

3 August 2026

The Hon. Ben Carroll
Premier of Victoria

The Hon. Jess Wilson
Leader of the Opposition

OPEN LETTER

Corruption and the Big Build: Royal Commission Terms of Reference must be broad

On Tuesday 28th July, The Hon. Ben Carroll announced a Royal Commission into corruption in the construction sector — his first act as new premier of Victoria. This identified integrity and the Big Build as a major issue facing Labor in the lead up to the November state election.

We welcome the Royal Commission. However, its Terms of Reference are critical to identifying and resolving the root causes of corruption.

Corruption is an inevitable outcome of governance failure and lack of transparency. A narrow focus on the construction sector will miss the key issue: the deep and systemic **governance failure** over at least a decade, which has allowed corruption to go unchecked.

This governance failure is even more acute given that since 2010 Victoria has been required by law to develop an integrated land use and transport plan. Instead, we have major developments without a proper land use planning process. We have transport projects, but no plan — the Big Build **is** the plan.

Our key concern is that the transport and land use planning process has been captured by political and commercial interests at the expense of the public interest. It will remain vulnerable to capture regardless of the party and individuals in government unless governance processes are strengthened.

In addition to the construction industry, we propose that the Royal Commission should investigate:

1. Whether the governance process for major projects meet legislative requirements in terms of integrated planning, transparency and business cases.¹

¹ Transport Integration Act 2010, and 2021 VAGO report [Integrated Transport Planning](#)

2. The role of major consultancies, transport and construction companies and the property industry in the design and management of major projects and whether this has eroded transparency and integrity.
3. Whether a lack of proper governance has led to conflicts of interest and the exercise of undue influence.
4. What are the main cost increases in major projects, and where does the money go?
5. Whether the public service provided robust, reliable and impartial advice to the government on investment priorities, commercial arrangements, the design of major projects, the strategic fit with national and state policy, and the public benefit of proposed expenditure.

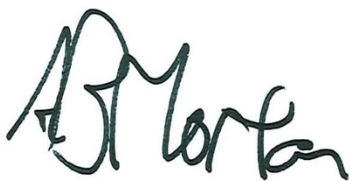
We propose that the Royal Commission should examine the multiple reports of governance failings from the Ombudsman², Auditor General³ and others, and the extent to which these were acted on.

We propose also that the Royal Commission should consider the increasing evidence of poor investment decisions and their lack of transparency.

These proposed Terms of Reference assume that the government will increase the powers for IBAC to include 'follow the dollar' and the conduct of politicians and public servants, as an urgent action before the November election, and that any IBAC investigation into corruption and the Big Build will be co-ordinated with the work of the Royal Commission.

We look forward to working closely with you on restoring integrity to Victoria's governance.

Yours sincerely,



Anthony Morton, President
[Public Transport Users Association](#)



John Hearsch OAM, President
[Rail Futures Institute](#)



Glenys Romanes AM
Chair, [Victorian Transport Action Group](#)



Emeritus Professor Michael Buxton
[Charter 29](#)

² Ombudsman 2023, [Alleged politicisation of the public sector](#)

³ e.g. VAGO 2023, [Quality of major transport infrastructure project business cases](#)