

Mr Bill Brummitt
Budget Policy Division
Department of the Treasury
Langton Crescent
PARKES, ACT 2600

30th January 2013

Dear Mr Brummitt

**RE: 2013-14 PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION ON HUME FREEWAY INTERCHANGE/ EDGARS ROAD
EXTENSION IN EPPING, MELBOURNE**

The accompanying submission is in response to invitations from the Australian and Victorian governments to submit submissions for the 2013-14 budgets. This submission is from the Aurora Community Association (ACA), a residents group from Epping North in Melbourne. The submission is requesting joint funding from both governments for a major road development project.

Our submission aims to make the case that not spending on transport can be more costly than spending – even when the project is estimated to cost a total of \$134 million. The project is the Hume Freeway Interchange/ Edgars Road extension in Epping, Melbourne. (The State contribution for the \$110 million Hume Freeway interchange part of the project could be under \$29 million).

The failure to upgrade and build more roads to match an expanding population has resulted in worsening road congestion in the areas north of Epping. Congested roads mean more time on the roads and less time for preparing proper meals, sleep, exercise, family life and socialising - all of this is increasing the possibility of damaging health and other social consequences.

Insufficient road building makes it harder for local businesses to operate which in turn denies residents reasonable opportunities for local employment. Long distances from work mean more road congestion in Melbourne's middle and inner suburbs. Increasing living costs and reduced liveability are likely to discourage new home buyers in general in Melbourne's outer growth areas and directly impact on the health and well-being of existing residents.

Yours Sincerely,



Toni-Marie Wuelfert
President
Aurora Community Association

**Submission for Connecting a Duplicated O'Herns
Road to Hume Freeway in Epping, Melbourne and for
Extending Edgars Road north to O'Herns Road**

**Aurora Community Association (ACA)
2013/ 2014 Federal Budget Submission**

January 2013

This 2013-14 budget submission is for connecting a duplicated O'Herns Road to the Hume Freeway in Epping, Melbourne and for extending Edgars Road north to O'Herns Road. An expanded version of this submission appears in the form of a petition which was tabled in the Victorian Legislative Assembly on Thursday 13th December 2012 by local Yan Yean parliamentary representative Danielle Green, MP.

The petition of residents of the City of Whittlesea, in particular Epping North, drew to the attention of the House the significant social and economic disadvantage faced by residents due to the lack of services and infrastructure in Epping North.

The petitioners requested that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria urge the State Government to resolve to immediately fund (in combination with the Federal Government where applicable):

1. The design and construction of the northern and southern ramps connecting O'Herns Road with the Hume Freeway (a full diamond interchange),
2. The duplication of the remaining section of single carriageway of O'Herns Road between the Hume Freeway and Redding Rise, and;
3. The four lane carriageway of Edgars Road between Cooper Street and O'Herns Road.¹

The ACA agrees with the City of Whittlesea council² that:

- Construction of the Hume Freeway ramps would relieve the congested Hume Freeway/ Cooper Street interchange and accommodate the imminent traffic growth resulting from the opening of the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit Vegetable and Flower Market in 2014.
- The Edgars Road extension would provide access to the employment area for the 45,000 people living in Epping North and Epping Central. The extension would also relieve congestion on High Street/ Epping Road and further dissipate traffic funnelled into the Hume Freeway/ Cooper Street interchange.
- The Edgars Road extension will ease current traffic congestion and prevent a massive increase in dangerous and frustrating traffic conditions for local residents.
- Roadwork will cause less inconvenience if Edgars Road is completed before the market opens.
- Currently, Edgars Road ends at Cooper Street and then starts again in the VicUrban/ Places Victoria 'Aurora' residential development in the northern part of Epping North. As a result, nearly 3,000 Epping North residents are forced onto the already congested Epping Road-High Street each day.
- Completing the entire 1.6km section of Edgars Road from Cooper Street to O'Herns Road will create the following benefits:
 - provide easier access to the Northern Hospital and the nearby medical precinct,
 - create safer road conditions on Epping Road by cutting traffic volumes

¹ See page 4 of Hansard website http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/daily-hansard/Assembly_Jul-Dec_2012_Daily_13_December_2012.pdf. Note Hansard gives 491 signatures for this petition compared to an ACA count of 581. There is also an internet version of this petition at website <http://www.communityrun.org/petitions/fund-oherns-rd-hume-freeway-interchange-in-epping-north-now> which counts at least 283 signatures, many of which also feature in the Hansard petition.

² See websites <http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/your-council/advocacy/our-top-10-advocacy-priorities#hume> and <http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/building-planning-and-transport/roads-and-transport/future-transport-needs/complete-edgars-road-from-cooper-street-to-oherns-road>

- create better road links with community services in Epping and Thomastown,
- allow for the immediate creation of an alternative and efficient north-south bus route, further cutting congestion on Epping Road and High Street,
- support greater local economic activity in the Cooper Street Employment Area, which includes the Wholesale Fruit Vegetable and Flower Market,
- allow for improved local public transport access.

