

Newcastle Inner-city Western Bypass

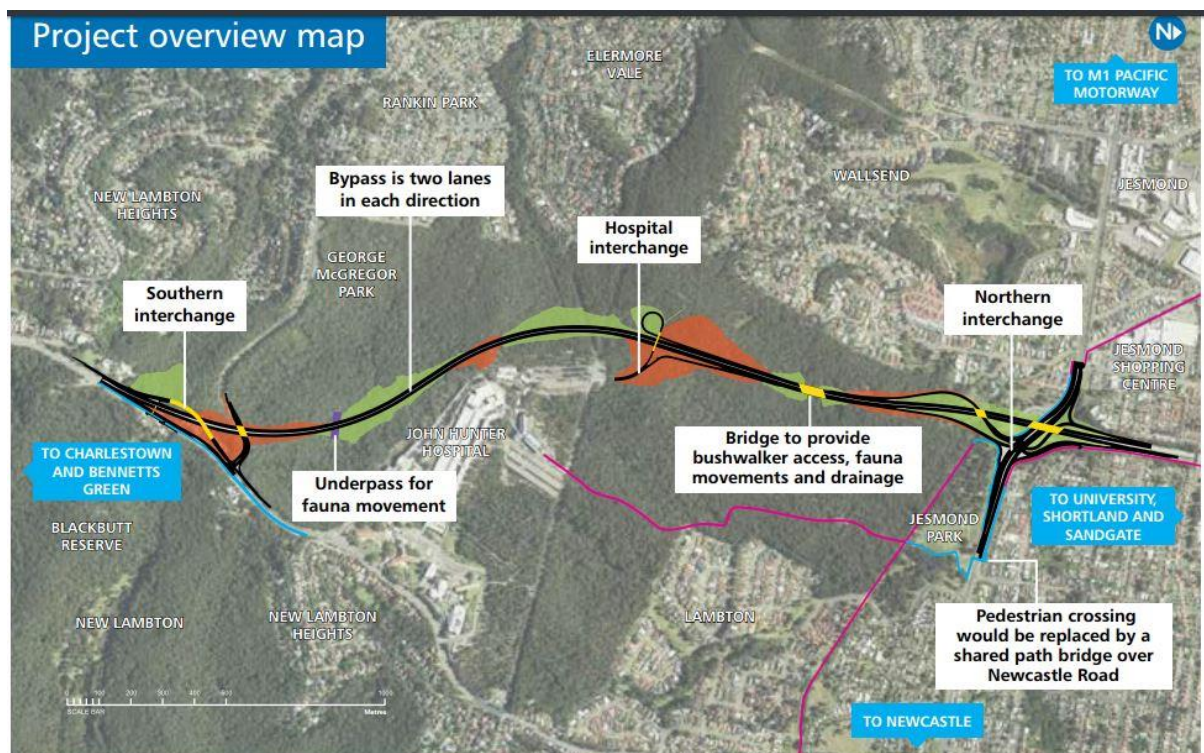
Let me introduce myself, I am a Newcastle taxi driver and as such I understand the traffic in Newcastle as every taxi driver does. There is nothing in this proposal that I feel confident would produce a good result for the traffic flow in Newcastle. While it will relieve some traffic concerns at the Newcastle Road and Croudace Road intersection due to traffic going behind the hospital it will do little at the McCaffery Road intersection. There are far better options as I see it.

From the outset road and transport infrastructure must be considered as parts of a whole unit and as such it is imperative that when a government designs major roads all transport options in conjunction with the area must be considered. All other infrastructure, which can include community facilities such as schools, shopping centres and in this case universities and private housing, must be taken into account. The decision of successive governments to downgrade public transport to a token and unsustainable system does place greater dependence on road traffic of private vehicles and so therefore all major road construction decisions must consider the impact on the communities need to travel in essentially private cars. Members of this government know next to nothing of the cost recovery options between major road construction costs and the supply of efficient and attractive public transport and as such must be more careful with decisions on major road constructions as the alternative to reliable public transport is virtually removed from the people in Newcastle in spite of the over \$160m spend on the removal of rail services into the city of Newcastle. This Government is irresponsible in its decisions as it chooses not to understand the travelling needs of the public in and around Newcastle. In a briefing with the former Transport Minister I outlined a blue print of functional transport solutions that would cost far less than the \$160m currently being spent on the truncation of the rail services to the city centre of Newcastle. This decision will make public transport less desirable and therefore private vehicles more important which will in turn cause greater congestion on the road network of Newcastle. With this in mind I will turn to the project at hand.

