



## Department of Transport

GPO Box 2392  
Melbourne, VIC 3001 Australia  
Telephone: +61 3 9651 9999  
[www.transport.vic.gov.au](http://www.transport.vic.gov.au)  
DX 210292

Ms Melissa Lancuba  
Media & Communications Adviser  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

Dear Ms Lancuba

### **INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEATH OF Berniece Edna Northover – COR 2019 1003**

I note your correspondence of 26 March 2021 and the findings and recommendations of Coroner Bracken made on 29 June 2020 arising from the inquest into the death of Mrs Berniece Edna Northover. The Department of Transport (DOT) takes this opportunity to express condolences to the family and friends of Mrs Northover for their loss.

Pursuant to Section 72(2) of the Coroners Act 2008 (Vic), DOT has prepared this submission to provide the Court a written response to the recommendations made in the State Coroner's report into the death of Mrs Northover. On behalf of DOT, I apologise for the lateness of this reply as the recommendations have only recently come to my attention. I provide the following responses to each of the two recommendations on behalf of DOT.

#### **The Coroner's first recommendation is:**

**VicRoads immediately install 'road infrastructure' at the intersection of Wellington and Berwick Roads Narre Warren so as to substantially increase the safety of that intersection for all road users.**

#### **The Coroner's recommendation will be implemented.**

DoT acknowledges the safety concerns at this intersection. Treatments that can be implemented within a short timeframe are currently being investigated and developed by DoT as a matter of priority. Currently, DoT is considering a lowered speed limit of 60km/h and additional warning signage on Wellington Road. These measures are expected to reduce the severity and likelihood of collisions, while DoT advocates for funding for a longer-term treatment to address the crash history and safety concerns.

#### **The Coroner's second recommendation is:**

**VicRoads immediately undertake an urgent comprehensive assessment of the condition, design and function of the intersection of Wellington Road and Berwick Road, Narre Warren East with a view to urgently making changes to increase its safety for all road users. I further recommend that as soon as practicable VicRoads implement the findings of the review and that the measures put in place as a result of**

**recommendation number 1 remain in place until the findings of the review are implemented.**

**The Coroner's recommendation will be implemented.**

DoT are currently undertaking a comprehensive assessment of the condition, design and function of the intersection. The primary findings of this assessment thus far are as follows:

- There is competing demand for various movements from all approaches at the intersection, and this may be contributing to motorists taking unsafe gaps through oncoming traffic;
- The vertical alignment of Wellington Road results in poor forward visibility eastbound on Wellington Road and poor sightlines from Berwick Road. Sight restrictions negatively impact motorists' ability to safely accept gaps in the westbound traffic stream;
- High vehicle approach speeds on Wellington Road is increasing the severity of collisions, with 85% of traffic travelling up to 90km/h (10km/h above the posted speed limit);
- Traffic volumes are anticipated to experience growth in the coming years, which is likely to exacerbate existing safety concerns; and
- There have been 25 crashes at the intersection between July 2014 and September 2019. This analysis shows a clear trend of collisions between motorists turning right from Wellington Road (west approach) and westbound vehicles on Wellington Road.

The 2019 Commonwealth Budget allocated \$110m for the upgrade of Wellington Road. Major Road Projects Victoria is working with the Commonwealth Department to determine the scope of this project, which encompasses this intersection. DoT is currently investigating the signalisation of the intersection.

DOT trusts that the information provided is of assistance to the Coroner and would be pleased to answer any further questions regarding this matter. Should you require further information please contact me on 9881 8800.

Yours sincerely



**VINCE PUNARO**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
METRO SOUTH EAST REGION, SOUTH EAST METRO SURFACE TRANSPORT

30/ 03/ 2021