

Gungahlin Drive

Fixing Labor's Failure.

Canberra**liberals**

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The Canberra Liberals will finish the duplication of Gungahlin Drive as an urgent priority within our first term. We will upgrade this road to a four lane Parkway in just half the time that Stanhope Labor took to build a two lane road. The final works on this Parkway will be completed during our first term of government. Mr Stanhope will not even agree to start full duplication during the next term of parliament.

Labor Transport Minister John Hargreaves has declared that duplication is "not on the books at all" and any such plan would be five to ten years away (Canberra Times, 12/3/2008).

Stanhope Labor has said in its May 2008 Budget that it will spend \$1.446 billion on infrastructure over the next five years. Despite this massive spendathon, there is no money for the most urgent road priority of Gungahlin Drive. We will redirect \$93 million from this total infrastructure spend and spend less overall than Labor will spend on infrastructure.

Canberra is a long, thin city, which is vulnerable to congestion on the major north-south roads and through the very centre. Without free-flowing roads on the north-south axis, commuters all across town are vulnerable to unnecessary delays.

Our commitment to establish this free-flowing transport corridor will give coherence and functionality to Canberra's road network. For the first time ever Canberra commuters will have the option of efficiently commuting across most of the length of our city without encountering traffic lights or bottlenecks. Commuters can travel from Mitchell (the Barton Highway) to Kambah (Sulwood Drive) without needing to stop at an intersection.

This road project will cost government in the short term, but it will have an enormous public benefit from the savings in petrol consumption and the reduction in pollution over the long run. We also recognise that time spent commuting is time away from family.

From Freeway to Parkway

Mr Stanhope built the first stage of Gungahlin Drive to a Freeway design. His only regard for urban aesthetics was to fund some random and unattractive sculptures alongside the road.

By contrast the Canberra Liberals will make the section north of Glenloch interchange

into a Parkway. We will fund revegetation on the land reserves parallel to the road, to ensure a more pleasant, natural and unobtrusive legacy.

The land areas adjacent to Parkways should be landscaped with hedges, scrubs and trees, in order to screen the road from urban areas and to give drivers a sense that they are driving in the countryside. Parkways are a form of Freeway that are blended with the natural environment.

A Broader Transport Vision

This commitment is the first part of an integrated transport plan, which will be announced prior to the election. The Canberra Liberals will re-establish a five year transport plan, to identify long-term needs and priorities and to obtain value for money from government contracts. The last such long-term road plan was established by the previous Liberal government.

We reject Labor's year-to-year approach to road funding, which entails uncertainty for motorists and for industry. We will align our five year plans with the federal government's five year planning timeframes for its road funding programs.

Not many years ago, journeys over 40 minutes to work were unthinkable. But in the past several years Canberrans have been suffering growing frustration at roads that are getting slower every month.

Our vision is for Canberra to have the best roads in the country again. A functional road network is a key element of the quality of life of many Canberrans and it has been one of the competitive advantages our city has enjoyed in the past.

Why this is the Number One Road Priority

Labor has known for years that traffic will be close to capacity on a mere two lane road. Government studies published in 2002 warned that

“GDE will be busy upon opening, and that widening to four lanes will need to be considered relatively soon after the opening of the initial construction”.

[Source: Urban Services, *GDE Study*, Engineering Feasibility Study, Technical Appendix no.1, June 2002, p. 19]

And in 2004 the CEO of the Department of Urban Services made the remarkable admission to a parliamentary committee that

“a two-lane road would provide an extraordinarily good service to people in that part of Canberra for something like 22 hours a day.”

As early as 2002 the forecasts from Urban Services showed that daily traffic appeared to be already around the thresholds deemed necessary to justify a four lane road. At a minimum, all sections of the road have at least 20,000 vehicles. As the road approaches the Australian Institute of Sport, volumes are well over 25,000. Then south of Belconnen Way, the daily traffic volumes approach around the 30,000 mark.

