February 2022 Toodyay Herald

Roadside devastation sparks petition to Parliament

LOCAL residents dismayed by recent large-scale earthworks to re-align Toodyay Road will petition State Parliament to halt further destruction of roadside vegetation on the main tourism route to the historic town.

Land resumptions and the destruction of picturesque views near Jingaling Brook have left big areas of bare embankment on either side of the re-aligned road.

The Safe and Scenic Toodyay Roads group has called on Main Roads WA to halt further construction to review the project.

It says unwarranted large-scale clearing spoils the attraction of Toodyay Road as a scenic drive to the historic town and leaves steep slopes on which nothing will grow.

Lower-cost alternatives such as hard shoulders in the City of Swan section of Toodyay Road near Gidgegannup could be used instead.

A shortage of materials and labour and backlog of road-building projects under the State Government's economic stimulus plans made it a perfect time to reconsider planned improvements.

A petition calling for a review is underway in Toodyay.

Main Roads WA spokesperson Dean Roberts said the Toodyay Road upgrade project remained a priority "to improve safety along this important route".

"Main Roads has been consulting with the community and has made some refinements to the design to reduce the environmental clearing footprint," he said

A Community Reference Group was established in 2017 to discuss designs with local community representatives."

He said repairs to sections of Toodyay Road were ongoing, with permanent repairs to be undertaken next month.

Main Roads WA offered no comment on the petition.

Long list of gripes mars Toodyay Road upgrade

Safe and Scenic Toodyay Roads
Andrew St John

OUR Safe and Scenic Toodyay Roads campaign last year stimulated a lot of public debate about how much clearing would be required for Main Roads WA's proposed Toodyay Road upgrade.

When we started this year with a stall outside the local IGA store, there was one topic about which there was absolutely no dispute – the poor quality of road improvements delivered so far.

On the top of the gripe list is the poor condition of Toodyay Road as it enters the town.

There were many comments regarding how appalling the surface is now compared to what it replaced.

It is all the more galling that we have seemingly gone backwards when there was little wrong with the road in the first place.

Similarly, the surface of the supposed improved junction with Racecourse Road and Toodyay Road leaves a lot to be desired.

A right-turn lane off Toodyay into the Northam Road was supposed to be marked as part of the improvements. However, almost a year later, there are still no such road markings (see photo).

Last year's new Jingaling Brook section looked like it was melting during the Christmas break, causing speed restrictions to be put in place early in the New Year as contractors attempted to fix it.

How many more remedial treatments will be required?

Some may remember when a new dual carriageway section of Toodyay Road was opened between Reen Road and O'Brien Road several years ago – the surface soon deteriorated and speed restrictions continued for months.

Locals residents are dismayed at the extent of bare landscapes that greet visitors to Toodyay after recent roadworks.

All of this serves only to make the community increasingly sceptical about the ability of Main Roads WA to deliver cost-effective road improvements to our community.

In their defence, it is clear that there are shortages of materials and labour due to the overstimulation of the economy – just ask anyone trying to build or renovate a house in Toodyay.

By contrast, the Shire of Toodyay's recently improved section of Julimar Road near the junction with West Toodyay Road is pristine compared with some of Main Roads WA's recent efforts.

Last year's unusually heavy winter rains were cited as an excuse for the inability to deliver satisfactory improvements to Toodyay Road but how did Main Roads WA cope during previous years of heavy rain?

Whatever the reasons, the delivered end product is in many cases either not fit for purpose or poor and the use of remedial work so soon after completion represents a waste of taxpayers' money.

Poor road surfaces may also contribute to decreased road safety, the very reason cited to justify extensive land clearing and grand engineering at Jingaling Brook and planned for other areas along Toodyay Road.

The backlog of road-building projects under the State Government's economic stimulus plans due to a shortage of materials and labour is likely to persist for some time.

This makes it a perfect time to halt planned improvements to Toodyay Road until the demand elsewhere for materials and labour subsides.

