Mr Nick Wimbush, Advisory Committee Chair  
Major Hazard Facilities Advisory Committee  
c/- Planning Panels Victoria  
Level 5  
1 Spring Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000

17 November 2015

Dear Mr Wimbush,

**Major Hazard Facilities Advisory Committee: Discussion paper initial comments**

The Maribyrnong Truck Action Group (MTAG) has received an invitation to provide initial comments on the matters raised in the Terms of Reference for the Major Hazard Facilities (MHF)s Advisory Committee. We understand that these comments will assist with the preparation of a discussion paper.

MTAG is a non-political, unfunded community lobby group of residents advocating for a reduction in trucks on residential streets in Melbourne’s inner west. Our common interest is a desire to improve the quality of life for our community.

We are concerned that the Terms of Reference for the Major Hazard Facilities Advisory Committee focuses on land use buffers and the interface between MHF’s and the immediately surrounding land, and fails to recognize the potential impact on neighbourhoods that are not directly adjacent to MHF’s. MTAG believes that the Advisory Committee should also consider the impact that trucks travelling to and from MHF’s may have on residents’ safety in other areas.

Where MHF’s are poorly located or where there is a lack of appropriate road infrastructure, trucks accessing MHF’s may have to travel through residential areas to get to their destination from the freeway / highway network.

The Major Hazard Facilities Advisory Committee should acknowledge this as one of the issues and challenges in protecting the safety and amenity of residents impacted by MHF’s, and should consider the role of the land use planning system in mitigating any potential adverse impacts on communities from trucks associated with MHF’s. The Committee could also consider the impact that this may have on the ongoing viability of MHF’s, particularly where there is community opposition to MHF’s because of the impact of associated trucks on residential areas.

There are currently about 21,000 trucks a day on Maribyrnong’s residential streets. Many of these trucks are tankers heading to or from MHF’s. These trucks pose huge safety risks to truck drivers, pedestrians, cyclists and other road users.
Our narrow roads, built in the 1800’s, were not designed for tankers, semi trailers or B-double trucks. Many trucks need more space to turn corners safely and can cut across lanes causing confusion for cars and other road users. Tight corners also mean trucks often mount the curb when turning, putting pedestrians and cyclists in danger. Roads like Francis Street and Somerville Road have multiple intersections and school crossings. The greater mass and inertia of trucks mean they take longer to stop and there are regular reports of trucks running red lights. Sudden stops can cause trucks to jack knife, putting all road users in danger. These incidents are not necessarily the truck driver’s fault but the presence of so many trucks on our residential streets threatens everyone’s safety.

MTAG is compiling a dossier of truck incidents in the West to highlight the unsuitability of residential streets as major truck routes and the impact that this has on the community. Over the past two and a half years, incidents have included trucks truck driving into power poles, running red lights, running through pedestrian lights, jack-knifing, losing their load, suffering mechanical failures, and hitting bridges on numerous occasions (in 2014, Metro Trains reported that 21 trucks have crashed into the Napier Street bridge in four years). Where these incidents involve fuel tankers, the consequences could be catastrophic.

In early 2014, Four Corners aired ‘This Trucking Life’ which highlighted systemic failures in truck safety regulation and management of driver fatigue. This was in light of an accident in Mona Vale, NSW, where suspected brake failure caused a Cootes fuel tanker to crash and explode, killing two people. A subsequent VicRoads inspection of Cootes Transport vehicles led to almost 40 percent of the fleet being taken off the road with safety defects. Cootes have a large depot in Spotswood and tanker trucks regularly use Somerville Road and Francis Street to get to one of the largest fuel depots in the state, ExxonMobil’s Yarraville Terminal. The secretary of the Transport Workers Union said that drivers are forced to speed, skip rest breaks and fake their logbooks. He then went on to say that, “Petrol tankers are literally mobile bombs, they’re at the most dangerous end of Australia’s most dangerous industry.” When these fuel tankers drive metres from our homes, schools and childcare centres every day, it is vital that government safety regulations are strict enough to protect communities like ours.

In light of this systemic failure in safety controls, other measures are required to protect the safety and amenity of residents. The land use planning system could potentially complement other regulatory frameworks to protect the safety and amenity of residents impacted by MHFs.

MTAG submits that the discussion paper should acknowledge the impact that trucks travelling to and from MHFs may have on the safety and amenity of residents both immediately adjacent to MHFs and in other areas, and should consider the role the land use planning system could play in mitigating any potential adverse impact from these trucks.

We look forward to the release of the discussion paper and expect that we will make a detailed formal submission at that point. We hope that our initial comments have provided useful input to its development.

Regards,

[Signature]

Samantha McArthur
President, Maribyrnong Truck Action Group (MTAG)