Metro Rail Tunnel:-
The Kensington Perspective

The construction of the 11 km Metro Rail tunnel running from South Kensington to South Yarra via the CBD is an important infrastructure initiative that should significantly improve rail services in and around the Melbourne CBD.

For the residents of Kensington, the project has limited direct benefit (given the new lines will not be accessible from South Kensington Station). We hope there will be better local train services but only time will tell.

What Kensington will get (guaranteed) is an extended period of disruption as the Western Portal (tunnel entrance) will be constructed adjacent to South Kensington station and JJ Holland Park with works extending over the next 5 years.

What are the issues?

1. The project will see new tracks descend from the current track (near the corner of Kensington Rd and Childers St) into the tunnel. This will necessitate extensive construction and excavation, new tracks, a retaining/flood wall of up to 6 metres height, relocated (and much larger) High Voltage towers and a large 3 storey bunker-like ancillary building.
   Little consideration has been given to how construction by-products like noise, dust and vibration are controlled and visual amenity protected for locals.

2. JJ Holland Park was formerly known as Seagull Swamp and was a refuse dump before being covered with clean fill and converted to a park. Under the topsoil, the park contains a witch’s brew of toxic heavy metals and chemicals (including arsenic, asbestos and lead) along with general waste that can emit methane and other noxious gases. While covered, the park is safe, but the tunnel will require extensive excavation, fill storage and transportation (somewhere in excess of 17,000 cubic metres or 1,500 semi-trailer loads) of this potentially toxic dirt through the suburb. If not handled correctly this poses a tangible threat to our community and again appears not to have been considered by authorities.

3. Construction works will also have profound impact on traffic and parking in the neighbourhood:
   • Extensive closures of Childers St will force the rerouting of many large trucks (accessing both the Lloyd Street Business Estate and the construction site) onto local streets.
   • Likewise, rat-runners (typically 300+ vehicles between 7 am and 9 am) will be denied access to Childers St and will have to reroute through other parts of the suburb.
   • JJ Holland Park serves literally hundreds of recreational and sporting families who use its facilities. The works will greatly reduce parking used by these families, forcing more parking pressure into adjoining areas and compromising safe access to the park.

   These changes will inevitably also impact on access to the Venny Adventure Playground, the Kensington Childcare Cooperative and the Kensington Community Centre. While authorities have produced a traffic plan, there has been no meaningful public consultation on the plan and authorities have refused to release it to the community.

4. There are multiple entities involved in the project:
   • the Minister for Major Projects and Public Transport - Jacinta Allan
   • the Minister for Planning – Richard Wynne
the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority (MMRA) now Rail Projects Victoria (RPV) – the government authority charged with delivering the project
the Cross Yarra Partnership (CYP) – the contractor engaged to dig tunnels and construct stations
the Rail Infrastructure Alliance (RIA) – the group of contractors who will be charged with rail and associated works outside of tunnel and station construction.

Their one shared skill appears to be avoiding responsibility for concerns raised by the community and reducing meaningful discussion about issues through the utilisation of an army of spin-doctors they call “stakeholder managers”.

What does the community want?

As supporters of the Metro Rail Project we acknowledge that some inconvenience to our community is inevitable with such a major infrastructure project. That said, the price we pay should limit loss of amenity and not include endangering our children or compromising the safety of our neighbourhood and community.

Our requests to the state government are simple to explain and simple to implement.

We seek:

1. A site management plan that ensures hazards are controlled, community amenity protected (eg from noise, dust and vibrations) and safe access to the park, the many facilities and services located there, and South Kensington station, is guaranteed
2. A traffic management plan that considers not only the construction zone, but also impact on the whole of Kensington, including access to the Lloyd Street Business Estate.
3. An integrated design for the works that ensures visual pollution is minimised and ongoing enjoyment of the park guaranteed.
4. At the end of the project, all affected areas are remediated, and the South Kensington Station upgraded from its current deplorable state.
5. A single forum for negotiation, coordination and decision making to achieve the above goals, bringing together the community, the City of Melbourne, the state government and the multiple contractors.

The Metro Rail Tunnel is a worthy project that enjoys our support, but not at the cost of our children’s safety and the amenity of the community. The Kensington Community calls upon the state government to work with local stakeholders and City of Melbourne to give life to these simple requests.

We encourage the Kensington community to get involved

To address these issues, we have an active sub-committee and an ongoing campaign to protect our community and amenity. If you have a question, a suggestion or would like to know how you can get more involved in the campaign, contact us at KensingtonMetroTunnel@gmail.com

For more information see:

• http://metrotunnel.vic.gov.au/
• www.kensingtonassociation.org.au and www.facebook.com/kensingtonassociation

Authorised by the Kensington Association Inc. 26 June 2018