

# Main Roads in damage control as costs mount

**Safe and Scenic Toodyay Road**  
Andrew St John, Convenor

THE SIGHT of workers sealing broken edges of Toodyay Road has aroused a sense of disbelief in community members including those of us at Safe and Scenic Toodyay Roads.

This is what we have been calling for since we started campaigning two years ago and it is what a Wheatbelt Safety Review recommended back in 2015.

In rejecting such low-cost but effective solutions, Main Roads WA cited the unsuitability of the terrain and a community call for passing lanes.

The apparent change in policy shows that the State Government agency is in damage control in more ways than one.

It recently announced significant delays to planned improvements as ballooning costs quickly become unaffordable.

Given the appalling state of many parts of Toodyay Road, Main Roads knows such action can only further upset the community.

It would mean that Toodyay's main link to Perth would not be fully fixed until more than a decade after the Road Safety Review.



*Recently repaired road edges on Toodyay Road.*

Hence the appearance of contractors providing temporary fixes last month to the busy roadway's most damaged part.

If this prevents accidents in the short term,

before planned major improvements, then all to the good.

But bear in mind these temporary fixes are on parts of the road that will be abandoned, if and when those improvements occur as a result of planned major realignments.

Cheap fixes still cost money and mean that even more public funds are being thrown at an already expensive project.

Imagine if a decision had been taken in 2015 to make the road safer through efficient, low-cost strategies rather than through grand and expensive re-engineering.

The former would have been affordable and almost certainly completed by now, with everyone enjoying the accompanying safety benefits.

Instead, by funding the project as part of an excessive and inflationary post-COVID economic stimulus, the previous Federal Government was complicit in creating the current debacle.

We previously revealed a fundamental flaw

in the State's business case to support the improvements.

It was based on the supposed economic benefits delivered by people arriving at their destination five minutes earlier by being able to travel at 110km/h on an improved road.

Such economic modelling is more of a possibility than a probability, which is enough to cast doubt on this claim.

However, the case for this supposed economic benefit is thoroughly debunked by the fact that the planned speed limit on the rebuilt road will 100km/h – the current maximum speed allowed for most of Toodyay Road.

With mounting costs adding to such a major planning defect, it must surely now be time for Main Roads to seriously rethink a project that is already years away from completion.

Our ongoing campaign includes asking questions in State Parliament about this increasingly costly project while raising community awareness around its ongoing flaws.

Meanwhile, as work will not begin at the junctions with Sandplain and Salt Valley Roads until at least late next year, we can enjoy the wonderful wandoo woodland and wildflowers there for a little longer.

If you would like to support our campaign contact us at [info@sastr.com.au](mailto:info@sastr.com.au)