

ENVIRONMENT

Ancient trees safe but mature vegetation axed

Save and Scenic Toodyay Road
Andrew St John, Convenor

MAIN Road WA (MRWA) representatives travelled to Toodyay last month to meet our members for a walk-through of major roadworks planned at the junction of Sandplain Road and Salt Valley Road.

We estimate close to \$50 million will be spent when works begin in 6-12 months.

Less vegetation will be cleared than originally planned after MRWA agreed to reduce the depth of the cutting through the hill to six metres.

The road will be realigned with passing or "climbing" lanes constructed on both sides of the hill.

An MRWA environmental officer walked SASTR members along the new south-westerly road alignment.

We requested the walk-through to provide a better understanding of the real-world impacts of the roadworks.

Several beautiful wandoo trees, some estimated to be more than 400 years old, are outside the clearing area and will continue to provide habitat for different species in the local environment.

In other good news, MRWA plans to retain the existing rest area at the junction, something we have asked for at other places along Toodyay Road.

The bad news is much of the mature vegetation will not survive the roadworks.

We had hoped the amount of clearing could be reduced, and unsightly embankments or batters avoided, by the use of stone retaining walls.

MRWA said this was not possible due to the unavailability of suitable local stone, so stone batters such as those that mark roadworks at Jingaling Brook will be used.

Despite these concerns SASTR commends MRWA for agreeing to conduct the walk-throughs, which we appreciate can be time-consuming and costly.

However, a walk-through in the early planning stages, rather than meetings with complacent stakeholders, may have delivered the required road improvements without laying waste to so much vegetation and scenic beauty.

We believe regulations around land clearing for road developments need to be tightened and are encouraging people to advocate for this change.

Postcards highlighting these issues will be available at the monthly markets for individuals to sign and forward to WA Environment Minister Reece Whitby.

You can also request a postcard via our website at sastr.com.au/your-voice.



We urge people to sign these postcards highlighting the damage caused by excessive land clearing and send them to State Environment Minister Reece Whitby.