

ENVIRONMENT

Parliamentary petition rejected but we fight on

Safe and Scenic Toodyay Road

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A PETITION signed by more than 5000 people to review planned alterations to Toodyay Road has been rejected by a WA State Parliamentary Committee.

Safe and Scenic Toodyay Roads (SASTR) and local community members campaigned for two years for a sustainable and environmentally responsible road design that would incorporate improved safety measures.

The petition spoke to concerns about the potential loss of wandoo trees up to 400 years old.

More than 1250 people from around the Toodyay area signed the petition,



One of many old wandoo trees that could be mulched as a result of improvements to Salt Valley and Toodyay roads.

supplemented by more than 4000 signatures online.

However, the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs of the Legislative Assembly rejected the petition, citing the lengthy consultations and accommodations made by Main Roads WA (MRWA) and claimed adequate mitigation of environmental effects.

We believe the committee ignored arguments SASTR presented and selectively cited from submissions.

For example, the committee quoted a Shire of Toodyay view that safety was of primary concern, which was never disputed by SASTR.

However, the same letter from the Shire of Toodyay chief executive indicated a review of the plans was justified to reduce the long-term cost to the environment without compromising road safety objectives.

This “selective hearing” does not instil confidence that the committee looked at submissions objectively, but instead gave preference to those in favour of the planned improvements.

The result is perhaps unsurprising given far more egregious assaults on our environment are receiving approval based on lax environmental regulations.

Despite the setback SASTR intends to continue fighting and seek further changes to the road plans.

MRWA representatives will conduct a walk-through in early April to show planned changes at the Salt Valley and Sandplain Road junction.

This should provide a clearer picture of how much vegetation will be lost and the impact of reducing the cutting depth from 12 to six metres, which MRWA finally agreed to last year.

Hopefully the walk-through will reveal

old-growth wandoo trees that will not now be mulched as part of the roadworks.

SASTR is pleased to have achieved this major change given MRWA previously stated a 12-metre cutting was a minimum for line-of-sight at the junction.

When a seemingly immutable engineering requirement is subsequently overturned it casts doubt on other MRWA claims used to

justify widespread clearing.

While the written petition is no longer available, SASTR’s campaign will continue.

Other means of registering dissatisfaction with the road improvements will be announced soon.

You will find our detailed response to the petition’s rejection at sastr.com.au or email info@sastr.com.au for further information.