

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Merrimu PSP \(DTP\)](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] [REDACTED], Re Merrimu PSP & Proposed Public Acquisition Overlay PA07
Date: Thursday, 9 April 2026 9:17:01 PM
Attachments: [Merrimu PSP proposed acquisition response.pdf](#)

Submission to Engage Victoria: 9 April 2026

Merrimu Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) & Draft Amendment C109moor (Moorabool Planning Scheme)

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Strong Objection to Proposed Public Acquisition Overlay PA07 – [REDACTED], Merrimu VIC, as relates to Merrimu Precinct Planning Scheme Amendment – draft amendment C109moor to the Moorabool Planning Scheme

1. Introduction

Our submission strongly objects to Draft Amendment C109moor, specifically the proposed Public Acquisition Overlay (PA07) affecting our property at [REDACTED], Merrimu.

We contend that the proposed acquisition is entirely unnecessary and would cause irreversible impacts on the property's heritage, environmental, operational, and social integrity.

Our objection is based on the following:

- The property's heritage significance, including rare pre-gold rush architecture and its historic relationship with Hopetoun Catholic Cemetery
- Existing and increasing traffic pressures, with potential risk to residents, children, and visitors
- Biodiversity and habitat values, supporting rare and threatened species
- Presence of critical infrastructure, including telecommunications and electricity
- Availability of viable alternative alignments on publicly-owned land
- Conflict with Burra Charter principles, threatening the integrity of heritage

2. Heritage Significance of [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] is home to [REDACTED], which is:

- **A rare surviving pre-gold rush building in Victoria**
- Listed on heritage registers and recognised by the National Trust
- A property of exceptional cultural, historical, and architectural value, whose significance relies on its setting, context, and relationship to surrounding land

The significance of the property extends well beyond the building itself:

- The frontage and landform provide vital visual and spatial context
- Maintains the historic connection with Hopetoun Catholic Cemetery, established on land donated by the original [REDACTED] owner
- Likely contains undiscovered archaeological features and remnants of early structures, evident in historic photographs of the site
- Together with the cemetery, the property forms a rare surviving cultural landscape, illustrating social, religious, and community history

Impacts of PA07 on heritage:

- Loss of frontage and buffer zones compromise the visual setting and historic context

- Increased traffic and vibration threaten structural integrity
- Excavation would destroy archaeological features
- Severing the relationship between the [REDACTED] and cemetery undermines the integrity of this historic pairing

Historic Relationship of [REDACTED] to Bacchus Marsh Road

- [REDACTED] was historically situated along the original Portland road alignment, the main access to Bacchus Marsh and beyond in the 19th century
- The frontage at [REDACTED] forms part of the historic approach, preserving the visual and cultural connection to the roadway
- The road's location illustrates early patterns of travel, trade, and community interaction
- Acquisition or realignment would sever this historic connection, reducing the ability to interpret the [REDACTED] role in local settlement

3. Burra Charter Principles and Conflict

The Burra Charter provides internationally recognised guidance for heritage management. The proposed overlay conflicts with key Burra Charter principles:

- Understanding a place before intervention – the overlay ignores the cumulative heritage and archaeological value of the site
- Minimal intervention – acquisition removes vegetation, buffers, and land features that have developed naturally over decades
- Respecting setting and context – the road intrudes directly into the heritage curtilage
- Maintaining cultural significance – disruption of the [REDACTED] cemetery relationship diminishes the social and cultural value of the place

4. Land Use and Organic Food Production

[REDACTED] is actively used for small-scale organic food production, which:

- Supports site rehabilitation and low-impact land management
- Protects and reinvigorates soils and vegetation to safeguard heritage structures
- Conserves habitat for native wildlife

Road acquisition would:

- Introduce pollutants, dust, and chemical contamination
- Undermine ongoing organic production and health of residents
- Compromise the heritage and ecological stewardship of the property

5. Loss of Frontage, Privacy, Safety, Vegetation, and Property Value

The property already faces increasing traffic pressures:

- Growing vehicle volume and size, including heavy vehicles
- Amplified noise pollution from the 'new' highway
- Ongoing maintenance for frontage, access, vibration damage to building, and litter removal

The frontage trees, planted and maintained by the property owners, provide critical functions:

- Noise reduction for the heritage building and dwelling
- Air filtering and dust reduction, protecting organic production and resident health
- Privacy and screening from traffic
- Wildlife habitat, supporting koalas, kangaroos, echidnas, wedge-tailed eagles, and hopping mice
- Form an environmental buffer, reducing vibration and visual intrusion from the road

The proposed PAO would:

- Remove mature trees critical for biodiversity, air quality, and noise control
- Increase exposure to road vibrations, risking damage to the historic building
- Amplify vehicle and noise pollution within the property
- Compromise safe entry and exit, particularly for children, residents, and visitors
- Disrupt a legally contracted dual carriageway, essential for both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]
- Permanently reduce privacy, amenity, and environmental protection
- **Ultimately, cause decline in property value due to loss of frontage, environmental buffers, and heritage context**

6. Biodiversity and Due Diligence

[REDACTED] supports significant biodiversity, including habitat for koalas, kangaroos, echidnas, wedge-tailed eagles, hopping mice, and other rare or threatened species with further potential to uncover the Striped Legless Lizard, Golden Sun Moth, and Victorian Grassland Earless Dragon.

The mature trees, vegetation corridors, and undisturbed land along the frontage provide essential shelter, foraging, and breeding sites that cannot be easily replaced.

These trees also perform important environmental services for the property, including acting as an air filter, reducing dust and pollutants, and providing a sound barrier against the increasing traffic on Bacchus Marsh Road.

