

18 March 2016

Level Crossing Removal Authority
GPO Box 4509
MELBOURNE VIC 3001



Submission by:

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

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To whom it may concern,

RE: Level Crossing Removal Project: Caulfield to Dandenong

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) Victorian Chapter provides the following submission to ensure that the **Level Crossing Removal Project: Caulfield to Dandenong** delivers a positive legacy for our city.

AILA is the peak body for the landscape architecture profession in Australia. Representing over 2500 members, we champion a landscape of livability, quality design for our streetscapes and public open spaces, stronger communities, and greater environmental stewardship. Our members include both Landscape Architects and Urban Designers, who are experienced in the design and delivery of major infrastructure projects.

AILA advocates for contextually responsive solutions and integrated outcomes in major infrastructure projects. Based on the information available, AILA sees good potential in an elevated solution for the Caulfield to Dandenong Level Crossing Removal Project where valuable green public spaces of high amenity and quality can be provided in the right locations for communities. Improved and new connections along the rail corridor for cyclists and walkers and increased permeability at grade between neighbourhoods could potentially deliver positive and transformational benefits if delivered to a high quality and maintained to a high standard.

We understand that '11 MCGs' of public open space will be delivered as part of this project. To deliver this quantum of public space to an appropriately high standard, (comprising approximately 70% green/soft landscaping and 30% urban/hard landscaping), we estimate that this equates to a minimum commitment by the Consortia of \$70-\$120 million. We encourage the Level Crossing Removal Authority (Authority) to secure this commitment and 'ring-fence' this amount for the delivery of the open spaces.

AILA advocates for 'quality over quantity' in the delivery of a range of public space typologies that respond to the needs of each particular area and contribute to a broader network of open space. We encourage discussion with the Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA) who has undertaken a comprehensive open space strategy for Melbourne to inform need.

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In addition, there needs to be a long-term commitment for maintenance of the public space assets. Considering the potential impact of rate-capping of Councils (which will impact on available funds for maintenance), we advocate for an innovative State-led solution that commits to the required higher levels of maintenance during the landscape establishment phases, followed by a sustainable regime that protects the valuable public space asset for community use into the future. AILA seeks a firm commitment from the Authority to put in place an exemplar maintenance regime. We support strong community engagement to engender a sense of ownership as one part of this multi-faceted, detailed plan. Our membership has considerable expertise in both the design and maintenance of public open space and would be happy to contribute our skills and expertise.

We are pleased that a strong multi-disciplinary team has been assembled in the procurement process for this project and design quality has been assessed throughout to determine the preferred solution. Maintaining this commitment will be critical to ensuring the project uplifts our public realm and delivers long-term social and economic benefit. However, AILA is concerned that the project has the potential to exacerbate urban blight and irrevocably damage neighbourhoods if design quality and maintenance is compromised. We urge the Authority to establish a process of quality control, including independent expert design review, to ensure the quality that is aspired to is delivered.

We understand that there are three elevated sections of rail to enable the level crossing removals. We seek further clarification regarding the transitional areas where the rail rises from existing ground levels to the elevated track. These transitional areas will have a significant impact on the neighbourhood landscape and may not fully realise their potential benefit for usable open space. We also highlight that the usefulness and quality of space below the elevated structure will be affected if its height above existing ground level is not adjusted in response to variations in topography. If track levels are determined solely in relation to minimum clearances at road crossings, and if these are at relatively low points in the wider landscape, the undercroft spaces in intermediate areas could be useless and unpleasant.

In addition, AILA strongly urges the Authority to consider the following in more detail:

- We encourage the authority to look at innovative ways to introduce activity beneath the elevated rail. This could include built form outcomes such as community facilities, retail, sporting facilities, and working hubs. There are many examples of where the arches or undercrofts of viaducts have been well utilised and contribute to much safer adjacent open spaces and streets.
- Multi-disciplinary design input is required for the elevated structure, to ensure a contemporary, elegant solution that minimises visual bulk. In particular, the integration of columns is critical to maintaining a positive ground level experience, and to not undermine the potential of significant tree planting throughout the proposed public spaces.
- We note that the structure is to be future-proofed to allow for third and fourth tracks and that these tracks would not be infilled in the centre to preserve access for natural light and rain. The open spaces to the sides must be similarly future-proofed to preserve amenity under different solar access conditions, particularly in regard to any tree canopy that is to be established.
- AILA supports the Authority's commitment to community consultation in regard to what form the open spaces should take to engender a sense of community pride and ownership. We urge the Authority to commit to realistic consultation timescales and an expert process to define a true and detailed brief that will inform the design of these public spaces. The type, quality, and maintainability of the open spaces are critical to the long-term success of the project. Qualified landscape architects and urban designers must be engaged at all times to provide critical rigor to this process.

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- We are concerned by the suggestion that the number of car parks will be determined following community feedback. This may lead to the design and construction of large tracts of at-grade parking areas that exceed genuine community need and discourage the development and use of more sustainable transport connections.
- Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles need to be rigorously applied.
- We encourage the Authority to adopt world's best practice in integrated noise amelioration for affected communities.

We look forward to your response to this submission and engagement with our expert members in support of the design, management and review of this legacy project for Victoria. Should you wish to discuss or would like to arrange a time to meet please contact Felicity McGahan, AILA Victorian State Manager, on 0401 811 976.

Yours sincerely,

Felicity McGahan
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