

## **Sustainable Transport Implications of Murdoch Drive Connection to Kwinana Freeway and Roe Highway**

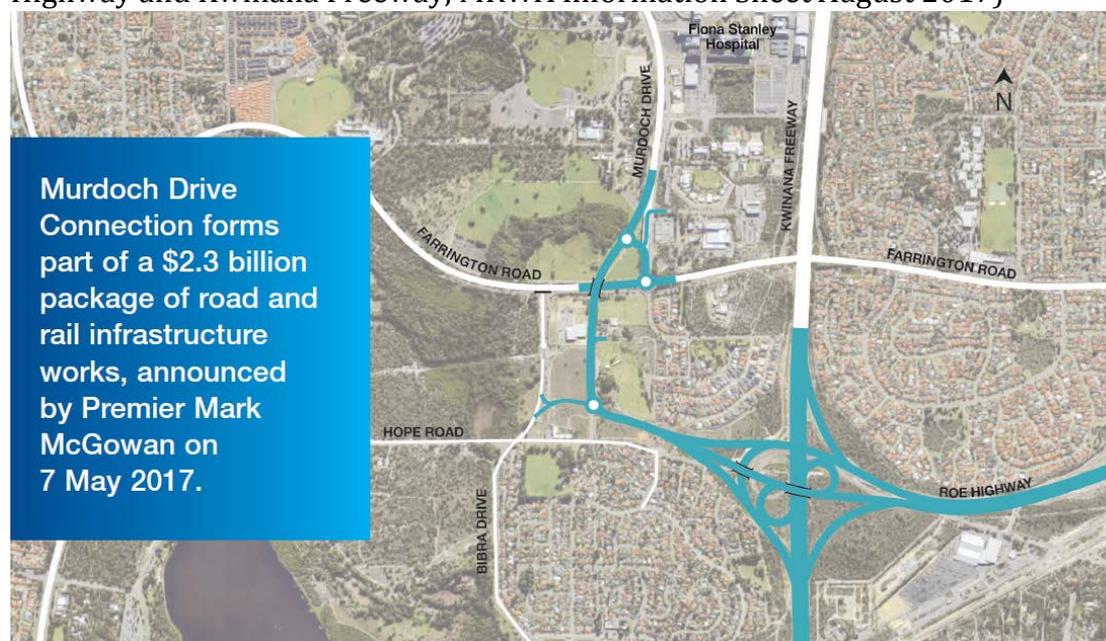
*A Statement of The Beeliar Group: Professors for Environmental Responsibility 2017*

### **Introduction**

Main Roads WA's (MRWA's) Information Sheet dated 17<sup>th</sup> August, 2017, provides a rationale for the Murdoch Drive Connection and briefly outlines the project timetable, land impacts and noise management.

The Connection (which is illustrated below) has a project budget of \$100 million and "initial construction activity" is expected to begin in mid to late 2017. Night works that include drilling and digging in discrete areas for service locations and environmental investigations began on 22<sup>nd</sup> August. Notice has been given of, and nominations invited for, a Construction Reference Group, which will inform the detailed design development and construction process for the project; help identify and respond to project issues and opportunities identified by project stakeholders; and communicate project matters to and from relevant stakeholder groups. Nominations for membership of the Group closed on 28<sup>th</sup> August.

**Murdoch Drive Connection** (copied from Murdoch Drive Connection to Roe Highway and Kwinana Freeway, MRWA Information Sheet August 2017)



The Connection project comprises extension of Murdoch Drive south from Farrington Road to provide connections to Roe Highway and Kwinana Freeway. Said to have been planned in various ways for over 10 years, the Project's overall aim is to: "Reduce congestion, provide better access to Fiona Stanley Hospital (FSH) and help the Murdoch Activity Centre (MAC) meet its economic potential as a major employment and research centre."

The Project's purported key benefits are to:

- Relieve peak time congestion on Murdoch Drive, South Street and Kwinana Freeway
- Provide shorter, more predictable journey times for those who live and work in the Murdoch Precinct
- Improve access to and from FSH for visitors, patients and emergency vehicles
- Support the ongoing development of the MAC as a major employment, education and research centre.
- Improve connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists between the end of Roe Highway and Farrington Road/Murdoch Drive.
- Complement other new road projects including the widening of Kwinana Freeway Northbound from Russell Road and Roe Highway and the development of Perth's first "Smart Freeway" between Roe Highway and the Narrows Bridge.

