

Royal Park Protection Group Inc.

Coalition of Transport Action Groups (CTAG) Rally Sunday 26 October 2008 at Flinders Street Railway Station

Speech made at the rally by Julianne Bell Convenor Royal Park Protection Group

I am speaking for the Royal Park Protection Group. We have been fighting the extension of the Eastern Freeway westwards for the past 10 years. This is the so called missing link. Past State Governments and the roads lobby are obsessed with joining up roads by an imaginary dotted line on a map. Rod Eddington arrives on the scene early this year and decides - apparently under the instruction of the Brumby Government - to extend the Eastern Freeway but in a huge project - the East West Link. Under this proposal we have mega road tunnels through inner Melbourne and elevated roadways/ freeways through the western suburbs.

The State Government is practicing a major deception on Melbourne's travelling and commuting public. Most people think The Tunnel will help commuters and ease congestion. Wrong. It is a truck bypass to and from the Port of Melbourne connecting with Dandenong and probably the Port of Hastings. It starts in Collingwood and Clifton Hill. One branch goes to the Port of Melbourne and there are no turn offs to the City where most commuters are headed. The other joins City Link bound for Tullamarine. It will serve few commuters travelling on East Link or the Eastern Freeway. How many want to go to the Port of Melbourne or Tullamarine?

Royal Park, our particular concern, will be turned into a quarry. Most of the tunnel construction will be by cut and cover methods. Apart from destroying open parkland, the tunnels through Royal Park will impact on Melbourne Zoo and affect the operation of the State Netball and Hockey Centre, as there will be a giant quarry next door. It will force the closure of Anzac Hall an Urban Camp for country school kids; devastate the Royal Park wetlands – an important source of water for Melbourne; obliterate the sports fields; and probably force the relocation of residents of West Parkville who may suffer compulsory acquisition of their homes.

We are of the view that the \$9 billion earmarked for road tunnels and freeways in the Victorian Transport Plan should be invested instead in infrastructure for improved and expanded public transport and rail freight in Victoria. It is not exaggerating to say that public transport in Victoria is in a state of collapse, especially the rail system. Only today the Minister for Public Transport announced that seats would be removed from train carriages to allow trains to carry more passengers. There is a great need for new rail extensions and upgrade of existing lines in the western and eastern suburbs. Victoria must abandon further road tunnel and freeway construction plans and concentrate on public transport.

On 23 June 2008 in an article published in Age "Opinion" Dr Paul Mees transport lecturer at RMIT (formerly at the University of Melbourne) said of Sir Rod Eddington *"His report on east-west transport proposes the biggest capital expenditure program in Australian history. Half the \$18 billion is for a single road project, which Eddington's own consultant economists suggest has a benefit-cost ratio well below one — which in plain English means it's a waste of money."*

The Brumby Government is apparently not listening to Victorians and their demands for sustainable public transport not road tunnels or freeways.

I have a message to read out from Protectors of Public Lands Victoria Inc. (Protectors of Public Lands Victoria is a coalition of over 80 environment, heritage and community groups) These members and affiliates have signed the following statement:

“We support the campaign by the Royal Park Protection Group Inc and the Coalition of Transport Action Groups (CTAG) in opposing construction of road tunnels in inner Melbourne, Royal Park and Holland Park and elevated roadways through the western suburbs and ask that the \$9 billion funding nominally allocated for the "East-West Link" be invested instead in improved and expanded public transport and rail freight in Victoria. We wish you well for the community protest on Sunday 26 October 2008.

These groups are:

Animals Australia; Australian Greens (Victoria); Australian Wildlife Protection Council Inc.; Blue Wedges Coalition; Carlton Residents Association; Collingwood and Abbotsford Residents' Association; Dendy Park Association; Eastenders Melbourne; Kensington Association; Koonung Mullum Forestway Association; Maribyrnong Truck Action Group; Mount Alexander Road Campaign Group; North and West Melbourne Association; Port Campbell Community Group Inc.; Public Transport Users' Association; Save Our Suburbs; Sustainable Population Australia (Victorian Branch); The 3068 Group; Travancore Residents; Unchain St Kilda; Victorian Coastal Alliance (This covers East Gippsland Coast Alliance, Wellington Coast Alliance, South Gippsland Coast Alliance, Bass Coast Alliance, Port Phillip Bay Alliance, Bellarine Peninsula Alliance and West Coast Alliance.)