

Media Release

Mt Victoria to Lithgow GWH upgrade estimated to cost nearly \$2 billion

Public transport and highway safety advocate Michael Paag said today he was shocked and stunned at the revelation the proposed upgrade of the Great Western Highway between Mt Victoria and Lithgow could cost taxpayers nearly \$2 billion.

Documents obtained by the NSW Opposition under Freedom of Information reveal the proposed upgrade of the Great Western Highway between Mt Victoria and Lithgow could cost taxpayers between \$1.7 and \$2 billion depending upon which route option is chosen.

Then candidate for Macquarie Bob Debus said on 3 October 2007 when he announced the proposed upgrade that it would cost \$450 million. The RTA has worked on a \$450 million base since commencing the community consultation process back in May 2008.

"The \$1.5 billion blowout is further evidence that the proposed upgrade should be scrapped", said Michael Paag.

"Spending nearly \$2 billion on an M4 style freeway between Mt Victoria and Lithgow that will turn the highway into a 25+ metre B-double freight corridor through the Blue Mountains will not solve transport needs of the Central West.

"The nearly 40 different speed zones, school zones, 21 sets of traffic lights and 17 villages will remain at one end and the black ice prone Forty Bends at the other.

"We don't need nearly \$2 billion to fix road safety on Victoria Pass", said Mr Paag.

The RTA's October 2008 Crash report (Mt Victoria to Lithgow) states '*Speeding is noted as a contributing factor in 49% of crashes*'.

The report also states most crashes occurred:

* *90+kmh speed zones*

* *In daylight and /or fine weather conditions*

"Installing speed cameras, safety barriers and improving drainage, lighting and signage on Victoria Pass would improve safety without the need to spend nearly \$2 billion", said Mr Paag.

"I call on the State and Federal Governments abandon the RTA's proposed \$2 billion upgrade of the Great Western Highway between Mt Victoria and Lithgow and instead undertake a safety upgrade of Victoria Pass, make the Bells Line of Road safer for motorists and invest the balance in rail," concluded Michael Paag.

Ends THURSDAY 15 APRIL 2010

Contact Michael Paag (m) 0423 596 240