

Preston Reservoir to Merri Creek water main replacement (M40) Community consultation report – July 2016



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M40 project – community consultation

A number of different engagement methods were used to inform local residents, businesses and the wider community about the upcoming construction impacts of the M40 project in Northcote, Thornbury and Preston. A summary of these methods and their reach is provided in this report.

Advertising

A number of advertisements were placed in print and social media to advertise the upcoming community information sessions.

These advertisements included:

- Advertising in **Preston Leader** on 14 June 2016, p4. As at March 2015, the paper's audited circulation was 37, 524.
- Advertising in **Northcote Leader** on 14 June 2016, p7. As at March 2015, the paper's audited circulation was 22,627.
- The information sessions were promoted on **websites** and **Facebook pages** by Melbourne Water, Darebin City Council, Bicycle Network and the Protect St Georges Road Landscape Group.
- MW's social media promotion data includes:
 - 7,700 people reached on Facebook. Of these, 41 people clicked on the posts and 17 people shared or commented on them
 - 7,387 followers on Twitter. Of these, 989 viewed tweets promoting the consultation.

Letterbox drop

A six-page fact sheet was distributed to residents and businesses in the lead-up to the community information sessions. This distribution of the fact sheet was to:

- Properties (x 350) near Robinson Road, Preston on Saturday 18 June 2016
- Properties (x 250) along St Georges Road, Northcote and Preston on Sunday 19 June 2016.

Information sessions

A number of information sessions were held in late June/early July.

People were encouraged to stop and talk about the project, provide on-the-spot feedback about the proposed reinstatement masterplan, take a copy of the fact sheet or go online to complete the feedback form.

To reach local residents and people who visited the Northcote Plaza Shopping Centre, an information display was set up over two consecutive days, mid-week.

Cyclists and pedestrians who use the St Georges Road centre median bike path were also targeted. Representatives of the project team handed out fruit bars to passers-by during peak commuter periods, early morning and late afternoon. The bars were wrapped with project information, including a QR code to direct people to the M40 project website.



In total, we estimate that during this nine-day consultation period, we:

- Interacted with **more than 2,300 people** at the information sessions
- Letterbox dropped and handed out **more than 1,000 fact sheets**
- Gave away **more than 1,500 fruit bars** to cyclists and pedestrians.

The following table provides a summary of the information sessions.

Information session statistics

DATE/LOCATION	# conversations	# Fact Sheets
Wednesday 15 June Melbourne Water foyer/BUG 8.30am – 10.30am 12 noon – 2.30pm		
Estimated number	39	90
Monday 20 June Regent station 8.00am – 10.00am 3.00pm – 5.00pm		
Estimated number	38	180
Tuesday 21 June Regent station 8.00am – 10.00am 4.00pm – 6.00pm		
Estimated number	36	140
Wednesday 22 June Northcote Plaza Shopping Centre 10.00am – 12.00noon 12.00noon – 5.00pm		
Estimated number	93	217
Thursday 23 June Northcote Plaza Shopping Centre 10.00am – 12.00noon 12 noon – 5.00pm		
Estimated number	87	175
Sub-total – information sessions	293	802
DATE/LOCATION	# conversations	# Fruit bars
Friday 1 July SGR & Normanby Avenue 7.00am – 10.00 3.00pm – 5.00pm		
Estimated number	160	350
Saturday 2 July SGR & Normanby Avenue 10.00am – 2.00pm		
Estimated number	90	250
Wednesday 20 July Cnr Normanby Ave/St Georges Road 7.00am – 10.00am		
Estimated number	250	500
Thursday 21 July Cnr Normanby Ave/St Georges Road 7.00am – 10.00am		
Estimated number	200	400
Sub-total	700	1500
ESTIMATED TOTAL	993	2302

Interactive website

At the commencement of our community consultation planning, Melbourne Water identified the need to have an interactive, engaging webpage in order to better engage with the community for a project on the scale of the M40 project.

In June 2016, Melbourne Water launched its 'Your Say' website, featuring the M40 project webpage. The webpage offers visitors advanced engagement tools, including an interactive map and online survey.

This webpage will continue to develop as the project progresses to the construction stage, and will enable Melbourne Water to directly communicate to the local community on when and where construction will impact residents and businesses.

