

HELP SAVE FOOTSCRAY FROM RAIL NOISE NIGHTMARE

A SECRET 2010 REPORT predicts a massive noise increase in Footscray from the Regional Rail development.

(see over for story in The Sunday Age, February 6, 2011)

The State Government of Victoria – unlike neighbouring states – has **no noise standards** to protect us from this. We support improved train services for the west. But it is not fair to ask Footscray to pay for this through polluted air, sleepless nights and intolerable days. It is entirely possible to have better trains AND a thriving, healthy community.

This is the **most expensive rail project in Australia's history** and is paid for by every one of us. Yet the secret report reveals the most basic steps have not been followed to protect Footscray. It is time for us to stand up. Victorians must not allow the **future health and liveability of Footscray** to be the huge underlying cost of this secretive project.

PUBLIC MEETING

When: 7pm Wednesday 20 April

Where: Senior Citizens Centre,
130 Buckley Street, Footscray

Who: Anyone concerned about noise & air pollution from the planned trainline. The EPA says people up to 500 metres from the track may be affected.

Why: To help plan activities to persuade the government to introduce noise standards of a sufficient scale to protect the future of Footscray.

QUESTION THE COUNCIL

When: 7pm Tuesday 19 April

Where: Footscray Town Hall,
corner Napier and Hyde streets,
Footscray

Who: *Fair-go for Footscray Rail Residents* will be asking questions of the Council to see what support it will provide to protect its community.

Why: Show your concern by coming along to listen and/or ask a question.

RESIDENTS FACE LOST SLEEP OVER RAIL PROJECT

Deborah Gough and Melissa Fyfe
The Sunday Age, February 6, 2011

HUNDREDS of residents in Melbourne's western suburbs face "chronic" sleep disturbance from noise pollution generated by the \$4.3 billion Regional Rail Link, the state's environmental watchdog has warned in unreleased reports commissioned by the former Labor government.

Accusing Labor of a "scandalous cover-up", the Coalition yesterday vowed to investigate fully the project's environmental and health impacts.

The Environment Protection Authority reports, which came to the government's attention after a Sunday Age freedom-of-information request, predict "significant adverse community reaction" to the sleep interference.

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The revelations will increase pressure on the future of the nation's most expensive rail project, with the Baillieu government last week warning of an additional \$880 million blowout in hidden costs and the federal government seeking to divert funds to the Queensland floods reconstruction.

The reports, which warned of "very significant environmental and health impacts", were seen by former planning minister Justin Madden in September last year, but he approved the project with no independent study into its impacts.

Mr Madden ordered an extra assessment and options to mitigate the noise, but residents were not told how much noisier the new rail line is likely to be.

"In Footscray, for the most exposed residents, a vast majority of the population will experience chronic noise-induced sleep disturbance, with very significant proportions 'highly disturbed'," the EPA report said. "For the most exposed residents in other areas, almost half the community will experience chronic noise-induced sleep disturbance."

The regional rail link will separate city trains from lines running to Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo and provide services to new suburban growth areas.

One of the EPA reports raised concerns about the Footscray park Railway Reserve, which, the consultants predicted, would be regularly affected by dangerous levels of nitrogen dioxide from the expanded rail line. The EPA said a planned risk assessment had not been done and nitrogen dioxide was known to affect human health, particularly that of children, the elderly and people with asthma.

The Baillieu government is investigating the "timing, funding and implementation" of the project, funded by the state and federal governments.

"Potential health and environment issues that have been uncovered will also now be fully investigated," a state government spokesman said. "These previously secret documents reveal the Brumby Labor government had full knowledge of potentially significant health and environmental impacts on residents of the western suburbs and covered up the potential dangers."

Opposition spokeswoman Emma Tyner said Labor ordered the Regional Rail Link Authority, which is answerable to the department, to explore a range of noise mitigation options to get the best result for the community in the western suburbs. Ms Tyner said the government wanted to dump the project. "Their plan to scrap the project is nothing more than a transparent attempt to find money to fund their uncosted election promises."

Besides Footscray, the other suburbs affected by noise are likely to be South Kensington, Sunshine, Deer Park, Ardeer and Tottenham. The main source of the noise increase is likely to come from longer carriages and increases in trains passing, particularly regional diesel-powered trains. The EPA suggests night services will rise nearly tenfold.

"The noise levels are expected to significantly to extremely exceed the criteria set in other jurisdictions, including New South Wales," its report said.