross
Mayor
City of Boroondara
8 Inglesby Road
Camberwell VIC 3124

Dear Mayor,

Monash Freeway upgrade and unacceptable freeway noise increases

I am writing about the serious impact of freeway noise on Boroondara residents, particularly from the widening of the Monash Freeway, in light of Council's strong advocacy to the State Government on freeway noise and effective noise reduction measures.

You would be aware that the State Government has two standards on noise attenuation: one for the CityLink section of the Monash Freeway where noise is not allowed to exceed 63 decibels, and another for the section between Toorak and Warrigal Roads, where noise levels are only required to be below 68 decibels (a 30 per cent difference).

The 68 decibel standard also applies to the Eastern Freeway, and I understand that increased traffic as a result of the opening of EastLink has also led to increased noise for residents in the north of the municipality.

The current widening of this section of the Monash Freeway will include the demolition and rebuilding of noise attenuation walls, but only to their existing height to achieve the less stringent noise attenuation level required of government freeways.

Privately commissioned noise monitoring studies at Haynes Crescent, Glen Iris earlier this year – before the addition of two further lanes and increased traffic volumes – showed a reading of 67 decibels.

It is clear that the 68 decibel level will almost certainly be broken once the widening is complete if noise attenuation walls are rebuilt only to their existing height, and it is probable that these noise limits are already being breached.

Sound levels fluctuate significantly and unless a comprehensive pattern of measurement under all weather and wind conditions is undertaken the occurrence of sporadic readings exceeding the allowable level is not certain to be detected.

Even if one were to accept the unfairness of different noise limits either side of Toorak Road, it seems senseless to proceed with the current widening only to be forced shortly after to rebuild the noise attenuation walls to a greater height.

Many Boroondara residents are deeply disturbed at the lack of action from the State Government on this issue and believe it is important for Council to support them in their fight for commonsense.

Council support could take one of several forms, for example writing on behalf of residents to Premier Brumby and Roads Minister Tim Pallas or implementing a comprehensive program of noise monitoring along affected areas including when the wind is blowing from the south.

While readings taken during construction may record noise levels lower than those experienced when the project is completed because of the reduced lanes and lower speeds in operation during construction, these readings could form valuable base-line data.

The adverse health effects of noise pollution are well-documented, and the strength of community opposition and reports of high levels of freeway noise suggest strongly the 68 decibel standard is not sufficient and clearly unacceptable to the residents of Boroondara.

It is difficult to see any reasonable justification for different standards on equivalent roads regardless of whether these roads are publicly or privately owned, particularly when substantial new works such as the expansion of the Monash Freeway are being undertaken and increased noise levels can be expected.

There is clearly a legitimate role for Council to take up this issue on behalf of its residents and to insist to Government that the level of noise attenuation should be 63 decibels on both sides of Toorak Road.

I look forward to you updating me on Council's efforts to support these residents of Boroondara in their quest for justice in this crucial matter.

Yours sincerely,

David Davis, MP
Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council
Member for Southern Metropolitan Region

cc.	Catherine Dale	Cr Heinz Kreutz
	Cr Luke Tobin	Cr Dick Menting
	Cr Phil Meggs	Cr Nicholas Tragas
	Cr Meredith Butler	Cr Mary Halikias-Byrnes
	Cr Jack Wegman	Cr Phillip Healey