The website can be viewed at www.yoursay.melbournewater.com.au

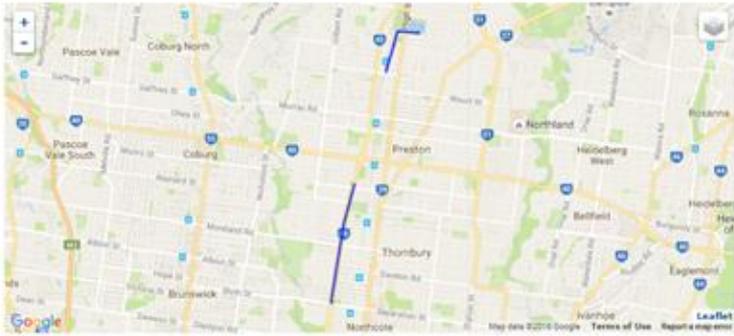
Oakover Rd)
• construct a temporary pathway for cyclists. This pathway will be located within the St Georges Road centre median.

Our community engagement activities will continue throughout construction.

While we expect construction to start in 2016, the construction contract for this project is yet to be awarded.

M40 Map

The M40 project is divided into two sections. The first section runs from the Preston reservoirs to Regent Street, Reservoir. The second section runs from Oakover Road Preston to Arthurton Road Northcote, along St Georges Road.



Why this project is important

This water main is a critical link in our distribution network. It supports the supply of drinking water to our retail customers (Yarra Valley Water and City West Water) and Melbourne's CBD and inner suburbs.

In the past, there have been a number of significant leaks from the M40 water main that resulted in serious disruption to the local community.

Timeline

- ★ **Functional design stage**
Completed January 2016
- ★ **Detailed design and construction stage**
Expected to start in 2016, and take 12 months to complete
- ★ **Reinstatement masterplan consultation**
June 2016 to July 2016

[See less](#)

Key documents

- ★ **M40 fact sheet, June 2016**
PDF (4.57 MB)
- ★ **M40 construction map**
PDF (748.29 KB)
- ★ **M40 Community bulletin, October 2015**
PDF (154.51 KB)

[See more](#)

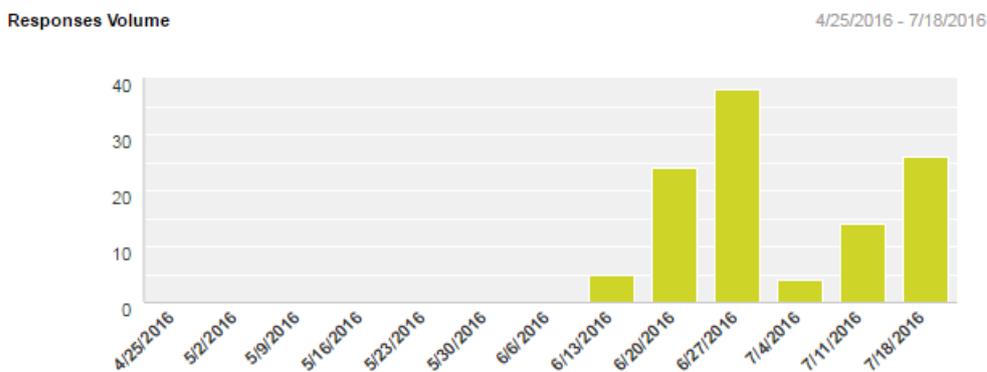
FAQ

- ? **Why is Melbourne Water planning to renew sections of the M40 pipeline?**
- ? **Where are the two sections that will be renewed?**

Online feedback form

The M40 project's online feedback form was available from 15 June 2016 and was closed on Monday 25 July 2016. In total the survey was open for 40 days, or just under six weeks.

There were a total of 111 respondents to the survey. The majority of responses were received in the weeks beginning 20 June and 27 June. This surge in responses correlates to Melbourne Water staff sharing project information in the Northcote and Preston communities in this time period.



Key findings

The majority of respondents identified '*Planting of semi-mature trees to fast-track growth and promote boulevard effect*' as the **most important** feature of the proposed reinstatement masterplan.

The majority of respondents identified '*Planting of semi-mature trees to fast-track growth and promote boulevard effect*' as **most valuable** feature of the proposed reinstatement masterplan.

However, it is important to note that there was only a small difference between the top three 'most important' and 'most valuable' features.

