

## BAG SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO PROPOSAL FOR SAFETY UPGRADE OF GREAT WESTERN HIGHWAY THROUGH BLACKHEATH - February 2016

Thank you for meeting with myself and representatives from various Blackheath community groups on Wednesday 10 February 2016 at Blackheath.

Thank you also for taking the time out to meet with Adele Colman, Wayne Kelly and I last Tuesday night. Thank you for also allowing a local highway resident to contribute in relation to the Evans Lookout Road section of the proposed highway safety works. We all found the meeting very productive and helpful.

Given your comments about the importance of our feedback, it has taken longer than anticipated to prepare this submission.

We formally request that we continue to be consulted and involved in this project including the final design phases. We also formally request to be consulted and included in the formulation of the landscape plan for this project.

Moving forward the key issues we want to raise in relation to the proposed highway safety works following the February 2016 Update are as follows:

- 1) The primary issue concerning the local community is the perception that the proposed highway safety works as put forward by RMS will speed the highway traffic up through the town precinct rather than slowing it down. The town precinct is an important tourism attraction, it is the last town in the Blue Mountains to retain its original character. The Blackheath community, through the community groups noted below, is very concerned about the lack of measures within the proposed highway safety works to address speed. As mentioned on several occasions and in prior joint submissions the community wants a safety camera to be installed at the intersection of the Great Western Highway and Govetts Leap Road and Bundarra Street to address speed and the running of red lights, especially by heavy vehicles at night. We note that Bundarra Street crosses the Western Railway and that the level crossing signals are in close proximity to the highway intersection. Given the heightened safety risks of having a significant level crossing in close proximity to the major highway intersection in Blackheath we strongly believe there are grounds within this project, given its safety focus, to depart from the RMS protocols for the installation of safety cameras and provide a safety camera as part of the intersection treatment at this intersection.

The community has also expressed strong views that the highway safety works must include physical and visual speed calming measures including blisters around the school zone and narrow rather than wide shoulders to slow the traffic down along the highway through the town precinct. In essence and as you correctly pointed out the focus of this project should be 'safety and not capacity'. Views expressed by officers of Blue Mountains City Council that the proposed highway

safety works should increase capacity are not supported by the Blackheath community. The retention of the town amenity whilst improving safety for local residents and tourists must continue to be the foundation of this project.

2) The significant vegetation along the highway corridor through the town of Blackheath, especially the corridor of oak and plane trees are vital to the amenity and village feel of Blackheath as well as its ongoing economic prosperity. Tourism is the key economic driver for Blackheath and it is vital that the highway corridor through the town precinct continues to retain its charm and attraction to visitors both domestic and international. Local business relies on visitors wanting to stop and stay in Blackheath and a key part of that is the visual appeal of the town with its tree lined highway and parks. Therefore any plans to remove some trees along the highway corridor raises, as you would understand, strong reactions from our local community. We therefore formally request that the RMS reexamine its proposals with the view to further reduce the number of trees that are proposed to be removed along the highway through the town of Blackheath as part of this project.

2.1) Given the community's views on speed and the need for physical and visual speed calming measures along the highway through the town precinct (from Evans Lookout Road to Mount Boyce) we believe there is no need to realign the highway between Evans Lookout Road and Hargreaves Street. Instead the current alignment should be retained. This would allow for the corridor of trees along the eastern side on this section of the highway to be retained. This is a request from local residents, many of whom reside along this section of the highway. The Blackheath community as a whole also strongly supports the retention of trees along the eastern side on this section of the highway. Further, we also believe there should not be a right turn bay into Hargreaves Street. Whilst we support a right turn bay into Sutton Park, we don't believe a seagull intersection treatment, as proposed by Blue Mountains City Council, is necessary given the focus of this project is safety not capacity.

2.2) The possible removal of trees along the western side on the section of highway around the intersection of the Great Western Highway and Abbott Street will have a significant visual impact as you enter the Blackheath town precinct along the highway from Katoomba. As discussed we propose, with the support of RMS, that the existing power lines along this section of the highway be put underground to allow for sufficient space to enable the replanting of trees of the same size and species as the ones to be removed. As noted this is very important because of the significant visual impact arising from the loss of trees as proposed along this section of the highway. Alternatively, another option, though not the community's preferred option, is for the power lines to be relocated to the western side of the lane fronting the St Mounts Guest House. This may allow some room for the replanting of trees of the same size and species along this section of the highway following the completion of the proposed intersection treatment at Abbott Street. However both options require the replanting of substantial mature trees, to

minimise the visual impact. We note that the Blackheath Streetscape Group has offered to assist, including providing initial maintenance such as watering and fertilizing of newly planted trees.

2.3) As discussed with you the tree on the corner of the Great Western Highway and Bundarra Street is an important symbolic landmark for the town centre precinct of Blackheath. We request the RMS review its design proposals for this intersection with a view to retaining this tree. We also request the RMS consider whether the east bound right turn bay is required into Bundarra Street given the visual impact of the loss of this tree and that there is a right turn bay into the railway overpass for eastbound traffic to access the western side of the highway on approach from Mount Victoria.

3) The loss of eight on street parking spaces along the westbound side of the highway in the shopping precinct is a major concern for both local residents and business owners alike. As discussed we propose, with the support of RMS, that a portion of funding from this project be redirected towards the expansion of the Blackheath Station commuter carpark. We believe providing more commuter parking at Blackheath Station will free up on street parking around the Blackheath Community Centre along Gardiner Crescent, thereby providing more parking for tourists, local residents and business owners close to the town shopping precinct. Representatives from the Blackheath Community Alliance, an umbrella group representing the groups noted below, have had discussions with Blue Mountains City Council, and both the Federal and State members of Parliament on this issue. Both the Federal and State Members of Parliament have indicated their support. We are awaiting a meeting with both the Mayor of Blue Mountains City Council and Ward 1 Councillors to also gain their support.

4) We also request RMS consider pedestrians and look into the provision of more footpaths along the highway, particularly between Ridgewell Road and Radiance Avenue. RMS should also consider pedestrian access for school children who utilise the bus stop near the Station Street railway overpass.

5) The community continues to advocate for a designated bike track near the railway corridor between Blackheath and Mount Victoria. We request your support in working with both the Federal and State Members of Parliament and Blue Mountains City Council to advocate for Sydney Trains to work with all parties to progress this issue. The community has strong concerns for pedestrian and bike rider safety in relation to the alternative route proposed by Blue Mountains City Council between Blackheath and Mount Victoria. The economic, social and environmental benefits of a bike track linking Blackheath and Mount Victoria means that all parties should work together to obtain the best outcome in terms of pedestrian and bike rider safety.

The issues raised above have been discussed and agreed upon by the following local community groups:

Blackheath Community Centre Hall Committee  
Blackheath Highway Action Group  
Blackheath & District Chamber of Commerce  
Blackheath Public School P & C  
Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre  
Blackheath Mt Victoria RSL Sub Branch  
Blackheath Scouts  
Blackheath Streetscape Group  
Blackheath & District Horticultural Society  
Friends of Blackheath Pool & Memorial Park  
Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society

A copy of this submission will also be sent to Blue Mountains City Council Ward 1 Councillors, the State Member for Blue Mountains and the Federal Member for Macquarie.

Kind regards,  
Michael Paag  
Chair - Blackheath Highway Action Group