I am an affected landholder in the Western Highway Fiasco (see https://www.fixfreewayfiasco.org/), particularly the 2B section, after Buangor, 3375.

I have collaborated with KORS Inc. KORS exists to show government why Option 1 of 2B on the Western Highway is a suboptimal choice of road site. KORS has received authoritative independent opinion that VicRoads did not use the best design methods for 2B.

Other research compiled by KORS shows beyond question that compared to the Northern Option route suggested by KORS VicRoads' decision to locate the new 2B stretch of highway in farmland costs much more, is environmentally destructive, is destroying farmers' lives, and ruining indigenous heritage.

The VicRoads bosses seem to be led by the principle that to spend more money is a better thing for taxpayers. While it is true road construction will generate short term jobs, we know the maintenance and upkeep of roads is neglected. Go the ABC talkback radio people for public comments this week, by former CEO Grant (?) of VicRoads. He said the balance is wrong. Maintenance of rural roads is declining and neglected, compared to previous years. Yet the return on investment of the Western Highway upgrade is 50 cents for every dollar. It is a losing concern.

Also, it seems parliamentarians who ought to hear their constituents’ voice are unable to both hear valid community concerns and simultaneously control VicRoads; rather the control runs in the opposite direction. And the current VicRoads CEO (Merritt) who admitted recent major flaws in the construction of this sweep of the western highway seems to be taking early retirement. The reasons given for this are just plausible. I smell a rat.

The current decisions should be reviewed, not rushed as Planning Minister Wynne has decided this holiday period they should. Wynne has not stood up to VicRoads. He seems to be misinformed or to ignore well-informed community input. I have uploaded a video which explains much of this.
There are a number of independent authoritative reports you can get from KORS Inc. to confirm the claims in the video.

Please ensure you receive all the additional reports KORS Inc. has access to: the environmental, the archaeological and any others.

Also, the following was recently announced for public consumption by a member of KORS Inc.

A spokesperson for the community group KORS Inc. says the permit for excavations providing earth fill to the highway widening between Buangor and Ararat will jeopardize groundwater quality. The group campaigns for a quicker-to-build road on the next stage: 2B. Gill Trebilcock says the Environmental Management Plan governing this pit has numerous irregularities. “The plan is a joke. It was not examined by the correct water authority. It looks as though the pit will cut into groundwater that was not even identified when the original plan was permitted.”

"As well as the wrong water authority, the plan refers to the Horsham City Council as the relevant LGA. The relevant LGA is the Rural City of Ararat, actually." "Crucially, if water flows out of aquifers into the pit no estimate of the number of trees affected by disturbance of their water supply has been made. Their untimely removal can contribute to salinisation of the land. If the water is salty here are no contingency plans. Also, the Buangor School uses the water downstream, for its gardens.”

The 300,000-cubic metre extraction pit would cut to a depth of 8 metres and into an aquifer that is expected to be between 0 and 5 metres deep. Only a year ago was this revealed to be a necessary part the earthworks-heavy plan for Option 1. "The extraction pit is a large, previously undeclared impact. It should have been revealed in 2012, at route selection stage, for ministerial scrutiny." That scrutiny
has been evaded by disclosing the requirement for the pit at this late stage. "However, in effect, we don't even need it. The Northern Option that we propose would not need that volume of earth to be extracted”, Trebilcock says.

From
Iona Mackenzie
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