



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

**Higgins Electorate: Level Crossings**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 10 September 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Thursday, 10 September 2015  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** O'Dwyer, Kelly, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Ms O'DWYER** (Higgins—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (10:15): In 2012 I first spoke in this House about an issue of serious concern to my constituents—the regular and disruptive closure of level crossings throughout my electorate. The congestion caused by these closures affects daily life, impacting upon where residents shop, where children go to school and how long it takes to get to work. Whilst the Koornang Road level crossing in Carnegie is one of the worst, it is not just in Carnegie where the impacts of level crossings are felt; it is also in Murrumbeena, Glen Iris, Malvern, Kooyong and Toorak.

In 2013 I tabled a petition in this House, signed by over 1,000 of my constituents, calling for action on the Carnegie and Murrumbeena level crossings. I was delighted when, after a number of meetings with the then transport minister, the then Victorian coalition government agreed with me and committed \$2.5 billion to upgrade the entire Dandenong rail line, which included removing nine level crossings and rebuilding both Carnegie and Murrumbeena stations. The Victorian coalition government funded this in their 2014 budget, and work had been scheduled to begin this year to be completed by 2018.

However, in their very first budget earlier this year, on page 23 of Budget Paper No. 4, Labor explicitly cancelled the Dandenong rail line project. Not only is it deeply concerning that this vital \$2.5 billion project has been cancelled but Labor's claim that they have a replacement program to remove level crossings all over the state does not stand up to scrutiny.

Page 17 of Budget Paper No. 4 states that Labor's alleged level crossing removal program is estimated to cost \$6 billion, but in the exact same line Labor has only budgeted \$3 million for the program—\$3 million is an incredibly long way short of \$6 billion. It is less than one per cent of the \$6 billion. And you certainly cannot remove even one level crossing for \$3 million. For a party that cannot manage a budget on their best day, this is simply incredible and defies credibility. With such an obvious funding shortfall, there is a real uncertainty about delivering the project in full, let alone by 2016 as the Victorian Labor government claims.

But even in the face of his own government's budget papers, the state Labor member for Oakleigh continues to claim that Labor will remove level crossings. The state Labor member for Oakleigh promised the removal of level crossings in Carnegie and Murrumbeena during last year's state election campaign. Instead of continuing to pretend that the removal of level crossings in Carnegie and Murrumbeena are going ahead, he should come clean about what his own government's budget papers really say and he should stand up for his community.

It is clear that without funding, these level crossings, or any other level crossings, cannot be removed. Instead of the \$2.5 billion Dandenong rail line project funded and scheduled to start this year by the former coalition state government, residents in Carnegie and Murrumbeena have a Labor government and a Labor state member who cannot say exactly what they will do, how their new plan will be funded and are not sure when it will start, let alone finish.

We have seen that Victoria is coming to a complete standstill under its state Labor government. The Carnegie and Murrumbeena level crossings are ranked in Victoria's top 10 worst congestion spots according to the RACV Redspot survey. Instead of delays, our community needs action on these level crossings right now.