

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 11.30AM – WEDNESDAY 25 JANUARY 2017**

## **CITIZENS TAKE LEGAL ACTION SEEKING CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES BEFORE DOMAIN METRO TUNNEL WORKS BEGIN**

- **CITIZENS, CONCERNED ABOUT DOMAIN METRO RAIL TUNNEL PROJECT TAKE LEGAL ACTION AND PROPOSE AN ALTERNATIVE**
- **ALTERNATIVE COULD PRESERVE 203 HERITAGE TREES IN ST KILDA RD AND THE STREETScape, AND AVOID TRAFFIC CHAOS AND TRAM RELOCATION**
- **ALTERNATIVE COULD ALSO POTENTIALLY SAVE \$800 MILLION OF TAXPAYERS' MONEY**

A Group of Melbourne citizens have commenced an action in the Supreme Court of Victoria against the Victorian Minister for Planning concerning aspects of the \$11 billion Melbourne Metro Rail Project (MMRP).

The Group – Domain Precinct Preservation Association (DPPA) – has served a writ on the Minister seeking to have the Court rule that part of the MMRP environmental effects assessment process be stayed pending further consideration of an alternative engineering proposal as recommended under the project's Environmental Effects Statement (EES). The Minister states, in his assessment of the EES\* "If the impacts upon (the) heritage significance of the St Kilda Road Boulevard can be further minimised by an alteration to the location of the proposed Domain station, this should be given careful consideration".

The DPPA is one of a number of Melbourne citizen groups that assert that the Minister has failed to properly investigate an alternative location for the Domain Station under the EES. DPPA secretary and lawyer, Nicola Lally, says the Association believes its alternative proposal would save taxpayers approximately \$800 million.

"The DPPA has obtained an assessment by a group of eminent professional engineers of the viability of an alternative to the current government proposal - one which fully allows the MMRP, which we support to proceed - but without the devastating environmental and heritage destruction consequences that go with the present way of delivering it", Ms Lally said.

"In the view of our Group and other Melbourne citizen groups, the alternative will save some 203 mature trees on St Kilda Road currently slated for destruction under the government's plans, and ensure that the existing St Kilda Road streetscape is protected.

"What many Melburnians have not yet realised is that the current plan will see St Kilda Road from Toorak Road to Dorcas Street - a distance of some 800 metres - reduced from eight traffic lanes down to two and be an open pit, the size of two football fields, for possibly five

to eight years of construction works. Traffic in the area will be chaotic. This alternative location for Domain station will greatly diminish these losses”, she said.

“It will be a tragedy to lose so many beautiful trees unnecessarily and have one of the finest boulevards in the world turned into a giant, dusty, construction site for many years to come especially when there is a viable, cost-effective alternative. The advice of arborists is that it will take 30-50 years for the streetscape in St Kilda Road to be restored to its present condition.”

Ms Lally says that the alternative proposal – developed by a senior, highly experienced group of engineers – involves re-locating the proposed Domain railway station by less than 50 metres off the St Kilda Road carriageways.

“This alternative cannot be ignored – particularly as we believe it would not only benefit the community at large and local residents, but it would save the taxpayer an estimated \$800 million, as well. It would be a travesty to proceed as currently proposed by the Government when the alternative is so much less disruptive and far less expensive,” Ms Lally said.

She said the legal proceedings that DPPA had initiated was a potentially powerful statement of community concerns. In addition, it is reported that over 2600 objections have been made in response to a MMRP Permit Application for “Early works” on St Kilda Rd which includes the removal of 103 trees. This Permit has not been granted by Heritage Victoria and yet works continue. There are serious concerns and there should be careful consideration of this alternative before works of any type continue. Ms Lally said the citizens believe the Government has paid only lip-service to genuine, constructive and well-meaning community sentiment.

\* Assessment under the Environmental Effects Act 1978, Minister for Planning, dated 22 December, 2016

**END RELEASE**

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