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9 September 2019

Hon Jaala Pulford,
Minister for Roads,
Electorate Office,
211 Dana St, Ballarat, 3350

Re: Proposed Tree removal between Clarendon and Buninyong on Midland Highway

Dear Minister,

We have attended community consultation meetings with Rural Roads Victoria on the proposed road widening works to install safety barriers and some passing lanes. Whilst we applaud the cause of road safety, we are deeply concerned about the impact of tree clearing for these works on the beautiful and historic landscape of the Mount Buninyong area. We understand that over 400 trees are slated for removal, including many old growth Manna gums that are an incredibly important part of the environment, providing seed diversity, homes to indigenous animals and birds, and enhancing the landscape with their majesty. We have a duty to do everything possible to protect these majestic trees. We understand that some of these trees were planted in 1956 to commemorate the Melbourne Olympic Games.

Part of the solution to preserving these trees would be to introduce a speed limit of 80 km from the Scotsburn school corner at Platts Road, to Buninyong. At present it is quite dangerous turning off the highway at Scotsburn to approach the school or the hall, and an 80 km speed limit would make it much safer. If a speed limit were introduced, there would be no necessity for the road widening and barriers, thus preserving the trees.

I add, as a resident of Clarendon who has travelled this road daily for over 40 years, that I have never experienced an accident on the stretch of road between Clarendon and Scotsburn, and feel that the proposed works are totally unwarranted in a stretch that includes many beautiful old Manna Gums. Our Society submits that the tree cover is an essential part of the vista of Mount Buninyong, and forms an important wildlife corridor to the south. The area has a significant landscape overlay in the Ballarat Planning Scheme, and must be respected and protected.

We seek your support in negotiating with your departmental officers to ameliorate the very negative impacts of this proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Anne Beggs-Sunter,
Hon. Secretary,
Buninyong and District Historical Society