Figure 1 demonstrates the weighting of respondents' answers to what is the **most important** feature of the proposed reinstatement masterplan.

The feature '*Reinstatement of the centre median to restore its aesthetic value and amenity*' received a total weighted score of 6.78. The feature '*A wider pathway with improved visibility and safety for both pedestrians and cyclists*' received a total weighted score of 6.55.

The total weighted score for the most important feature, *'Planting of semi-mature trees to fast-track growth and promote boulevard effect'*, was 7.35.

Therefore, the difference between the first and second 'most important' feature is 0.57. The difference between the second and third 'most important' feature is 0.23.

The other two features listed in this particular question – *'Restoration of the palm trees within the centre median'* and *'Changes to the location of palms, type of trees and understory planting'* – received total weight scores of 6.31 and 5.73, respectively.

Figure 1

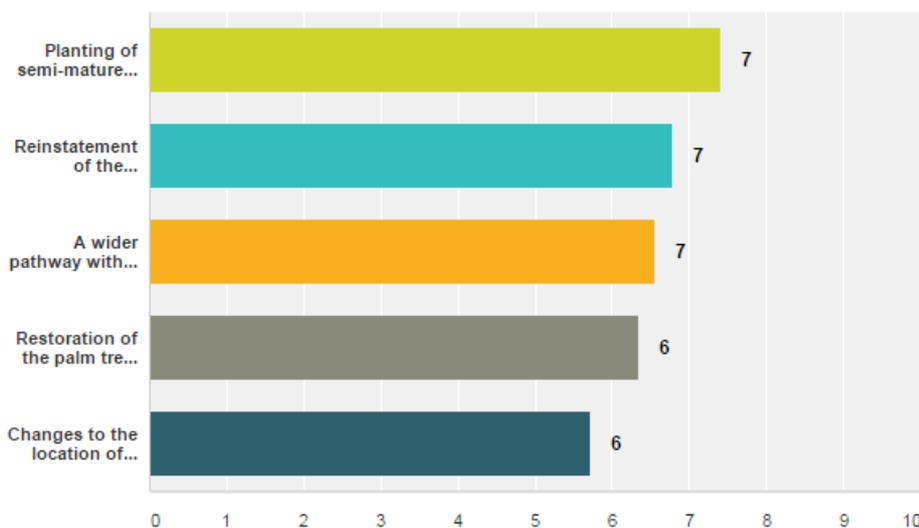


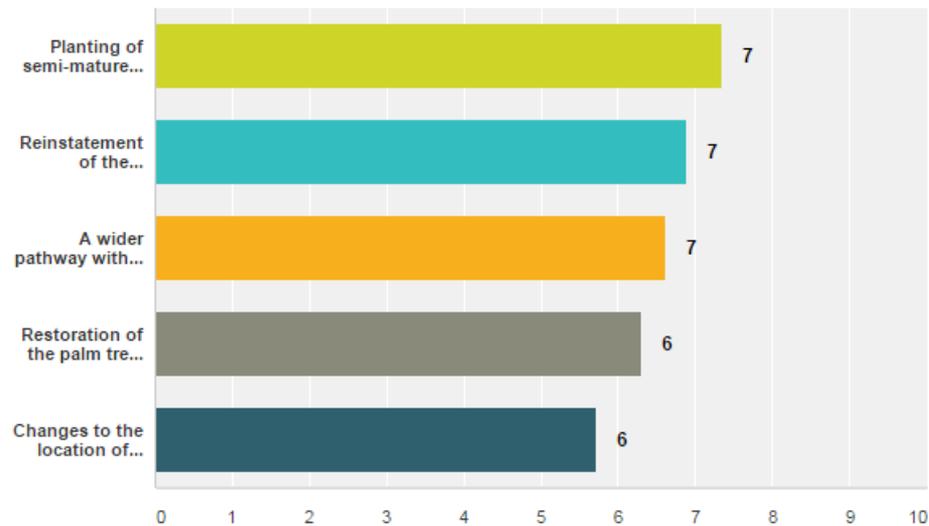
Figure 2 demonstrates the weighting of respondents' answers to what is the **most valuable** feature of the proposed reinstatement masterplan.

