



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Private Members' Statements

15 May 2018

WALLSEND ELECTORATE ROAD TRAFFIC

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (19:42):

Congestion in Wallsend has reached crisis levels. Travelling down Newcastle Road during business hours is taking longer and longer, and traffic in the lane to turn right towards Shortland at the Jesmond roundabout often reaches to the crest of the hill at Jesmond. So frequent were the accidents caused by congestion that the speed limit on the main road connecting Wallsend and Newcastle was reduced by Roads and Maritime Services in March from 70 kilometres an hour to 60 kilometres an hour. Our western suburbs population is booming but the traffic infrastructure is not meeting the community's needs.

On 18 April, after the speed limit had been reduced, an accident involving two cars and a garbage truck at Jesmond threatened to cut off Newcastle Road. That would have forced traffic heading from Wallsend to Newcastle to travel through Shortland or Elmore Vale, taking suburban routes ill-equipped to deal with that sort of traffic. Those cars would have added to the traffic problems on Croudace Road and University Drive, which are already overburdened. Getting off the John Hunter Hospital campus at peak hour can take up to an hour, and parking around the University of Newcastle is next to impossible at the best of times.

I was contacted several weeks ago by a long-time resident of Shortland whose formerly quiet street is now frequently travelled by trucks wanting to avoid the Jesmond traffic snarl. He said, "I'm worried about having my grandkids around it all. We raised our kids in this area and it has always been sociable and quiet. Now it feels like we're being swamped in traffic. Even trying to drive to the Jesmond shops is getting harder and harder." A woman who has lived on University Drive for 50 years, since it was a no through road, has expressed similar concerns. She said, "My grandkids can't even come over for a visit anymore because there's just no

parking. It's gotten worse and worse over time as the university has grown, but this year it has just become staggering."

Stage five of the Newcastle Inner City Bypass will alleviate some of the pressure, but more needs to be done. Vital infrastructure projects, including the transport interchange at Glendale, are urgently needed to help alleviate the traffic problems. Once again, the Federal Government has failed to allocate any funding for this worthy project. The Glendale interchange, which has been acknowledged by Hunter mayors as the most important infrastructure project in the region, would serve to greatly enhance transport efficiency throughout the western suburbs. Unfortunately, getting it done has been like pulling teeth.

Physical infrastructure is only part of the solution. The changes that have been made to bus routes and timetables in the Newcastle region have been disastrous for commuters, leaving the network completely unworkable for many. Commuters who used to take public transport so they did not have to struggle to find a parking spot are being forced back into their cars. The review into bus services and timetables announced by private operator Keolis Downer must take this into account. In the meantime, the congestion is putting the squeeze on productivity in the local area, with countless hours being lost waiting in traffic. In terms of accessibility for emergency services vehicles, the danger is very real.

In lowering the speed limit on the drive from Wallsend to Newcastle, the Roads and Maritime Services noted that there were more accidents along that stretch than on comparable arterial roads throughout the State. Most of these accidents are a result of congestion. Lowering the speed limit might make it easier for drivers to slam on the brakes and avoid an accident but it does not stop the congestion. The western suburbs transport is failing. We need a comprehensive strategy involving a varied transport mix to address this issue.