



David M. Davis, M.P.

Member for Southern Metropolitan Region
Shadow Minister for Planning
Shadow Minister for Local Government
Shadow Minister for Equality

10 June 2016

Professor Charles Guest
Chief Health Officer
DHHS
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Dear Professor Guest

Human health impact of proposed elevated diesel trains on the Caulfield to Dandenong line

I recall that on 12 June 2012 the World Health Organisation announced its decision to classify diesel exhaust fumes as carcinogenic to humans, finding sufficient evidence in humans for diesel engine exhaust causing lung cancer and limited evidence in humans for diesel engine exhaust and an increased risk of bladder cancer.

The Victorian Government proposes to build extended sections of elevated rail between Caulfield and Dandenong through heavily populated established suburbs and no Environmental Effects Statement process has been or will be undertaken on the Government's proposal. I am particularly concerned by the apparently cavalier approach of the Government and its agencies to this important matter, as evidenced by the Chief Executive of the Level Crossing Removal Authority before the Parliament's Economy and Infrastructure committee, where he said:

All I am prepared to say about that is that the authority, using expert technical, legal and planning advice, conducted that self-assessment in accordance with the ministerial guidelines for self-assessment under the Environment Effects Act, and that assessment resulted in no triggers warranting a referral to the Minister for Planning about an EES. So we have complied with the legal requirements under the planning laws, and that has been completed.

I have seen no evidence the Government has adequately or publicly considered the impact on human health of diesel exhaust fumes being more broadly dispersed as a result of its elevated rail proposal. Therefore, the purpose of this letter is to request that you conduct a Health Impact Assessment of the Government's proposal to have diesel trains ascending to and travelling at a three storey height all the while emitting carcinogenic diesel exhaust fumes.

Diesel trains currently travel at grade along the Caulfield to Dandenong line, but I am concerned that from the Government's proposed elevation, emitted exhaust fumes will disperse at a greater distance and impact on a significantly greater number of households and community facilities such as schools and kindergartens.

Further, having been for a time Minister for Health, it is my considered view that in relation to avoidable carcinogens, it should be the responsibility of the state at all times to seek to reduce human exposures where practicable. Certainly, the state should not exacerbate a situation, in this case for decades to come, where viable alternatives with reduced travel of diesel exhaust fume emissions exist, such as rail under road grade separations.

Other jurisdictions appear to be approaching the issue of diesel exhaust emissions with a greater degree of care and gravity than is the case to date in Victoria and, as a case in point, I draw your attention to the NSW EPA's Locomotive Emissions Project: Scoping Study of Potential Measures to Reduce Emissions from New and In-Service Locomotives in NSW and Australia.

A Health Impact Assessment of the Government's elevated rail proposal is required by my constituents who, given the Government's extraordinary decision to proceed without an EES, currently lack the necessary information to weigh up serious decisions about whether they need to relocate in the interest of their families' health.

Under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, you have independent responsibility to develop and implement strategies to promote and protect public health and wellbeing. In the absence of any other analysis of the potential negative impacts on public health of the Government's proposed Caulfield to Dandenong elevated rail proposal, I believe it is incumbent upon you to protect the public health of my constituents and conduct a Health Impact Assessment.

I am available to discuss these matters at your convenience.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Davis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Hon David Davis MP
Member for Southern Metropolitan Region