



21 November 2019

Ms Angela Carey
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Re: Submission to Ballarat Safer Cycling Connections, Sturt Street Gardens

Dear Ms Carey,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above project, which aims to improve safety and promote cycling along Sturt Street between Pleasant Street and Dawson Street by modifying intersections; widening kerbs, traffic islands and pedestrian crossings; constructing new paths and installing traffic signals.

The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) (National Trust) is the state's largest community-based heritage advocacy organisation actively working towards conserving and protecting our heritage for future generations to enjoy, representing approximately 27,000 members across Victoria. As Victoria's premier heritage and conservation organisation, the National Trust has an interest in ensuring that a wide range of natural, cultural, social and Indigenous heritage values are protected and respected, contributing to strong, vibrant and prosperous communities.

This submission highlights concerns in regard to the proposed cycling path through the historic Sturt Street Gardens, including the cultural heritage impact of the proposed works and the consideration of alternate designs.

1. Cultural Heritage Impacts

Heritage is of critical importance to the Ballarat community and the city's future, as outlined in *Our People, Culture & Place: a plan to sustain Ballarat's heritage 2017-2030*, which was developed through focused consultation as part of the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) program.

As the main thoroughfare, the landscape of Sturt Street contributes to the distinct identity and heritage values of Ballarat, and is highly valued by the local community and visitors alike.

The Sturt Street Gardens are covered by a Heritage Overlay under the Ballarat Planning Scheme and have recently been nominated to the Victorian Heritage Register. When considering any changes to a significant cultural landscape such as this, it is essential that the heritage impact of any proposed works are carefully considered within this context.

We understand that Regional Roads Victoria commissioned an arborist and heritage report to inform the process, however it is unclear if a heritage consultant was engaged prior to the determination of route. If a heritage impact assessment has been completed, we request that these plans be made publically available.

2. Consideration of alternate designs

The National Trust has a strong preference for an alternate design which does not impact on the cultural landscape of the Sturt Street Gardens. We would be interested to know if any alternate designs have been considered beyond the renders that have been made publically available. We also seek clarification on why the alternative routes of Muir Street and Dana Street were considered unfeasible.

The Conservation Management Plan (2007) for the gardens states that “installing of paths to monuments through lawn areas from adjoining footpaths is not considered appropriate as it detracts from the visual appearance of the lawns and adds visual clutter”. We strongly suggest that Regional Roads Victoria consider alternate methods for safe cycling routes that do not impact on the visual appearance of the gardens.

3. Conclusion

The National Trust acknowledges the need for safety, and we appreciate the Victorian Cycling Strategy’s desire to encourage cycling as a sustainable mode of transport that improves liveability in cities like Ballarat. However, these needs must be balanced against the identified heritage values of the place. We have concerns regarding the potential high-impact nature of the works proposed in putting a bike path in the median of these historic gardens.

We request that further thought is given to alternate routes and designs in consultation with the community, and that the recommendations of an independent heritage consultant are seriously considered. We encourage Regional Roads Victoria to thoroughly explore safer cycling routes that are less intrusive on these highly valued gardens.

Should you have any questions regarding the above, please contact me on 9656 9823, or at eloise.dowd@nattrust.com.au.

Yours faithfully,



Eloise Dowd
Environmental Heritage Advocate
National Trust of Australia (Victoria)