While *'Planting of semi-mature trees to fast-track growth and promote boulevard effect'* was deemed most valuable with a total weighted score of 7.35, the feature *'Reinstatement of the centre median to restore its aesthetic value and amenity'* received a total weighted score of 6.89. The feature *'A wider pathway with improved visibility and safety for both pedestrians and cyclists'* received a total weighted score of 6.62.

This change in statistics between the two questions of 'importance' and 'value' demonstrates that respondents **value** the reinstatement of the centre median and the wider pathway **more than** they find the two features **important**.

The feature '*Planting of semi-mature trees to fast-track growth and promote boulevard effect*' remained static across the two questions, with the same weighted statistic found across both questions.

Figure 2



Overall, it can be deduced that the close result in what is deemed 'important' and what is deemed 'valuable' reflects that different features of the proposed master reinstatement plan are more important and more valued by the community.

Key themes and comments

In addition to the questions on value and importance of the proposed reinstatement masterplan, respondents were asked to provide comment on four questions:

1. What do you like most about the proposed reinstatement masterplan? Why?
2. What do you like least about the proposed reinstatement masterplan? Why?
3. How do you think the proposed reinstatement masterplan could be improved?
4. What other comments would you like to make about the proposed reinstatement masterplan?

Generally, it is evident that the majority of survey respondents were satisfied with the proposed reinstatement masterplan.

The prevailing theme within the survey responses focused on trees and understorey – specifically, comments reflected respondents' satisfaction that semi-mature trees, an understorey and canopy were being returned to the centre median to restore amenity.

However, a strong secondary theme revolved around cyclists' concerns. Specifically, comments focused on satisfaction that the shared path would be widened; however cyclists and pedestrians alike were concerned over visibility issues along the path.

These concerns focused on visibility for cyclists and pedestrians at signalised and un-signalised vehicle crossings, the establishment of sight lines for cyclists, and separation of cyclists and pedestrians along the shared pathway.

The below analysis provides a detailed snapshot of comments and key themes evident in each question.

What people like most

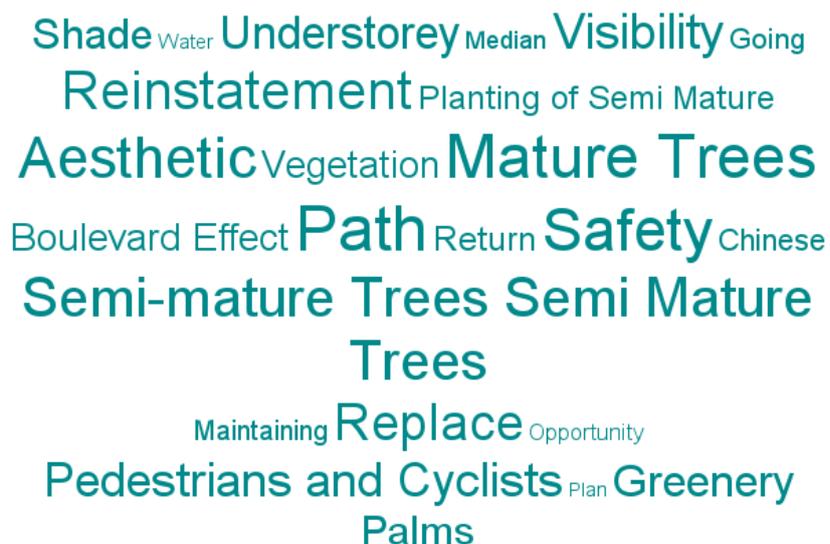
- Improved safety for walkers and riders.
- Keeping the aesthetic quality while maintaining safety.
- Safer cycling, with room to overtake safely when going on the opposite side of the path. Make it easier for cars to see the cyclists.
- Reinstatement of plants to create boulevard effect. Environmental and aesthetic reasons similar to other "leafy" suburbs.
- Removal of agapanthus; flower heads get in the way.
- That you will replace trees like for like.
- Reinstating the existing greenery that gives character to this long stretch of busy road.
- Being able to keep a tree avenue within the median and some widening of the shared path. It is a very tricky site with a lot of competing demands, so well done.
- Reconsidering weeds and foreign plant species that block visibility and have no connection to natural flora
- Increasing the width of the shared path as much as feasible to improve safety, reduce conflict and allow for future growth in volumes
- Providing an alternative bike path for cyclists during works
- Proposed Chinese Elm trees and understorey species
- Wider path and mature trees. Safety, shelter, amenity.
- The wider shared path, to increase cyclist visibility and safety. As both a driver and cyclist, I currently find it unsafe.

Lomandra Longifolia Tanika Council Needs Riders
Community Impact Visibility Improve Path
Concrete Trees Vegetation Planting Dense
Canopy Children Look Median Concerned Speed
Pathway

This word map reflects the key terms used in all respondents' comments.

What people like least

- *Planting Lomandra Longifolia Tanika is a big concern and in fact a safety hazard. On hot windy days I have seen this plant catch fire and burn very easily and fire could spread very quickly to local gardens and parks. This plant is a very bad idea.*
- *The palm trees are ugly, incongruous with Melbourne, should be rid of.*
- *The change in tree variety - the current trees are unusual and nice. I don't think the deciduous Chinese elms would be suitable. Is there an evergreen variety?*
- *The understorey appears reduced in size. With the increase in track width, the 'boulevard' will look a lot less lush. It needs to be managed well - it can look straggly and harbour rodents.*
- *Closure of the unsignalised crossovers hasn't been confirmed. They are very dangerous to riders, because drivers don't stop.*
- *I'm concerned about the width of the path and the amount of concrete! I do a lot of walking around the area and some bike paths seem to be coming mini freeways!*
- *The potential that the trees won't survive.*
- *The time it may take to get a canopy again - up to 20 years.*
- *Lack of broader consideration of using momentum of works to address bike bottleneck at Merri, and continual use of palm trees in the area*
- *There is no mention of shade provision, tree cultivars or minimum requirements for tree size at planting and maturity. We need shade.*
- *Removing, storing and replanting the palm trees seems costly and unnecessary, but I can imagine the outrage if you planted something else.*
- *Would have liked to see walkers and bike riders separated but recognise there wasn't sufficient space for this to occur. Width of path less than 4.5m in some places.*



This word map reflects the key terms used in all respondents' comments.

Suggestions for improvement

- Create a new network of pipes on the side of the median strip and leave the trees as they are!
- Move the water main so the trees and path are not disturbed. Do not put water pipe under mature trees and heavy traffic areas.
- Include more trees, and design the layout so that if future work needs to be done it does not affect all the mature trees.
- Make it so bikes can travel faster... ie. priority for road crossing at lights etc.
- Ensure understory planting is very low and does not block visibility and that mature tree planting is set back significantly from all road crossings across the cycle path.
- Better separation between pedestrians and cyclists, through physical separation or a wider path.
- Confirming with VicRoads that the unsignalised crossovers will be closed.
- Make sure there is a maintenance and tree\plant replacement plan for the future.
- Remove road crossings (other than main roads), get rid of palm trees, make it like New York City's High Line: full of native trees, some small shops (e.g. coffee cart), walking, picnic areas, many trees to make aesthetically pleasing. I would like to see some street art along the track
- Maybe some drinking fountains along the way and some seating for tram users and people walking along.
- A greater biodiversity of plants. More understory. I would like to see some colour in the plantings - maybe a block of geraniums or something equally tough.
- Consistent width of 3.5m. It would also be great to see the path north of the section brought up to the same standard in terms of planting and for all the same reasons that the landscape has been reinstated in this section, out of scope I know, but maybe as council has got its bike path for free, they can stump up a few dollars.
- Put a bike speed limit on the SHARED pathway. Ensure there are sufficient plantings to conceal pathway from road.
- Inclusion of indigenous trees and shrubs with appropriate maintenance to ensure success.

Tram Think Needs Boulevard Water Median
 Separation Street Understory VicRoads
 Mature Trees Aesthetically Pleasing Path
 Lines Planting St Georges Rd Road Inclusion
 Ensure Amenity Replacement Trees Minor
 Larger Choice Existing Trees Beautiful

This word map reflects the key terms used in all respondents' comments.