Its scope of works is described as being:

- Murdoch Drive realigned and extended to Farrington Road.
- A grade separation at Farrington Road and Murdoch Drive.
- Extension of Murdoch Drive from Farrington Road to provide connectivity with Kwinana Freeway and Roe Highway.
- A new roundabout on Murdoch Drive, between Farrington Road and Bramanti Road, which will intersect with the existing Allendale Entrance roundabout
- The realignment of Bibra Drive to tie in to a new roundabout at the southern end of Murdoch Drive, disconnecting it from Farrington Road
- Bridge improvements over Kwinana Freeway.
- New Principal Shared Path along the Kwinana Freeway.
- Shared path along Murdoch Drive to Farrington Road (including local connections to Hope Road and Peterborough Circle).
- New footbridge west of Kwinana Freeway over Murdoch Drive.
- Noise wall adjacent to residential properties.

The argument put for building the Connection is framed around two related points: current constraints on vehicular access to FSH and the MAC precinct's current road network do not provide efficient access now, and are inadequate to serve future needs. However, its subtext is very clear in the "key benefit primacy" of "*Relieve peak time congestion on Murdoch Drive, South Street and Kwinana Freeway*". **No evidence based on past or present observations, or future projections, has been presented that would justify the Connection in terms of FSH and MAC access needs, and it is well-established that road building does not reduce congestion.** Just as traffic begets roads (such as those proposed), roads beget traffic!

### ***Access to Fiona Stanley Hospital***

With respect to access to FSH, we contend that, there are much cheaper and less disruptive alternatives for improving access to FSH than construction of the proposed Murdoch Drive Connection. For this component of the project

justification to have any credibility, current data on and forecast generation of traffic in and out of FSH must be supplied and a range of alternative options considered.

### ***Access to and circulation within the MAC***

With respect to access to and circulation within the MAC, the Project is contrary to broader State policy set down in *Directions 2031* (2010) and *State Planning Policy 4.2 - Activity Centres* (2010). It is also contrary to the *Murdoch Specialised Activity Centre Structure Plan* (2014).

### **Directions 2031**

Published in August 2010, *Directions 2031*, a product of the WA Department of Planning and WA Planning Commission, “replaces all previous metropolitan strategic plans for the metropolitan Perth and Peel region and supersedes the draft Network City policy. It provides direction on:

1. how we provide for a growing population whilst ensuring that we live within available land, water and energy resources;
2. where development should be focused and what patterns of land use and transport will best support this development pattern;
3. what areas we need to protect so that we retain high quality natural environments and resources; and
4. what infrastructure we need to support our growth.”

The then Minister for Planning stated in his Foreword that, “The framework provides for different lifestyle choices, vibrant nodes for economic and social activity and a *more sustainable urban transport network*”. Sustainable personal transport has a focus: first on walking, second on cycling, third on public transport and fourth on motor cars. The **Main Roads ‘fact sheet’ does not reference public transport as a mode of travel, and walking and cycling are addressed only as a consequence of the road proposal itself** – not as a mode more holistically across the precinct.

*Directions 2031* sets a clear direction for public transport and its role in activity centres: “An integrated system of public and private transport networks that are designed to support and reinforce the activity centres network.”

**MAC is an activity centre designed around transit oriented development principles.** *Directions 2031* provides clear policy on this – “planning and developing key public transport corridors, urban corridors and transit oriented developments to accommodate increased housing needs and **encourage reduced vehicle use**”. The Connection will not encourage reduced vehicle use, to the contrary it will be likely to increase vehicle use.

*Directions 2031* calls for “reducing energy dependency and greenhouse gas emissions”. Vehicular transport is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Encouraging more vehicle use, the Connection will increase both energy dependency and emissions.

Directions 2031 seeks to maximise “essential service infrastructure efficiency and equity...” and to “develop an integrated approach to infrastructure and land use planning and development”. **In the context of MAC it is essential to maximize public transport infrastructure if infrastructure efficiency and equity (both social equity and transport mode equity) are to be achieved.** The Murdoch Drive Connection Project shows no sign of an integrated approach. It deals with what it sees as an isolated problem – access to two adjacent precincts – and addresses it by increasing capacity for, principally, private vehicular entrance into and egress from, and transit along, a road (Murdoch Drive) that separates the precincts. In the process it will make both pedestrian and bicycle movements across Murdoch Drive (within the precinct) more difficult.

### **State Planning Policy 4.2 - Activity Centres**

Also published in August 2010, *State Planning Policy 4.2 - Activity Centres* specifies “broad planning requirements for the planning and development of new activity centres and the redevelopment and renewal of existing centres in Perth and Peel”. The opening statement frames the approach – “reduce the overall need to travel; support the use of public transport, cycling and walking for access to services, facilities and employment; and promote a more energy efficient urban form.” Policy Objective 7 makes clear that activity centres should, “Maximise access to activity centres by walking, cycling and public transport while reducing private car trips”.

