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David M. Davis, M.P.

Shadow Minister for Industry and State Development
Shadow Minister for Major Projects
Shadow Minister for Small Business
Shadow Minister for Manufacturing and Exports
Member for Southern Metropolitan Region

Friday, 4 May 2007

The Hon Steve Bracks, MP
Premier of Victoria
1 Treasury Place
Melbourne VIC 3000

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Dear Premier,

I write on behalf of constituents concerned at the closure of the Moorabbin Children's Traffic School to ask that the decision be reversed.

The Moorabbin Children's traffic school has for many years served the people of the southern suburbs of Melbourne well. Many people remember that school from when they went through it as young people, learning basic skills about road sense and understanding traffic signals.

Young children as young as 3 and 4 years old are taught skills that will provide them with an understanding of how to remain alive in a world in which they are required to cross roads and do a whole range of other things that are inherently risky. Anyone who is a parent will understand the significance of this, and I certainly understand it in respect of my children. The importance of these traffic schools cannot be overestimated.

It was with concern that I became aware that the Moorabbin traffic school has closed in recent weeks. This appears to have been precipitated by a decision made by a local-level police officer. I cast no aspersions on the set of decisions; I do say that there must be a reconsideration of them. The police have made a decision that is going to have a terrible consequence in the local area south east of Melbourne.

Not only do these traffic schools provide base knowledge, road sense and understanding of traffic that is so important for young people but they are also a very important way by which young people understand the importance of the police. In many cases they develop a relationship with police officers that enables them to view the police favourably, so there are a number of important aspects to the activities of these traffic schools.

It appears that traffic schools fall under some unclear bureaucratic terrain. The police have some involvement in funding them, as do local councils and in many cases community groups. In the case of the Moorabbin traffic school I know that a local group

of Freemasons has been very active in supporting it, and the Glen Eira Council has been active in supporting that school. As recently as January this year the Council facilitated new line markings being put down at the school, a move that was supported by the local group of Freemasons which had provided some funding.

This is a genuine community effort to keep this school going. Obviously local government, the police and no doubt the road traffic authorities have a responsibility to ensure that these schools are used and maintained, and used to the full. Somebody said to me -- and I think they may have been half serious -- that many of these skills can be taught online. I am a great advocate for activities online, but I have to say that the importance of these schools is that they are physical structures and children learn about traffic lights and other traffic issues in a physical environment where they can actually understand distance and space and those sorts of matters. For that reason I think on-line teaching is not the same as young children learning these skills in a proper traffic school that has small, scaled-down roads and the ability for traffic lights and signs to be in place so that young children can see and recognise them in a real world-type situation.

I am concerned that the state government appears not to have taken the right steps in closing the school and, in light of significant community reaction to the decision, ask that you move to have the decision reversed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Davis', with a flourish extending to the left.

David Davis, MP
Member for Southern Metropolitan Region