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## **Response to Doncaster Rail Study**

The Carlton Residents Association (CRA) has been closely involved with Melbourne's transport policies for decades. We have contributed to many State Government and City of Melbourne transport plans and have regularly lobbied for a rail line to Doncaster as a long-term solution to road traffic congestion north of the CBD. Doncaster Rail has been on the transport agenda since 1890.

We are shocked and dismayed with Doncaster Rail Study, Phase 1, outcomes. This \$6.5 million Study, funded by the State Government, proposes an excessively costly (around \$5 billion) rail line which critically relies on costly future enhancements of the existing rail network. An impractical rail route (Doncaster park & ride carpark to Collingwood Station) is proposed which fails to service major population centres in the Doncaster area. It is a project designed to fail.

The Doncaster Rail Study is in stark negative contrast to the 2012 proposal of the Doncaster Local Government Group which identified a much more extensive and practical plan for Doncaster Rail at a fraction of the cost (\$1.3 billion) than now envisaged by the current Study. Recent experience in Perth, with virtually identical rail projects, confirms that a cost-effective Doncaster Rail project could proceed immediately given the political will. This extensive interstate rail experience has been largely ignored by the Study Team.

State Government's roads-centric transport policy has prioritised Stage 1 (\$8 billion) of the \$15 billion East West Toll Road for immediate construction. This 'sovereign' decision has undermined urgent, essential and viable public transport projects such as Doncaster Rail. The myth that somehow the E-W Toll Road will 'unblock' the Eastern Freeway now overwhelms rational debate on transport funding priorities. Pre-election promises in 2010 to prioritise public transport have been abandoned.

It is vital that a Phase 2 assessment of Doncaster Rail be urgently undertaken, with broad consultation involving rail experts from Perth and o'seas. It is not good enough to sideline Doncaster Rail as too costly and too difficult. What is required is will and enthusiasm from the Study Team and the State Government to build the long-delayed Doncaster Rail project. The project must not be overwhelmed by the powerful roads and infrastructure lobby demands for the E-W Toll Road.

Ian Bird

Traffic & Transport Spokesperson

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