Any proposed road construction through this area would:

- Fragment habitats and wildlife corridors
- Remove critical vegetation supporting rare and threatened species
- Introduce noise, vibration, dust, and light disturbances
- Permanently degrade ecological integrity, including soil and water quality

From a due diligence perspective, planning authorities must demonstrate that all feasible alternatives to the proposed PA07 alignment have been considered and that impacts on biodiversity are minimised.

Land across Bacchus Marsh Road, already owned by the Department of Transport and Planning, offers a practical, low-impact alternative corridor that preserves the ecological values of [REDACTED].

Proceeding with PA07 without fully assessing this alternative would indicate a failure to meet statutory and policy obligations for environmental protection, precautionary principles, and responsible planning.

7. Infrastructure, Services, Costs, Risks, and Logical Alternatives

The proposed PAO corridor contains critical existing infrastructure, making acquisition and

construction both technically challenging and financially risky:

- High-voltage overhead powerlines essential to the regional network
- Telstra optical fibre, forming part of the main Melbourne–Adelaide communications link
- Optus and other telecommunications infrastructure serving the region
- Water, drainage, and utility easements requiring careful management

Construction within this corridor would likely:

- Require complex and expensive engineering solutions to avoid infrastructure damage
- Cause service disruptions to local and regional residents and businesses
- Introduce high maintenance costs and long-term operational risks
- Trigger archaeological investigations if previously unknown heritage remains are uncovered, leading to delays and increased costs

Logical Alternative: Publicly-Owned Land

Land directly across Bacchus Marsh Road is already owned by the Department of Transport and Planning, providing a clear, less disruptive, and cost-effective alternative for the Merrimu Precinct road. Benefits include:

- Avoiding acquisition of private property, preserving heritage, environmental, and operational values at [REDACTED]
- Reducing risk to high-voltage powerlines and critical telecommunications infrastructure
- Maintaining the legally contracted dual carriageway frontage for both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], ensuring safe access
- Preserving mature trees and vegetation that filter air, reduce noise, provide privacy, and maintain wildlife habitat
- The possibility of a thoughtful, community-minded design, allowing continued respectful access to Hopetoun Catholic Cemetery for volunteers, visitors, school children, and parish activities

Utilising existing publicly-owned land is not only a practical solution, it is fiscally responsible and aligns with heritage conservation, environmental stewardship, and community safety principles. Ignoring this alternative demonstrates a lack of proper due diligence.

8. Archaeological and Undiscovered Heritage Features

The proposed acquisition area is likely to contain:

- Subsurface artefacts, including remnants of early structures, fences, and foundations
- Evidence of historic use associated with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and the cemetery

Excavation in this area would:

- Risk destruction of irreplaceable heritage
- Cause significant project delays due to mandatory archaeological investigation
- Increase costs and complexity of construction while undermining the cultural integrity of the site

9. Hopetoun Catholic Cemetery

The Hopetoun Catholic Cemetery is historically significant:

- One of the earliest Catholic sites in Bacchus Marsh, reflecting the establishment of the Church in this region

- Maintains a historic relationship with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] forming part of a culturally cohesive precinct
- Provides longstanding community, cultural, educational, and tourism value

We, the owners of [REDACTED], Merrimu strongly support the Hopetoun Cemetery Group submission and fully endorse their submission and objections to the proposed Merrimu Precinct Planning Scheme Amendment – draft amendment C109moor to the Moorabool Planning Scheme.

10. Lost Opportunities

Construction of a road through this site would:

- Destroy potential for heritage tourism and cultural storytelling in this picturesque river valley
- Reduce opportunities for walking and cycling connections linking residents of Hopetoun Park, Long Forest, and Merrimu with Bacchus Marsh town centre
- Remove the potential to develop a cultural corridor linking heritage and natural landscapes, preserving both historical and environmental values
- Would disrupt the historic character of the area, undermining the opportunity to preserve and celebrate a key part of the region's cultural heritage.
- Threatens features that are integral to the local identity, including [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the cemetery, and established landscapes, reducing the community's ability to connect with its history.
- Diminishes residents' and visitors' capacity to experience and learn from the site, weakening the collective sense of ownership and pride in local heritage.
- Erases visible reminders of the region's history, limiting future generations' ability to appreciate and celebrate Bacchus Marsh's unique heritage.
- Via the removal of mature trees, historic landscaping, and established ecological corridors, negatively affect the visual appeal of the precinct, reducing the pride locals take in the area's natural and built environment.

11. Conclusion – Required Outcome

- The proposed PA07 must be removed from all land affecting [REDACTED]
- No frontage acquisition should occur under any circumstance. There should be no visual, historical, or financial impact on [REDACTED], Merrimu either via proposed land acquisition, or proximity of other works relating to the proposed Merrimu PSP.
- Alternative road alignments using publicly-owned land, or land further west from this important historic precinct must be fully explored and considered.
- Ensure ongoing protection of:
 - Heritage and archaeological assets, including [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and potential subsurface features
 - Biodiversity and wildlife habitat, preserving rare and threatened species and mature trees
 - Dual carriageway access for both [REDACTED]
 - Hopetoun Cemetery setting, access, and all requirements as outlined within the Hopetoun Cemetery Group individual submission

The proposed acquisition is unnecessary, costly, high-risk, and damaging. It conflicts with heritage conservation principles, environmental stewardship, community safety, and responsible

planning standards. A properly considered alternative using publicly-owned land would meet road alignment objectives while protecting irreplaceable cultural, ecological, and community values.

We look forward to your response and consideration in relation to all points outlined within this submission.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

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Regards,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Merrimu VIC

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