The entire Toodyay Road upgrade project could be re-evaluated to determine the real need.

Improvements could then be planned in consultation with the local community, including many residents who want to preserve the road's scenic and environmental nature as well as improve its safety.

Alternatively lower cost improvements could include more use of hard shoulders as have been used in the City of Swan section of Toodyay Road near Gidgegannup.

Toodyay residents and visitors can support this campaign by signing our petition to the WA Parliament which calls for a review of the planned improvements to Toodyay Road.

The petition is now available at Makit Hardware in Stirling Terrace.

Please include your full residential address rather than a PO box number.

No action yet on last year's plans to make the Northam turn-off safer for vehicles turning right.

New members needed to help this year's Show

Toodyay Agricultural Society

seats at this year's committee tabl

Letters

Responses below from a letter by Owen Catto Dec 2020:

Where trees are weeds

AS A RESIDENT of Toodyay who uses the Sandplain Road and Salt Valley Road intersections with Toodyay Road daily, I observe many near-accidents.

It is with that background that I question the intent of all activists, environmentalists, Safe and Scenic Toodyay Road members and Shire of Toodyay Environmental Advisory Committee in their efforts to delay the planned roadworks for this disastrous section of road.

We continue to delay, ignore and stifle improving Toodyay road safety at our own peril.

A road death will occur due to unsafe road conditions and it will be on all of our heads.

This is not if, but when.

Read less

Road safety from a road construction sense is about several things, including:

Road vision – we have to remove more vegetation from all our roads to make them safer. This is happening all over the state.

A tree in the wrong place is a weed.

Road width – many of our roads are not the correct width from road verge to road verge. Traditionally many of our roads are still single-lane road criteria, with a double-lane road built on it. A civil lawsuit against a local shire and/or

Main Roads will happen.

Straightening roads where possible.

Making road gradients more even.

Sufficient passing lanes in hilly, high traffic areas.

Making road intersections safe.

The Sandplain Road and Salt Valley Road intersections with Toodyay Road, like many others, could not be built today because they are of unsafe design/location.

Ongoing opposition and not applying common sense to improving road safety could possibly lead to loss of funding for these works, and loss of life.

It has been delayed long enough – let's get the job done.

Owen Catto
Toodyay

Trees not to blame

REGARDING the letter on road safety.

Having lived in Toodyay for nearly thirty years and being an Ambo for six years, I've not heard of or seen a road accident caused by a road or a tree etc.

May I suggest that accidents are caused by drink driving, inexperience, drug use, speeding, fatigue, medical conditions, failing to drive to the road conditions, inattention, using mobile phones.

I live on (not literally) a gravel road where the speed limit is 110km/h and at one spot a large wandoo narrows the width so it's just wide enough for two vehicles to pass each other (and no I won't say which road as someone will turn up with a chainsaw and cut it down).

So, to the writer of that letter "don't try putting me on a guilt trip for accidents caused by the above".

Robert Kermode
Toodyay.

What came first?

WITH respect, Owen Catto's judgement that the iconic Powder Bark Wandoo is a weed (December *Herald*) is one of the most surprising we have ever heard.

How can a tree that was propagated by nature centuries ago be in the wrong place?

Perhaps it is more that the road or indeed we recent arrivals to this landscape are in the wrong place?

As to the issue of the Sandplain/Salt Valley Road intersection being unsafe, we are in complete agreement.

But as the Safe and Scenic Toodyay Roads (SASTR) campaign has always maintained, there is a balance to be had between improving safety and excessive damage to the environment – it is not one or the other.

In that regard, recent discussions between our group and Main Roads WA suggest that new designs for this junction are possible without so much clearing and we look forward to seeing these confirmed officially.

That aside, Owen pays the conservationists including our group a compliment by saying they are holding up the work on Toodyay Road.

We wish that was true but any delays in this work by Main Roads WA are due almost certainly due to the unavailability of contractors and resources.

Andrew St John
Safe and Scenic Toodyay Roads Campaign
Toodyay