



Minister for Transport and Main Roads

Our ref: PET 38493
Your ref: A600275

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Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to my interim response to petition 3307-20 about vegetation clearing around the Palm Beach Interchange (Exit 92) for the Pacific Motorway (M1) Varsity Lakes to Tugun (VL2T) upgrade, which was tabled on 8 October 2020.

The Palaszczuk Government is delivering \$2.3 billion worth of upgrades to the M1, supporting 2000 jobs. This includes the \$1 billion 10-kilometre VL2T upgrade, which is supporting 820 jobs as we deliver Queensland's plan for economic recovery.

The M1 is a critical route in the national transport freight network, a main tourism gateway, a key connection for commuters and local neighbourhoods, and has a vital role in the economic prosperity of the Gold Coast and Queensland.

I can advise that the 1.4-kilometre section of the upgrade between Palm Beach Avenue at Exit 92 and Sarawak Avenue at Exit 93 includes:

- widening the M1 to a minimum of six lanes
- upgrading the Palm Beach Interchange at Exit 92
- constructing a one-way auxiliary lane between Palm Beach and Sarawak avenues to retain access from the M1 for residents and businesses
- installing a new intersection on the western side of Exit 92 to connect to the southern extent of a new western service road that will provide alternative local travel options for residents of Palm Beach and Currumbin
- extending and widening entry and exit ramps on both sides of Exit 92
- retaining space for a possible future rail corridor on the western side of the motorway
- relocating all public utility services to the eastern side of the M1
- installing new pedestrian and bike paths to improve active transport connections
- planting more than 58,300 trees and shrubs of various sizes.

It is, however, a difficult balance when considering these future transport needs against the impact to residents' amenity. The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) understands the impact tree removal can have on the environment and community, and I am confident that every effort has been made to ensure environmental impacts of the VL2T upgrade have been minimised. In an effort to minimise the overall environmental impacts of the VL2T upgrade, the project includes the following environmental features:

- planting more than 570,000 shrubs and trees of various sizes
- offset planting of nearly 5000 koala habitat trees (approximately five hectares) in the nearby Eddie Korhauser Recreational Reserve
- constructing a fauna underpass connecting the Burleigh to Springbrook bioregional wildlife corridor

- adopting fauna sensitive road design to benefit invertebrates, such as two threatened butterfly species—the Swordgrass Brown Butterfly and the Richmond Birdwing Butterfly
- erecting fauna exclusion fencing to prevent koalas accessing the M1, and fauna exclusion shields to eliminate the possibility of koalas climbing the universal beams on the noise barriers
- installing barrel and fish passage baffles to improve the fish passage in Oyster Creek
- establishing Osprey nests near Saltwater and Oyster creeks.

In recognising the significance of the well-established vegetation within the road corridor between Exits 92 and 93, TMR investigated an additional option to redirect residential traffic along the local routes of Palm Beach Avenue, Tahiti Avenue and Sarawak Avenue. However, traffic forecasts under this design indicated that by 2023, almost 10,000 vehicles daily would utilise Tahiti Avenue. This option would have significantly reduced neighbourhood amenity, with extensive traffic queues making it difficult for these same residents to enter and exit their streets, as well as creating an unacceptable safety risk to vulnerable pedestrians and bike riders.

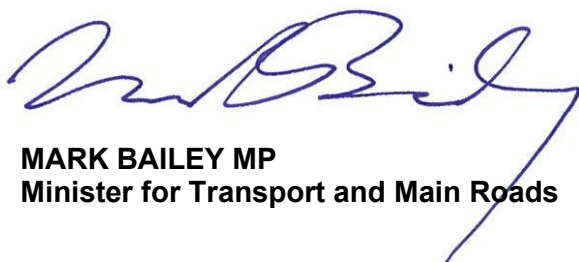
I can advise that, since 2018, the VL2T project has conducted a robust consultation program which included more than 25 community information sessions, over 300 briefings to key landowner, environmental and business stakeholders, and approximately 3000 contacts to a dedicated project email address and free-call phone line. This consultation identified the level of community concern from the residential catchment between Exits 92 and 93, which resulted in further design investigations in this area.

In order to retain as many trees as possible while still ensuring that public utility services can be sufficiently accommodated within the eastern road corridor, the design was amended to situate a new noise barrier which is required under TMR's legislated *Transport Noise Management Code of Practice – Volume 1 2013*, immediately adjacent to the local road network rather than the motorway.

I am satisfied that this final design option has suitably balanced the numerous challenges in this section of the VL2T upgrade, as it provides the critical transport infrastructure required for the M1 while also addressing the environmental concerns raised by residents in this petition.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



MARK BAILEY MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads