

## **Comments on Claims in the Parliamentary Liberal Party "Position Statement on the Fremantle Eastern Bypass and Roe Highway Stage 8."**

*CLAIM: The Government has ignored the best available advice.*

Unfortunately, the Liberal Party paper gives no references what this 'best' advice is. Previous reports from the proponent, Main Roads WA, support construction. Also, companies with a financial stake in consultancies surrounding the FEB, construction of the FEB or ensuring continued public subsidies to road transport have also recommend construction.

The latest study on the Fremantle and Roe Highways, and the only one to carry out a triple bottom line assessment, the WA Planning Commission's '*Assessment of the Fremantle Eastern Bypass and Preferred Alternatives, 2003*', was very clear that constructing the proposed highways was not the preferred or best option.

*CLAIM: Construction on the FEB would divert traffic from suburban streets, protect resident's health, safety and lifestyle.*

While sections of Leach Highway, South Street and High Street are fronted by houses, they are not 'suburban' streets. They are classified as major distributor roads. Leach Highway and High Street were originally built, among other reasons, to access the Fremantle Port. South Street was upgraded to highway status under the previous Liberal Government in 1999 to provide another major freight distributor road to Fremantle.

It has been the bad planning by previous governments and Main Roads WA (eg, inappropriate urban development, encouraging more cars & trucks and lack of investment in alternative transport) that has increased conflict along these existing roads.

As for Hampton Road, City of Fremantle traffic calming of Hampton Road has already 'diverted' traffic from this road onto the purpose built Stock Road. (Evaluation of Hampton Road-Ord Street Traffic Calming Trial, City of Fremantle, 2003).

The Liberal Party paper implies that building new highways causes traffic to 'disappear'. Unfortunately, all a new highway does is move traffic to another area creating health, safety and lifestyle problems somewhere else. In addition, the paper fails to factor in the consequences of extra or 'induced' traffic caused by more highway construction. The paper also fails to acknowledge that urban areas exist along the proposed highway routes (through White Gum Valley, Beaconsfield, Hamilton Hill and Coolbellup) or the impacts that will occur to those urban areas.

Recent local evidence, and substantial overseas research, indicates that new highways induce or create additional extra traffic that would not necessarily have occurred if the highway had not been built and instead transport alternatives were put in place (Transport Action Coalition, *Farmer Freeway and Induced Traffic, 2003*). The extra emissions and pollution made by these additional vehicles worsens Perth's already poor air quality. This greater pollution load further reduces air quality and impacts on the health of the wider community.

*CLAIM: When the Fremantle Port reaches 900 000 containers per annum.*

It is doubtful that the existing Port could reach this level, more than doubling its current capacity. Port operations have limited room and the existing outdated loading equipment and procedures are hard pressed handling the current capacity. The existing Port operations would therefore need to expand and this would cause more conflict with existing, and proposed adjacent residential areas. A massive investment in efficient loading equipment would also be required.

Under the Liberal Party advocacy of greater truck freight and car use, roads leading to the Port in North Fremantle would also require expansion. The Parliamentary Liberal Party appears to be committing itself to massive, never-ending road construction throughout Fremantle. Roads in North Fremantle would need to be expanded, Stirling Bridge doubled and the existing Stirling Highway extension through East Fremantle widened to cope with the large increase in traffic proposed by the Parliamentary Liberal Party.

The paper ignores the limits to growth for the Port or impacts that unfettered expansion of the Port or vehicular traffic would have in the area.

Due to poor planning by past 'planners' and previous governments, conflicts between Port operations and the surrounding urban environment have reached a critical point. The push for more highways ignores the existing urban context and ignores sustainable community development. More highways as proposed by the Parliamentary Liberal Party would in the end only slightly delay the necessary changes to the style of Fremantle Port operations and a probable change of location.

Perhaps the next stage of the Parliamentary Liberal Party highway campaign will be to re-introduce the former Roe Highway through South Fremantle along Marine Tce through the West End and into the Port.

Another port with properly planned, designed and protected transport corridors is needed and that may occur in Cockburn. Ideally, one should be considered north of the river as well. These would make distribution more efficient and reduce the negative impacts the Fremantle Port has on the existing urban fabric.

