

Save Our Station Ballarat Inc

Announcement by SOS President Gerald Jenzen

31 July 2018

Good morning,

Just over two years ago a small group of concerned residents got together to demand that the redevelopment of our historic Ballarat central rail station precinct delivers a 21st-century, all-abilities accessible transport hub, with adequate car parking, and be capable of meeting future demand for a fast growing Ballarat.

Our group, 'Save our Station', fondly known as SOS, was formed and has been actively agitating against the Andrews government's ill-conceived proposal at our historic central rail station precinct - with its proposal to sell off (or dare I say give away) prime central Ballarat real estate - a major part of our historic rail precinct, to a developer to build what can only be described as a 'block of flats' – 46 apartments - 5 storeys high and which will be a blight on this historic site.

They are also giving away our historic Goods Shed, which we agree needs to be restored, but not turned into a meeting space with unwarranted retail shops. We believe that the Good Shed should become our Ballarat central station bus interchange.

Added to this the government decided to build a two-level car park, reducing current car parking. Well, SOS was able to change their mind and now the government is building a third level, a total of 407 car parks which, though better, still falls short of existing car parks, and way short of our future need of 1,000+ parks.

The Andrews government until now had no plan for disability access across the rail precinct, particularly a connection to both platforms.

Today SOS is pleased to advise that Daniel Andrews will soon announce a further \$20 million to build disability access to both the north and south platforms via lifts with an above-line covered walkway, and also to cover the costs of installing traffic lights on Nolan Street.

Provision of disability access is essential and something for which SOS has advocated from day one. However we believe that it is equally essential for this platform connection to be placed underground – beneath the rail line – with the same access, yet ensuring that it will not intrude on the heritage character of the station.

The pending announcement of additional funds from the Andrews government is due to the actions of SOS and because of current action in VCAT by Grampians disAbility Advocacy and the Disability Discrimination Legal Service. Labor can't afford the embarrassment of a successful case against it in the lead-up to the election.

The Andrews government will also be announcing additional funds for traffic management in Nolan Street, including the installation of traffic lights, without a current traffic management plan or consultation with those directly affected!

In fact this project has never considered the needs of commuters. Even with the extra funds, the redevelopment will be selling Ballarat short on transport and heritage. The Andrews government has never had a coherent plan for improving facilities for commuters and has shown no care for our unique rail heritage.

The Andrews government has reacted to a succession of embarrassing oversights in its proposals for the station. As SOS has pointed each one out, the government has successively provided a "fix" to each problem.

The pity is that this ill-conceived, ad hoc approach to the development of the precinct is delivering an expensive and permanent reduction in capacity for the station to be Ballarat's 21st-century transport hub for the future, and it is destroying and giving away Australia's most outstanding heritage rail precinct in the process.

The Andrews government or the Liberal /National state opposition, if elected at the November state election, must renegotiate the contract, retain the land and buildings in public ownership, and seriously consider the alternative proposal we, SOS Ballarat, have put forward. This includes DDA compliance by going under the existing tracks, not over.

Save our Station continues to campaign for our historic central Ballarat station precinct to fulfil its primary purpose of being a 21st-century transport hub

(albeit, in a unique heritage setting); the design and delivery of the local and regional bus interchanges within the site must make all new and existing facilities accessible to people of all abilities and it is essential that the precinct must have a traffic management plan that works to minimise risks and limits the impact of the increased activity on nearby residents.

It is anticipated that Ballarat's population will grow from 100,000 to 150,000 people by 2040. Our community will need fast efficient train services, with ease of access and adequate parking for the long-term future at our central station for commuters going to work, doing business or leisure, and importantly for tourism.

We at Save Our Station simply ask that the station precinct redevelopment contract with the developer be renegotiated, not ripped up, and that the sale of land and the historic Goods Shed should not proceed; the proposed apartments should be built on another site entirely; the developer needs to complete the already started multi-level car park and to create another 500+ car park spaces at ground level; and that the developer is the only one in a position to expedite the urgent works necessary to make the Goods Shed structurally sound, environmentally safe and watertight.

Save our Station congratulates all its supporters on their efforts to date. The campaign continues as we head towards the state election. It includes a letter box drop across Ballarat and a month of action throughout September.

For further information go to: www.saveourstationballarat.com