I have been aware of the history of this proposed road ever since my arrival in Newcastle in the early 1980's. I went back through history and examined the details since 1935 when this road became more than just a line on a map. The community of Newcastle has been waiting 81 years for this quite short road to be constructed and now we have a proposal for the missing link that has been trotted out many times before at various times and places. In meetings in the 1980s the connection at McCaffery Drive was totally rejected because it did

not resolve the important issues of the section from essentially Myall Road to McCaffery Road. (The main issues are: general traffic congestion between Myall Road and McCaffery Drive, the 40 kph school zone, congestion at Cardiff Road and Lookout Road intersection, congestion at the McCaffery Road and Lookout Road intersection, the congestion in front of the Hospital entry at Kookaburra Circuit and finally the congestion at the Russell Road and Croudace roads intersections). This proposal falls short once again and should be rejected once again. This has essentially been sitting in Mathew Mate's bottom drawer for about 20 years with the only significant change being some of the detail concerning the connection at both the Jesmond end and the McCaffery Road ends, as well as the removal of full connectivity to the John Hunter Hospital site – that is, to facilitate entry and exit connections, both north and south, between the hospital site and the by-pass road.

The overview

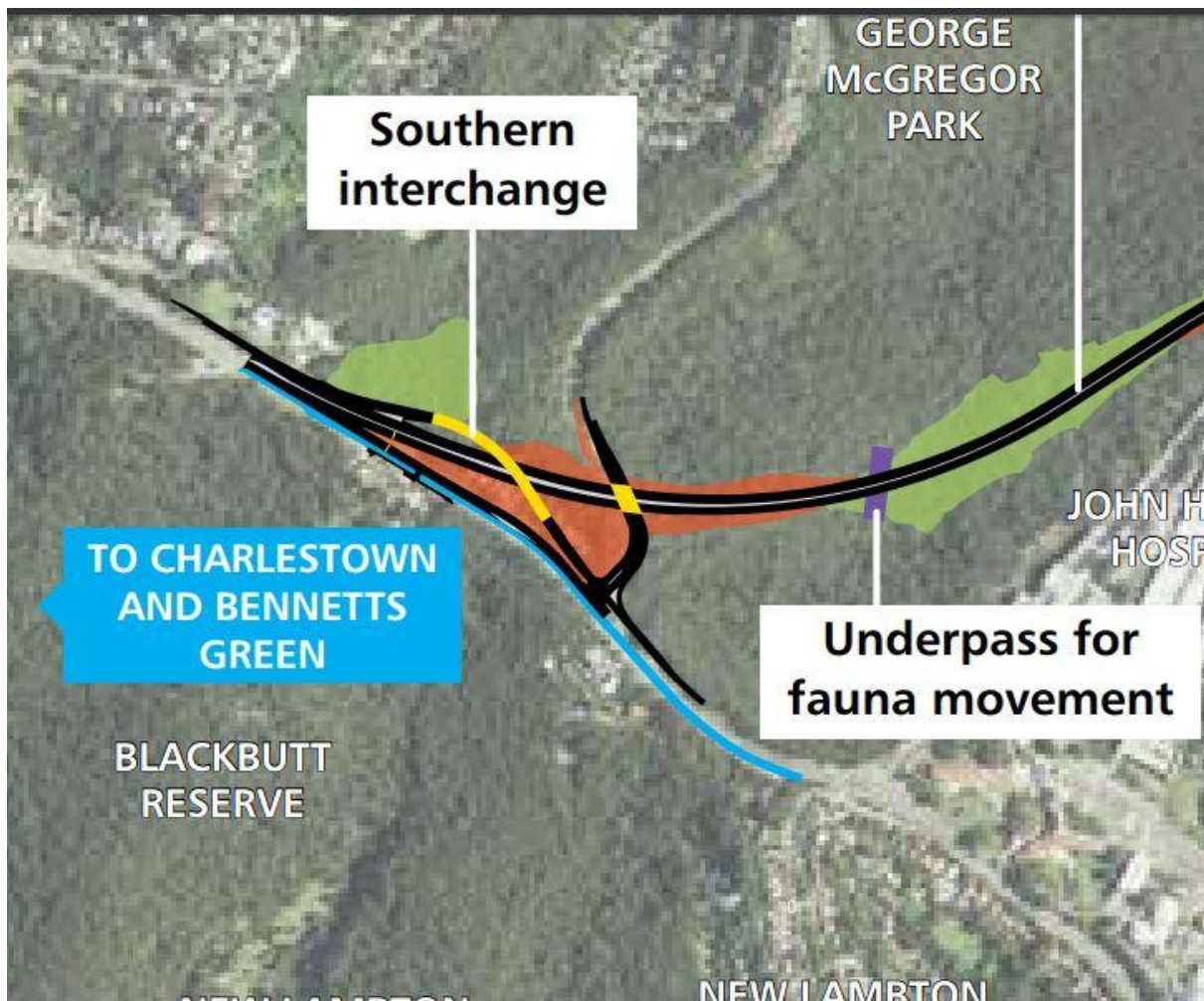


At the ceremonial commencement of the construction to the John Hunter Hospital, I clearly remember the then Premier, Neville Wran, referring to the main entry to the hospital being via the high speed by-pass road to be constructed west of the Hospital site. He gave reference that this hospital was uniquely located so as to have fast access from both the north and south as this was more than a hospital for just the Newcastle areas but for the Hunter Valley. A hospital site of this size needs many good access roads and we have seen issues of traffic congestion on the main access road making it very difficult for the emergency vehicles to get quick and well managed access to the Emergency Department of the hospital, from time to time. It is extremely concerning that planners, in 1935, knew that this road was essential for the good traffic movement in the inner city area, and yet we have had to wait now 81 years to have a proposal that is still not going to resolve the traffic