The Government recently justified plans to duplicate the airport roads by saying that

“the level of traffic on Pialligo Avenue is currently at 26,000 vehicles a day, which clearly exceeds the limit of 18,000 vehicles per day for single lane roads.” (Canberra International Airport, Preliminary Assessment Pialligo Avenue Upgrade, 14 September 2007, p.11)

The GDE road carries traffic above this 18,000 threshold of traffic volume along its entire length. One standard is being applied for the airport roads and another to GDE.

Table: Forecast Growth in Daily Traffic on GDE

Section of GDE	326,000 pop (year 2006)	360,000 pop (year 2016)	400,000 pop (year 2026)	500,000 pop (year 2051)
North of Barton Highway	38,900	45,900	52,600	55,800
Near Kaleen	20,100	41,700	51,200	52,500
Near AIS	26,100	38,600	48,600	51,300
South of Belconnen Way	29,700	37,900	49,900	54,300
South of Aranda	28,500	36,800	47,600	49,100

The project description for GDE on the federal Government’s AusLink website (www.auslink.gov.au) states that the two lane road will have a daily capacity for 30,000 vehicles. This is presumably information supplied by the ACT Government. But the 2002 modelling data suggested that traffic in 2006 would be rubbing up against this threshold on Caswell Drive and would also be very close to this threshold where GDE runs behind the AIS (south of Ginninderra Drive).

Evidence Since the Single Lane Road Opened

Since the single lane road has opened in April 2008, traffic tests have shown that the traffic is travelling well below the speed limit. Director of Roads ACT Tony Gill revealed on radio that traffic on the new nine kilometre road has been moving remarkably slowly.

“We keep a record basically how things are going, where there are operational issues, where there are some problems. We’ve for instance, in the last few weeks, we’ve had people travel from the Barton Highway down to Glenloch in as short as 12 minutes and as long a time perhaps 23 days later as 28 minutes.” [Radio 666 2CN 7/4/2008]

A 12 minute journey would mean that the fastest speed in peak time is 45 kilometres per hour. And a 28 minute journey equates to a speed of just 19 kilometres an hour.

Gungahlin is Canberra’s fastest growing region, with entire new suburbs coming on stream every year. And new residents in Gungahlin have been lied to by Labor about when this road would come on stream.

Traffic problems in Gungahlin have caused some residents to move home. ACT Government Minister Simon Corbell was one of them! He told the Canberra Times that he and his family moved out of Gungahlin partly because of the inadequate roads.

“One of the very significant issues to us was travel time” Mr Corbell said. “It became very frustrating” He “completely understood” the concerns of Gungahlin residents who saw the traffic delays as the last straw. “That’s exactly why the Gungahlin Drive Extension needs to be built.” (*Canberra Times*, 15/4/2004, p.5)

Examples of what Canberrans say about the Single Lane fiasco

“For such an important and costly road, why on earth hasn’t it been made at least two-lane (each way) from the outset? It’s surely a false economy to spend \$120 million on a single-lane road now, with the idea of widening it later as traffic increases.”

R.S. Gilbert, Turner (*Canberra Times*, 30/7/2007)

“Three years ago I moved my family to Gungahlin. The Gungahlin Drive Extension was under way and promised a long overdue exit path from Gungahlin. Fast forward three years (yes, three years to construct) and what do we have? Probably the worst possible outcome – a joke of a single-lane track to move commuters from Canberra’s fastest-growing town centre.”

Chris Robey, Nicholls (*Canberra Times* 17/3/2008)

Mr Stanhope’s Broken Election Promise

Mr Stanhope promised in 2001 to build the road by 2004 with four lanes and at a cost of \$53 million.

But Stanhope Labor did not sign the first major works contracts until November 2005, one year after the whole project should have been finished!

And the second contract wasn’t signed until May 2006, two years after the road was originally scheduled to be finished.