*CLAIM: The Fremantle Eastern Bypass was planned to make efficient use of Stirling Bridge.*

The Fremantle Highway was originally included in the MRS after a previous Liberal Government deleted the Point Resolution Bridge (Stock Road extension) from the MRS. The Fremantle Highway was a replacement highway designed to placate the Main Roads Dept establishment. It was a political decision not a good planning decision. This is highlighted by the fact that homes need to be purchased and bulldozed for the proposed FEB. The land was never originally planned as a transport route but as a residential area.

Stirling Bridge often experiences bumper to bumper traffic now. It can be argued that the bridge is already efficiently used. Encouraging more traffic onto Stirling Bridge, by building more feeder roads, will ensure that a second bridge or duplication will need to occur.

The paper never states that any other part of the existing road network to the Fremantle Port should be used more 'efficiently'.

*CLAIM: Supportive of increasing the use of rail to transport containers to/from Fremantle Port.*

No policies are presented by the Parliamentary Liberal Party on how this will be achieved. The highway building policy proposed in its paper is in fact a direct threat to increasing the use of rail as it supports continuing subsidies to the road freight industry.

*CLAIM: If the Government deletes the Fremantle Bypass and Roe Highway Stage 8 Federal funding for Roe Stages 6 & 7 will be threatened.*

The State Government has moved to delete the Fremantle Highway. It has no policy on Roe Stage 8. The Federal Government has given the State Government the allocation for construction of Roe Stages 6 & 7. The paper's claims are completely false.

It should be noted that members of the Parliamentary Liberal Party front group SoS, Melville CEO John McNally and Melville Councillor Russell Aubrey, lobbied Federal Ministers to withhold funding for Roe Stage 7 in an attempt to force the State Government to build the FEB. This move angered many Melville residents as it would have resulted in Roe Highway stopping at South Street. Luckily for residents, their campaign failed.

*CLAIM: An environmentally acceptable solution to construction of Roe 8 near "Bibra Lake" will be found.*

It is unfortunate that the paper cannot admit that the proposed Roe Highway Stage 8 would go through important wetlands. Instead there is a sanitised 'near Bibra Lake'. Both the WA Planning Commission and the EPA have assessed various highway proposals for Roe 8 and have concluded it is not possible to construct a highway through the wetlands in any form without causing significant damage. In addition to the damage to the wetland ecology that a highway through this area would cause, there are also risks to our groundwater.

The WA Planning Commission recently released a bulletin on acid sulphate soils. It highlights the dangers of altering the hydrology of wetland areas and the subsequent release of sulphuric acid and heavy metals into the surrounding soil and groundwater. The wetlands Roe Stage 8 is proposed to bisect are identified as high-risk acid sulphate soil danger zones in the WA Planning Commission's planning bulletin No. 64, *Acid Sulphate Soils*. Road and bridge building are identified as activities that should be avoided in these areas.

The paper does, however, display a double standard. The paper claims the ALP has no acceptable alternatives to the Fremantle Highway so should not delete it. However, the Liberal Party paper fails to deliver any 'safe' way to build a highway through the wetlands yet it is unequivocal that the Liberal Party will construct Roe Highway through the important wetlands.

*CLAIM: The State Government has no alternatives.*

The State Government alternatives can be found at the Dept of Planning and Infrastructure website. It is astounding that the author of the Parliamentary Liberal Party paper is not aware of what the Government is proposing. The government alternatives were arrived at through the Freight Network Congress public consultation. Social,

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economic and environmental factors were used to calculate the impacts of each option. It is now up to the Government to deliver on those alternatives.

The Parliamentary Liberal Party has never engaged in such public consultations on transport issues. Remarkably, there are no transport policies on the state Liberal Party's website. The road building proposals of the Liberal Party do not constitute a transport policy.

*Claim: Liberal Party hopes to prevent people from being misled into buying land along reserve.*

This is a low form of political intimidation and gives an indication of the ethics, or lack of, in the Parliamentary Liberal Party.

The Parliamentary Liberal Party intends to deny the WA community the \$100 million worth of residential land sales and the approximately \$ 350 000 per annum in rates that will flow from deleting the FEB. Money from the sale of the highway reserve land should be used on sustainable transport projects.

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