The City of Whittlesea Council estimates the cost of the Hume Freeway interchange project to be \$110 million. The Council notes³:

- The Federal Government has indicated its support for a shared funding arrangement to fund two thirds in a funding partnership with the State Government.
- The State Government contribution could be further offset by our Development Contribution of \$7.5m. The State's contribution could potentially be under \$29m for a \$110m capital return and a significant ongoing sustainable economic return.

Council⁴ estimates the cost of completing Edgars Road (as a 4-lane divided road from Cooper Street to O'Herns Road) to be \$24m, including \$3m for land acquisition. One developer has agreed to build or fund part of one carriageway for this project.

As a result of these missing road links, nearly 3,000 Epping North/ Wollert residents are forced onto the already congested Epping Road-High Street or Miller Street each day in order to get onto Cooper Street and the Hume Freeway. The affected section of Epping Road-High Street, immediately south of O'Herns Road, is a 2-lane, rural-standard road (with open drains and poor shoulders) which carries around 13,000 to 17,000 vehicles daily, significantly more than its intended capacity.

A great deal of costly time-wasting in morning and afternoon peak hour traffic on Epping Road-High Street and Miller Street in Epping could be avoided if vehicles could enter the Hume Freeway from O'Herns Road rather than from Cooper Street. Miller Street was not initially designed as a main thoroughfare road and the congestion that has resulted from its extension to O'Herns Road has no doubt adversely affected established businesses in Miller Street and in the minor streets connecting to Miller Street.

For several years the growing Epping North/ Wollert area has experienced worsening road congestion which is increasingly time-wasting and costly. Time lost from road congestion is also becoming a more serious health issue. A 2011 survey of over 25,000 participants from Victoria's 79 Local Government Areas has found that such lost time can mean there is insufficient time for proper meals, sleep, exercise and socialising.⁵ These health consequences are potentially very serious with time pressure leading to the stress of being harried, discouraging collective or public activities and fracturing families and friendships. Local road construction involving the Hume Freeway Interchange and Edgars Road is likely to significantly improve the health of local residents as well as the current situation of insufficient additional and upgraded main roads to match population growth.

³ See website <http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/your-council/advocacy/our-top-10-advocacy-priorities#hume>

⁴ See website <http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/building-planning-and-transport/roads-and-transport/future-transport-needs/complete-edgars-road-from-cooper-street-to-oherns-road>

⁵ See article "Time: A social determinant of health" in TIME_Conference-Posters-A3-WEB.pdf from www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

The transport improvements requested in this submission are seen as vital to the development of the Epping Central and Cooper Street employment areas. These areas have potential for considerable expansion which would enable a sizable increase in the employment of local residents. Such residents would then be less likely to contribute to road congestion elsewhere because of a reduced distance from work. The financial and health benefits from such reduced travel times, even for those with longer distances from work, would make Epping North/ Wollert and surrounding areas much more liveable and consequently more attractive to new home buyers.

The Council is aware of potential Epping employers unfortunately being turned off by the “lack of access infrastructure for freight movements and workforce availability”.⁶ This does not fit in with a proposal from the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development for Epping to be one of 20 principal activity areas in Melbourne (Coburg, Preston and Werribee are also included). Activity areas are meant to have an “important role to play as a focus for community activity, services and investment”.⁷ More government attention and investment is needed for this to happen with Epping. At the highest level for activity areas are the Central Activities Areas which number seven and which include Broadmeadows. Epping has the space for a lot more business growth and may have the potential to be a worthy addition to the Central Activities Areas.

The absence of additional road construction to deal with the congested Hume Freeway/ Cooper Street interchange is a major threat to the future of the nearby Melbourne Wholesale Fruit Vegetable and Flower Market which opens in 2014. This market is being relocated from its current site in Footscray Road. The market has an annual turnover in excess of \$1.6 million.⁸ The projected cost of the market relocation has been estimated at around \$600 million. Obstacles causing delays in the relocation have been overcome. A huge amount of time, effort and money has been put into the relocation of Melbourne Wholesale Fruit Vegetable and Flower Market to Epping. The relatively not-so-huge additional investment for the Hume Freeway interchange/ Edgars Rd extension would add substantially to the chances of the market relocation succeeding.

The Aurora Community Association urges the Commonwealth Government and the Victorian State Government in the 2013/ 2014 budgets to seriously consider and act on the case for connecting a duplicated O'Herns Road to the Hume Freeway in Epping, Melbourne and for extending Edgars Road north to O'Herns Road.

⁶ See website <http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/your-council/advocacy/our-top-10-advocacy-priorities#hume>

⁷ See website <http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning/plansandpolicies/activitiesareas/overview>

⁸ See website <http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/publications/20120314-Melbourne-Markets/20120314-Melbourne-Markets.pdf> , pp. vii-xi.