problems! The solution is so close by if only wise and concerned attention was given to the real traffic needs of the travelling public in and around Newcastle.

Some may say that we should be satisfied with this proposal; but I say waiting for 81 years to have a road constructed and then to get something that is a total compromise is just not good enough!

The southern interchange



It is with deep concern that I have carefully examined the proposed connection of the inner-city bypass. I note from the outset that the decisions to have 40KPH speed limits around schools was for the safety of school children and that it was as a strong proposition that high volume roads and high speed roads ought not to be directed into these protected 40 kph schools zones. I recall in many public meetings with Mathew Mate (then from the RTA) where this was pointed out, and that there were many discussions about tunnelling under the hill between rail line at Tick Hole Tunnel area and the valley at the side and rear of the hospital. While I admit that there are some engineering challengers to this proposal due the undermining of the area, they are not insurmountable. The lives of school children

are at stake here and to me they are most important; perhaps to the Department and the government they are not that important.

Traffic congestion is created by the combination of the volume of traffic, the traffic lights at Cardiff Road and the 40 kph traffic restrictions. It seems to me that nothing in this proposal will assist in solving this traffic congestion problem BUT it may and most probably will make it a lot worse. This is the wrong proposal for this area.

As to the proposal for the actual southern end of the interchange, I have concerns that the McCaffery Drive intersection will not function very well at all as there is no access to the by-pass for those travelling north. As the nearest connection is the hospital interchange this may well increase the traffic access to the hospital site from the by-pass at this point. Peak hour at this point is currently highly congested with very long queues.

