

Groups drive hard line against north-east link

BY MICHAEL QUIN

COMMUNITY groups are increasing pressure on Banyule Council to oppose plans to build a freeway through Banyule Flats.

The \$6 billion project to join the Metropolitan Ring Road in Greensborough to the Eastern Freeway in Bulleen is yet to receive funding, but discussions between the council and Roads Minister Tim Pallas have continued.

Concerns raised with the council include the potential acquisition of houses, partition of the suburb and the environmental impact on Warringal Parklands and Banyule Flats.

Protectors of Public Lands Victoria secretary Julianne Bell rejected claims by the South Eastern Integrated Transport Authority that tunnelling under parklands could be environmentally sustainable.

"The project would be a juggernaut, bulldozing its way through – and laying waste to – a swathe of environmentally sensitive parkland and heritage landscapes."

Banyule mayor Tom Melican has also questioned the project's sustainability and suggested the money go to public transport instead.

But the alliance of groups – including Friends of Banyule, Warringal Parklands the Coalition of Transport Action Groups – said the council needed to go further.

"The mayor gave us assurances that they were opposed to the north-east link, but we will still not be satisfied until they have a formal commitment to oppose it," Ms Bell said.

She also suggested heritage listing for Banyule Flats and Warringal Parklands would "present a deterrent" to the State Government "bulldozing their way ahead" with the project, but that the council's deferral of that decision had led to questions about its commitment.

Cr Melican said he was waiting for more information from SEITA before taking the next step.

SEITA said the north-east link would reduce reliance on Fitzsimmons Lane, Heidelberg Road and Rosanna Road.