The policy is explicit in recognizing that there will be “Increasing demands for access, particularly to the Perth Capital City, strategic metropolitan, secondary and specialised centres” in Activity Centres that “may have adverse environmental and quality of life impacts due to increased peak period traffic congestion. *Future demands for access and movement cannot be met efficiently if there is a continued reliance on private cars and only a limited mode shift towards public transport, walking and cycling*”.

### **Murdoch Specialised Activity Centre Structure Plan**

Published in January 2014, this WA Planning Department and WA Planning Commission MAC-specific plan makes clear the intent to follow the direction of *Directions 31* and *State Planning Policy 4.2 - Activity Centres*. “There will be a dynamic shift in the approach to transport planning and the introduction of major public transport trunk infrastructure in an east-west direction will transform Murdoch from being an origin of public transport trips and a redirector of traffic, to a centre which is both an origin and destination.” Significantly, two rapid public transit projects are proposed: one to serve ‘within MAC precinct’, the second to provide a key east-west route along South Street. Any road proposal for the precinct must be considered in the context of these public transport projects given the clear policy intent to maximize public transport access and reduce private car trips.

### **Main Roads WA’s position**

It is a matter of record that publicly available **MRWA documents about the Murdoch Drive Connection make no reference to any of the policies**

**summarized above. Instead they appear to be in conflict with them. MRWA apparently sees a future of continuing reliance on private vehicles, as expressed in its intention (some may say obsession) to reduce congestion on roads that, in this case, serve the FSH-MAC precinct. This is contrary to WA Government policy that has been stated and restated over the past six years.**

### ***Short-term options for government***

We acknowledge that the State Government has a short-term need to minimise perceived waste of government funds consequent on its decision to terminate the Roe 8 development. We also understand that the Murdoch Connection, as currently conceived, is a major component of the Government's present plans to meet that need. We consider, however, that there are better ways of meeting this need than proceeding with the Connection, which owes too much to the now cancelled Roe 8 development concepts and too little to broader government policy for the MAC and the realities on the ground.

We therefore urge that the Government consider and accord priority to the wishes of the local communities, which, we understand, can be summarised as follows:

- a) A new design that doesn't assume Roe 8 will be built. A resolution that won't increase traffic movements on Hope Road, Bibra Drive and Farrington Road and will protect the ecological values of the Beeliar wetlands.
- b) A new design based on Murdoch Activity Centre traffic modelling rather than the Roe 8 traffic modelling, which was for a Freight Link to Fremantle Port.
- c) A comprehensive review of all the possible options for the best fit-for-purpose proposal – a proposal which, at its heart, does not assume Roe 8 will be built.
- d) A solution that incorporates public transport as a starting point, not as an add-on.
- e) Review and resolution of the problems with train and car park access from Kwinana freeway.
- f) A stop to all construction planning and works for the Murdoch Drive Connection until all the issues above have been reviewed and resolved to the community's satisfaction.
- g) Further consultation with the community before the preferred plan is implemented.

Should the Government choose to ignore these suggestions and decide to proceed with its currently advertised plan we request that it is amended as follows.

1. Delete the link road connecting the Roe 7 off ramp to Bibra Drive as this is likely to funnel Freeway and Roe Highway traffic through the Beeliar Wetlands, along Hope Road and Bibra Drive.

2. Remove the first roundabout at Baker Court; which is made unnecessary by deleting, as requested in (1) above, the link road connecting the Roe 7 off ramp to Bibra Drive.
3. Remove the cul de sac on Bibra Drive as this is not necessary if the link road is deleted, as requested in (1) above. This cul de sac will inconvenience local residents and businesses who use Bibra Drive and Farrington Road to access the MAC and the Fremantle area.
4. Rezone and sell off the surplus land from the Roe 8 Road reserve between Bibra Drive and Kwinana Freeway to prevent a future Government building Roe 8.
5. Consider installing an off ramp for ambulance use only linking Kwinana Freeway to Barry Marshall Drive.

Points 1, 2, 3 and 5 above are illustrated below by way of modifications to the map on page 1.



We recognize the importance of the flyover at Farrington Road if the current proposal is implemented because it will prevent Roe Highway traffic from using Farrington Road as an alternative “Roe 8”. Farrington and Hope Roads pass through environmentally sensitive areas and should be traffic calmed and restricted to local traffic as much as possible.

We wish to re-emphasize that the Murdoch Drive Connection to Roe Highway and the Kwinana Freeway should be solely to facilitate access from these freeways to the Murdoch Activity Centre. It should not have the effect of diverting traffic from other major roads onto Hope Road or Farrington Road as these pass through environmentally sensitive parts of the Beeliar Wetlands.

*Professor Carey Curtis, Curtin University, was the primary author of this Beeliar Group Statement. Other Beeliar Group members, particularly Emeritus Professor Philip Jennings, Murdoch University and Adjunct Professor Bruce Armstrong, University of WA, contributed to the final version.*