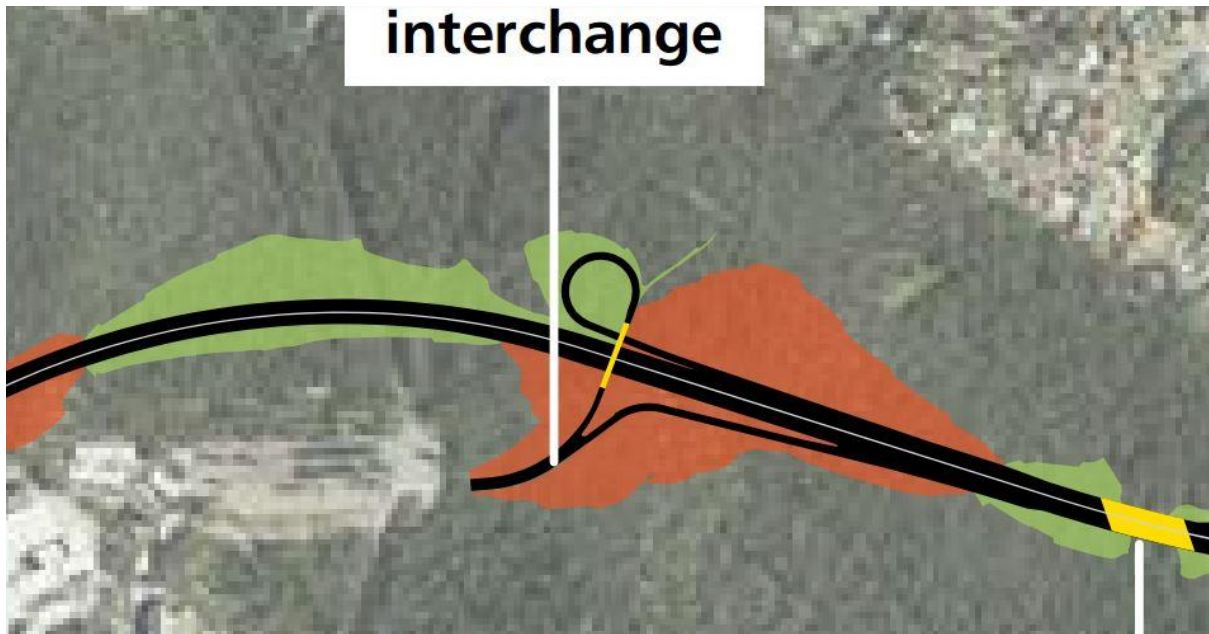
Note that the traffic from the south needing to go to Elmore Vale can be considerably significant and I would envisage excessive queueing due to the traffic lights. It is not unusual for the traffic to be banked up as far back as Cardiff Road. This will not assist traffic congestion in my view.

The section between McCaffery Drive and Myall Road is in fact essentially the old Charlestown Road and Lookout Road and is not in any way a by-pass road whatsoever. The fact that there is a 40kph school zone is evidence enough, and strong reason enough to re-do the plans and not to just postpone the work. This should have been completed so many years ago. I again contend that a tunnel is very do-able and must be seriously investigated. This road in Sydney would, as a matter of course, have as its first option a tunnel and no less consideration must be given to roads in other parts of the state of NSW. Newcastle is the sixth largest city in Australia and the second largest city in NSW and as such needs road and transport networks that will make the city work well. It is imperative that smart and wise decisions are made in regard to road and transport infrastructure so that the city can grow well. I point out that zero expense was spared for the Hunter expressway that was built in almost record time and yet this inner city by-pass has a less than second rate plan after 81 years of deliberations and procrastination for a vital road connection.

The Hospital link is only a half connection and is only half right because it is only planned to do half a job It is totally unwise to have such a plan in place. It is imperative at such a large hospital site that as many entry and exit options as possible should always be considered, as we cannot know what future urgent situation may develop. We must consider that the bushland surrounding the hospital site may be a source of urgent evacuation, or even a

future earthquake emergency, as we had in 1989, could mean that quick access to the site would be imperative for the protection of lives in the community.