Other comments

- *Lack of broader consideration of using momentum of works to address bike bottleneck at Merri, and continual use of palm trees in the area*
- *The plan needs to be made taking the future and environment into consideration.*
- *I am very happy to see that trees are to be reinstated and look forward to the safety improvements.*
- *Do not sacrifice the trees and turn it into a concrete bike highway.*
- *I'm very pleased that it looks like a good outcome has been reached for all parties, particularly with the path being widened and the trees being retained.*
- *Disappointed. Really needs to be more vision. St Georges Road is ugly. Too much grass, weird and incongruous palm trees, could have made this something to be internationally proud of, instead we're getting a sub-standard replacement of the disappointing state it's currently in. It's depressing that a chance like this only arises very occasionally and you've put no creative effort in whatsoever.*
- *I appreciate the work gone into this, after all Melbourne Water is not a transport agency, so taking into account the needs of cyclists and pedestrians is great. This may be outside your remit, but the bus stop at Artherton Road is very badly designed, and blocks cyclist and pedestrian movement. The buses really should be moved to either side of St Georges, or the tram tracks widened, or something.*
- *Well done Melbourne Water. Excellent job from designers dealing with a highly contested space.*
- *Please don't let it be a concrete jungle. The St Georges Road greenery is the only appealing thing in this suburb. It's beautiful. Please don't leave us without it.*
- *I'm a cyclist and a resident who finds current path beautiful. Many cyclists sprint up and down that path and pedestrians walk along without awareness, so I see need for path improvement. I'm concerned a wider path might mean more 'entitled' bike riders. I think the narrow path keeps everyone more aware of each other!*
- *Pleased that you have considered community input and just want the implementation to achieve on these expectations.*
- *The overall plan must be commended with its attempt to maintain the avenue effect.*

Community feedback and comments

During the consultation process, community feedback and comments about the proposed reinstatement masterplan were collected, shared with the project team and, where appropriate, incorporated into the detailed design.

For example, feedback confirmed that some respondents would prefer trees and vegetation to be included into the planting of the centre median at the intersection of St Georges Road and Miller Street. Melbourne Water took the suggestion to its consultants and stakeholders – and has been incorporated as a feature of the detailed design reinstatement plan.

Similarly, some residents had requested a mix of native species for the understorey planting. Others requested the agapanthus to be removed. These suggestions have been incorporated into the detailed design.

Other feedback that has been incorporated into the reinstatement plan or shared with the relevant stakeholder, Darebin City Council, includes:

- *Wider path, better visibility, more appropriate vegetation that isn't weedy nor cause hazards to path users, decreased conflict between pedestrians and people riding a bike, safer easier access to tram shelters*
- *Better visibility at crossings and wider path*
- *Better use of available (grassed) space to create a genuinely beautiful space in a busy, unappealing road - also, related investment in the stretch of St George's Road between Merri Pde and the Yarra trail would create a complete cycle route to the city (obviously, this is outside the purview of replacing pipes in Thornbury)*
- *Separate pedestrians and bikes; block minor road crossings (Normanby Ave to Arthurian Rd). Ensure adequate follow up care of plants and replacement of dead plants for the next ten years. Ensure adequate pedestrian access along desire lines to minimise 'goat tracks'.*
- *Put a bike speed limit on the SHARED pathway. Ensure there are sufficient plantings to conceal pathway from road.*
- *Consistent width of 3.5m. it would also be great to see the path north of the section brought up to the same standard in terms of planting and for all the same reasons that the landscape has been reinstated in this section, out of scope I know, but maybe as council has got its bike path for free, they can stump up a few dollars.*
- *I would like to see some street art along the track*
- *Please relocate palms away from the car crossing points. They cause a serious sightline problem (I both ride and drive a lot in the area)*
- *Remove road crossings (other than main roads), get rid of palm trees, make it like New York City's High Line: full of native trees, some small shops (e.g. coffee cart), walking, picnic areas, many trees to make aesthetically pleasing*
- *Would recommend blocking smaller cross roads to ensure cyclist and pedestrian safety through centre-median.*

Next steps

Now that the proposed reinstatement masterplan has general acceptance by stakeholders and the community, the detailed design for the reinstatement plan will be shared with our preferred service providers so that the details can be incorporated into their costings for the construction of the M40 project.

The contract to design and construct the M40 project is expected to be awarded in early August 2016.

To guarantee supply of the semi-mature trees in the number and size required, Melbourne Water will also place the order for the trees once the contract is awarded. Key stakeholder representatives, including the Protect our St Georges Road Landscape Group will be invited to participate in this activity.

Further information

www.melbournewater.com.au/M40

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Call: 1800 754 077