The Cost Blowout

After the 2001 election, Mr Stanhope Labor very quickly downsized the road from four lanes to two and blamed this on cost increases. As the years dragged by, Labor blamed each new cost blowout on increases in the cost of materials and labour.

The Government’s 2002 estimate of \$53 million for only two lanes blew out five years later to \$120 million for two lanes. If the price tag is adjusted in real terms, we are looking crudely at an approximate doubling of price. But road construction and maintenance costs increased only 28% over this period, as measured by the federal Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics.

If Labor had not delayed this project so long, costs would not have spiralled out so much.

Estimate update	Total cost from Barton Highway, inclusive of Caswell Drive and Glenloch Interchange	
	4 Lane cost (including the initial 2 lanes)	2 Lane cost
2001-02 Liberal budget	\$53 million	Nil estimate provided
Estimates May 2002 under ALP Government (Hansard 23/7/2002, pp.405-6)	\$40 to 45 million (excluding Caswell Drive & Glenloch)	\$53 million
Estimates May 2003 under ALP Government (Hansard 29/5/03 pp.921-933)	\$97 million	\$57 million
Estimates May 2004 under ALP Government (Hansard 21/5/2004, p.478)	\$120 million	\$71 million
Estimates May 2005 under ALP Government (Hansard 25/5/05, pp.672-5)	Nil estimate provided	\$86 million
Estimates May 2007 under ALP Government (Hansard 26/6/07, p. 707)	Nil estimate provided	\$120 million

Fully Costed and Funded

Stanhope Labor has said in its May 2008 Budget that it will spend \$1.446 billion on infrastructure over the next five years. Despite this massive spendathon, there is very little money committed to roads. We will redirect \$93 million from this total infrastructure spend and spend less overall than Labor will spend on Infrastructure.

Canberra has the economic capacity today to invest in our major infrastructure. Stanhope Labor has raked in windfall stamp duty receipts, windfall GST revenue and has increased ACT Government taxes and charges. At a time of a \$1.6 billion dollar revenue boom, Canberrans are asking what we have to show for this.

Construction work will commence as soon as possible, with particular focus on fixing the Caswell Drive end of the road, where it is busiest, and the Glenloch Interchange which gets gridlocked and causes congestion to flow back up the road.

Labor has met repeated cost blow-outs on GDE by diverting money from other worthy ACT road projects (like Tharwa Drive). The Canberra Liberals will not take Labor's policy of robbing Peter to pay Paul.

The cost of duplicating GDE has been officially estimated by government officials at between \$65 million to \$90 million.

- Advice to an Assembly Committee in 2004 indicated a formula for approximate costing of duplication, which provides a result of around \$65 million in present day dollar terms (Hansard, *Select Committee on Estimates, Approp Bill 2004-05*, 21 May 2004, pp. 478-9).
- The Director of Roads ACT Mr Tony Gill recently indicated to the media in March 2008 that construction within the next five to 10 years would be at an estimated cost of \$90 million (*North Side Chronicle*, 11/3/2008, p.1).
- Mr Gill also confirmed on radio that the cost would be \$90 million. (Radio 666 2CN 7/4/2008)

The Canberra Liberals have consulted with experts in the road construction field and believe that an estimate of around \$85 million is achievable and reasonable. We have also allowed a ten per cent contingency to ensure our estimate is at the conservative end. We will seek to manage costs to keep them as low as possible

and if we can achieve better value for money, then we will do so.

Our financing commitment is set out below.

	2008-09 \$m	2009-10 \$m	2010-11 \$m	2011-12 \$m
GDE – Duplication from Barton Hwy to Glenloch Interchange	13.5	55.0	25.0	
Parkway Vegetation		0.5	1.0	

We will not include public artworks within the scope of work for the Parkways. Mr Stanhope included \$750,000 of artworks in the initial stages of building Gungahlin Drive Extension.

We will commit \$1.5 million of funding to plant vegetation alongside the duplicated road, to upgrade this road from a Freeway to a Parkway.