The Hospital interchange



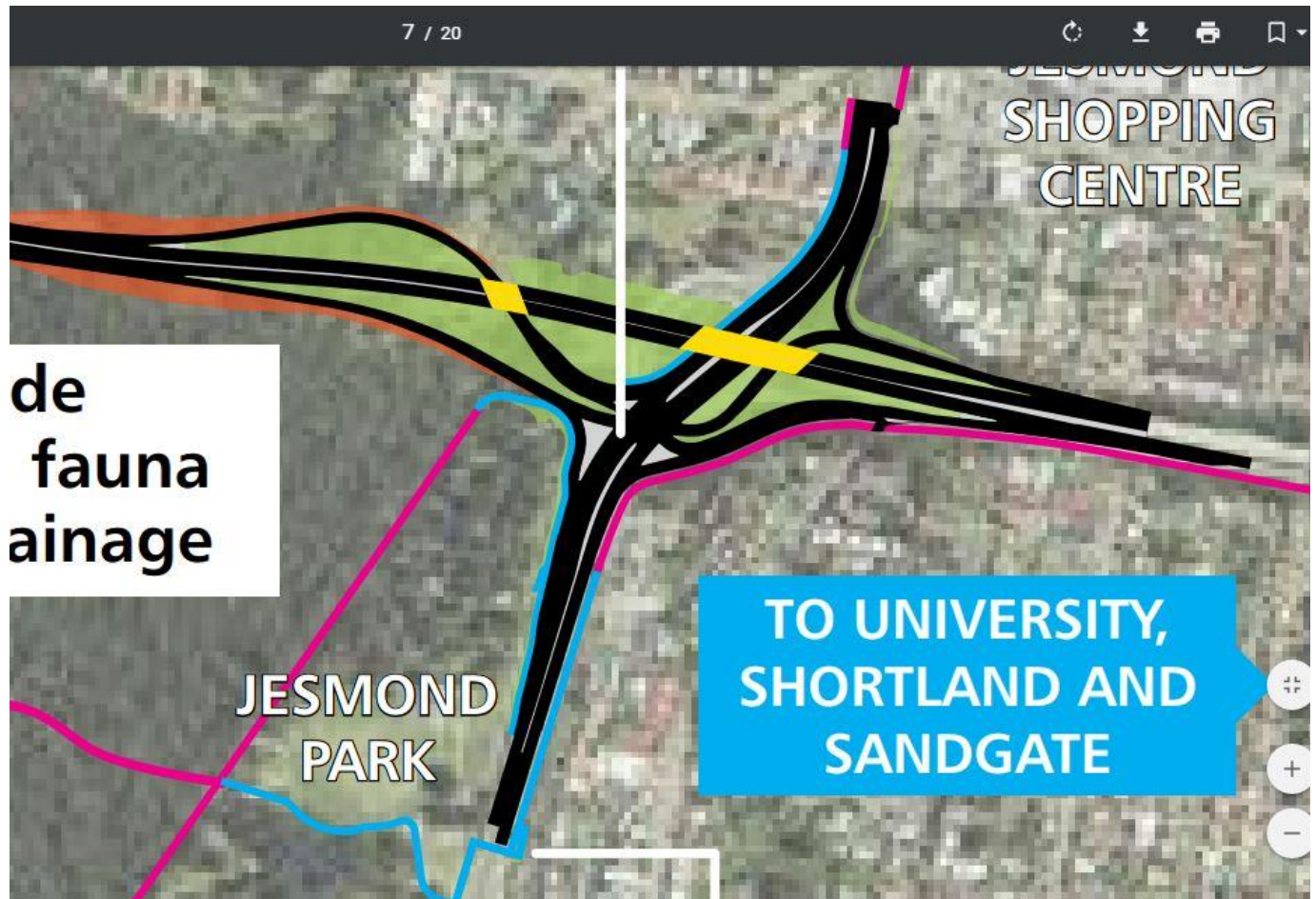
The continual drip feed funding of major infrastructure is the main reason that compromised decisions are constantly being made. Every plan that is modified and moves away from the original intent of that plan, causes infrastructure to be continually delayed, and ends up costing more and becoming less effective than originally planned. Major road structures need to be well-planned without compromise! To re construct a major road is a total waste of community resources; I, as a tax payer, have a direct interest in not wasting our money.

