

Calder Highway

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As part of my electorate's ongoing campaign to procure funding from the federal government for urgently needed upgrading to sections of the Calder Highway, I want to present a further petition from 572 petitioners calling on the government to address this very pressing issue.

With the petition I seek to table today and the one that I tabled during budget week, we have a total of 1,064 petitioners—and there are lots more coming. My constituents will not let this issue rest until the federal government takes the action necessary to restore safety and efficiency to the Calder Highway.

As I have mentioned before in this place, the Calder Highway, which services the people of Sunbury, is a major regional highway that serves as a major freight route and a commuter route into the city. As a regional highway, it is vital to the regional development. However, its increasing use has put pressure on commuters because it has become seriously congested, therefore dangerous, between the intersections of Kings Road, Sunshine Avenue and Calder Park Drive. There have been a record number of serious traffic accidents, which have resulted in deaths, injuries and endless delays for motorists trying to go about their daily lives and business.

My constituents, particularly the many thousands who use the road on a daily basis, are concerned about this dangerous road. I have received many letters, but I seek leave to table one in particular, from Mrs Nola Hamilton from Sunbury, who has asked me to bring her case to the attention of this chamber. I will read Nola's letter:

In 36 years I have lost three family members: my brother in 1970 aged 20, my father in 1973 aged 44, and my sister in 1999 aged 46, all due to car accidents in roads in Victoria. Is this a good enough reason for fixing the Calder Highway mess? I am now raising my sister's children with my own. I dread Monday to Friday every week when my daughter drives the Calder and turns down Sunshine Avenue to her teaching position in Keilor. Please present this letter with your petition.

Mrs Nola Hamilton.

Nola's story is heartbreaking because of the precious lives that were lost and cannot be replaced and the devastation that road deaths cause to those left behind who have to live with the consequences of these tragedies. It is unacceptable that motorists who use the Calder continue to risk their lives by driving on dilapidated, dangerous and overcrowded roads.

Calder was formally declared a road of national significance more than four years ago, which means that it is the joint responsibility of the state and federal governments. The Victorian government has recognised the vital importance of these road improvements and has agreed to shoulder half the costs of fixing the Calder. The Victorian government's \$40 million is already on the table. It now requires the federal government to provide the remaining half so that these urgent repairs can be made.

Large signs erected along the Calder Highway warning people that they are travelling in high accident zones acknowledge that there is a serious problem, but it is by no means a satisfactory or sufficient way of fixing it. We need to have these upgrades done as a matter of urgency. The federal government must commit to road improvements that will in fact save lives. Until such time as these works are funded—and therefore allowed to proceed—the people in my electorate will continue to petition the government. In the strongest possible terms, I call on the federal government to act on my constituents' petitions.

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