Large tracts of native vegetation have been removed in roadworks on Toodyay Road.

Too much bush cleared

Safe and Scenic Toodyay Road
Andrew and Charmian St John

ONE OF the pleasures of living in Toodyay is its proximity to Perth and that the relatively short journey to the city is through a beautiful combination of bush and farming country.

Even in the height of summer the bare pastures are accompanied by the sparkling greenery of majestic Wandoo, Jarrah, Marri and River gums with all their supporting flora and fauna.

There are few more beautiful spectacles than driving up from town at any time of year in the late afternoon and seeing the unique effect of the setting sunlight on our resplendent bush.

It contributes immeasurably to Toodyay being a great place to live and, of course, to visit.

Another perspective might be that of commuters who curse the slower-moving vehicles, the increasing number of heavy vehicles and the lack of places to safely overtake.

We have all experienced these frustrations and for some they far outweigh the value of the splendour of the natural bush beside the road.

Such frustrations, along with other factors, lead to accidents, near misses and the need to improve the road.

If you are in the frustrated driver category you will be happy to see the recent road improvements in the Jingaling Brook area.

For those of us who enjoy the spectacle and heritage of Toodyay Road and its accompanying countryside, the recent widespread clearing is extremely depressing and far exceeds what we were led to believe would take place in the so-called consultation process.

Judging by anecdotal conversations and social media traffic, there is a significant number of people who don't accept that there needs to be this amount of environmental destruction as a necessary price to pay for improved road safety.

After the Jingaling Brook improvements are completed which include passing lanes, there are scheduled roadworks from Clackline Road to the Sandplain and Salt Valley Road junctions and also at the junction of Fernie and Toodyay Roads.

The former will involve clearing trees and vegetation up to 10 times more than has taken place at Jingaling Brook and will lead to the loss of many mature Wandoos in possibly the most scenically attractive part of Toodyay Road.

A significant number of us do not want this clearing to happen on such a scale and since these planned improvements are not yet funded, we ask that other options and designs be considered.

The need for improvement is completely accepted but we are advocating for alternative ways to make driving safer other than by building a road that will allow for increased speed and limit any consequences for speeding drivers by removing more trees than necessary.

Rather than increasing the speed of traffic, what about enhancing safety in certain locations through more prominent and variable speed warning indicators, speed cameras, increased police presence, strategically placed speed restrictions, audible noise strips and hard shoulders?

Compromise is required on both sides – not every tree can be retained but nor is total road safety a goal that can be achieved no matter the environmental cost.

With a reputed budget of $100 million for the upgrading of a mere 27kms of road, one also wonders about the financial sense of this whole exercise.

We need a compromise that incorporates road design that is more sensitive to the environment but also contributes to a safer Toodyay Road.

It should not be beyond the bounds of our community to reach such a compromise in relation to future road improvements.

If you would like to contribute to the campaign for a Safe and Scenic Toodyay Road, please contact info@sastr.com.au.