The current front access, at Kookaburra Circuit, to the hospital is in an appalling state with no sign of repairs being undertaken. As an aside, the total disgrace of this road is causing many who must travel over this poorly-constructed road to suffer considerable pain. As a wheelchair taxi driver, I am acutely aware of this unacceptable situation on many of my customers. IT MUST BE FIXED AND VERY SOON. I have experience in road construction and I can say with confidence that the foundation of this current entry was never well prepared and is the cause of the current shocking state of this roadway.

I recall the second entry into the hospital site was a long and protracted decision and is inefficient in the manner of the design. Then again the evidence of the indecision of the entry in to the hospital is demonstrated by the continual changes that were made to the now main entry. Bearing in mind that the main entry was to be via the yet to be built bypass road we cannot alone blame the designers of the John Hunter Hospital but rather the excessive delay of 81 years to arrive at where we currently find ourselves with yet

another compromise major infrastructure decision. A delayed decision is often a poor choice to make – dithering will rarely produce a good result. We the have evidence here!

The northern interchange



The northern interchange at Jesmond Park will not assist the traffic flow on Newcastle Road at all, in fact it will add to the continual afternoon parking lot that is westbound traffic currently happening between Lambton and Jesmond. This will also add to the eastbound parking lot between Wallsend and Jesmond on Newcastle Road. Adding an additional set of traffic light to stop all of the traffic will not assist the traffic flow on Newcastle Road.

The whole road infrastructure around the Jesmond and the Newcastle University is poorly designed. I will take a wide view of the area firstly before detailing the problems that I see with the current plan. Some in the government, or government departments, may consider the university is somewhat separated from government and as such the government may hide behind the point that “the university does not consider this to be wise use of ‘their funds’ or even other things are more important use of funds”. The University is a creation of government and receives funds from various sources including government and in the overall picture is still an instrument of government; therefore, the government, as such has responsibility for the effective function of the university and the manner in which it affects the community in which it resides. Given that the university is a large complex that attracts thousands of people almost every day and that the government has chosen (by default) not

to have effective public transport to deliver the majority of the people to the university it is beholden that good, wise and appropriate roads be created so that the people may efficiently get to the university without gridlocking the area which is what happens currently. I might add I have proposed a number of effective public transport options some of which I presented to Gladys Berejiklian when she was the Transport Minister and while she said she liked the proposals she could not support them **because** “the decisions were already made by the executive government”. Because the government has all but totally destroyed any possibility of effective public transport options as we are now dealing with roads and that alone; so we need to examine the effective movement of vehicles on the roads in and around the Jesmond area.

With this in mind I, again, suggest a new entry into the university. Traffic travelling south towards the University, on Highway 123, should be able to enter the university via a short link entry near where there is an overpass on Highway 123 which goes into the Newcastle Institute for Energy. This would take such traffic off the roundabout overpass connection at University Drive, thus giving some traffic relief to the Wilkinson Avenue and Bluegum Road traffic as well as the northbound traffic leaving Highway 123 at this point. This was previously rejected without comment but should be seriously looked as a strong traffic management plan.

The level of congestion at the Jesmond Park end of Newcastle Road in both the mornings and in the afternoons needs a better solution than the proposal. There is the space and the possibility of a solution similar to the M7 and the M4 intersections, near Eastern Creek, where the traffic can continue to flow instead of having to face a total stop via a new set of traffic lights. We have waited for 81 years so we must get it right for both today and the future. Newcastle Road is facing an increase in traffic volume potential due to the developments continuing near the Link Road and each side of Minmi Road with residents needing to travel to inner city areas for employment and other activities.

I am pleased for the plan to have a pedestrian bridge over Newcastle Road at the Jesmond Park. I would hope that the bridge is designed to be wheelchair friendly and capable for push bikes as well.

I am more than prepared to attend in person to underline my serious concerns in connection of this whole project and how it fits into the entire community of Newcastle.