



SPECIAL REPORT THE TRUTH ABOUT OUR SLOW TRAWL FREEWAYS AND WHY IT'S GOING TO GET WORSE WITH EVEN MORE TRAFFIC CONGESTION

50,000 more cars to clog our roads

By **TREVOR PADDENBURG**

WA'S clogged freeways will have to find room for an extra 50,000 cars a day within five years, new figures have revealed.

Despite the figures, Transport Minister Simon O'Brien said he had no plans to widen the traffic-choked Mitchell Freeway and would only upgrade a 4km stretch of the Kwinana Freeway.

Mr O'Brien blamed traffic congestion on the bad driving habits of West Australians — not poor road infrastructure.

Peak-hour traffic chaos has become so bad that WA's motoring groups, including the RAC and the Motor Trade Association, have labelled the situation a farce.

Main Roads figures, released to *The Sunday Times*, show average weekday traffic on the Kwinana Freeway south of the city peaked at 110,000 a day.

Main Road expects that figure to jump by another 50,000 vehicles — an increase of 31 per cent — in five years.

Weekday traffic on the Mitchell Freeway north of the city is even worse, with 136,000 vehicles a day clogging the major arterial road. By 2016, Main Roads predicts it will jump almost 10 per cent to 150,000 vehicles. Mr O'Brien said the Government was investing in upgrades of arterial roads and spend-

ing big on public transport, which he said was a better way to ease congestion.

But *The Sunday Times* tested peak-hour traffic this week, revealing a journey of just under 20km on the Kwinana Freeway from Cockburn Central Station to the city's Hay St exit took 52 minutes — an average speed of 22km/h and well below the mostly 100km/h speed limit.

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show the number of cars on the roads will continue to soar, with WA's population increasing by 64,300 to 2.3 million last year and continuing to grow by 220 daily. By 2020, Perth's population is expected to rise by 13 per cent, but road transport would increase by 34 per cent.

WA Motor Trade Association chief executive Stephen Moir said the Government's lack of planning was "short-sighted" and "just dumb".

RAC roads spokesman Matt Brown told the Government to pull its head out of the sand and invest in road upgrades to tackle spiralling congestion.

"It's not enough to talk about it. It's time to put the dollars behind it and make it happen. We're kidding ourselves if we think the problem will go away and kidding ourselves if we think it's not going to get worse," Mr Brown said. "If we don't act now we'll wake up with problems as bad

as Sydney or Melbourne. We will reach crisis point a lot quicker than we think, and by then the problems will be too big and too expensive to fix."

Curtin-Monash Accident Research Centre director Brett Hughes said congestion woes were compounding at an alarming rate, like a water pipe that was already at capacity and would burst with more pressure.

"Sydney's wrecked — it's a horrible place where people travel an hour and a half to get to work, and WA is going down the same path," Prof Hughes said. "Our problems are massive and they're going to get much worse, much faster."

But the Transport Minister blamed freeway congestion on the commuting habits of West Australians — not bad roads or infrastructure.

"Perth and WA more broadly are car-orientated places. That, coupled with a rapidly growing and more mobile population, has resulted in more cars on the road network," Mr O'Brien said.

Recent or planned upgrades of Reid Highway, Alexander Drive, Wanneroo Rd, Roe Highway and the Great Eastern and Great Northern highways were examples of the Government improving roads, with \$1.3 billion spent last financial year.

AVERAGE WEEKDAY TRAFFIC VOLUME

	NOW	2016	% INCREASE
■ Mitchell Fwy (north of Karrinyup Rd)	136,000	150,000	9.3
■ Mitchell Fwy (south of Hutton St)	134,000	150,000	10.6
■ Narrows Bridge	170,000	195,000	12.8
■ Kwinana Fwy (north of Canning Hwy)	99,000	150,000	34
■ Kwinana Fwy (south of Leach Hwy)	110,000	124,000	11.2
■ Causeway	55,000	75,000	33.3
■ Graham Farmer Freeway tunnel	95,000	100,000	5

Source: Main Roads



DOING THE KWINANNA FREEWAY SHUFFLE WITH ALL THE OTHER ONE-PERSON-PER-CAR MOTORISTS



DRIVEN TO DESPAIR: A survey by *The Sunday Times* of passing vehicles on the Mitchell Freeway and Kwinana Freeway revealed cars were occupied by a lone driver an average of nine out of 10 times. Just one in 10 cars had a passenger or were being used for car pooling. The pictures above were taken at 8am on Thursday of traffic heading north on the Kwinana Freeway.

WHAT THE EXPERTS WOULD DO TO EASE TRAFFIC CONGESTION ON WA'S FREEWAYS

MATT BROWN



RAC – Head of member advocacy

“ The battle to beat congestion needs to be fought on many fronts, but it's important to start now. We need increased government investment in our road network to create a better traffic flow, to look at new anti-congestion technology and investment to fix traffic troublespots. The Government needs to invest more in public transport. Businesses can also stagger hours or give employees the option of working from home. ”

STEPHEN MOIR



Motor Trade Association – WA chief executive

“ Congestion is here to stay unless we give consideration to three key areas: increase the number of lanes on major freeways and highways from the standard two; improve accessibility and availability of public transport, including light-rail options for inner-suburban areas and, finally, build better link roads and rail between major suburban centres such as Joondalup to Midland and Midland to Fremantle. ”

PROF BRETT HUGHES



Curtin-Monash Accident Research Centre director

“ One of the fundamental issues for freeway transport for Perth is urban density. The experts will say: good public transport, good road systems, fewer cars . . . but urban density is a critical issue. More people need to be able to live closer to where they live, work, learn and play. ”



 <p>DESMOND SNOOK</p>	 <p>SIMON O'BRIEN</p>	 <p>PROF D'ARCY HOLMAN</p>
<p>Main Roads executive director of road network services</p> <p>Main Roads plans to manage congestion through Intelligent Transport Systems technology such as variable message signs, which advise of crashes, delays, incidents, congestion and speeds; vehicle-detection systems, which pick up the number of cars and their speed; and installing fibre-optic cables along the Mitchell, Kwinana and Graham Farmer freeways and Roe, Reid and Tonkin highways to assist with future ITS. We will expand the use of monitoring cameras.</p>	<p>WA Transport Minister</p> <p>Managing traffic congestion requires multiple strategies, including land-use planning to achieve more balanced traffic flows and reduced travel, encouraging car pooling and the use of public transport, cycling and walking as alternatives to private vehicles. The growing use of technology . . . will also help manage congestion and reduce bottlenecks.</p>	<p>Road Safety Council independent chair</p> <p>Reducing the number of crashes saves lives, reduces injuries, reduces congestion and increases the reliability of travel time. Intersection crashes remain a great problem in metro areas, often resulting in serious injury and significant delays. In the future, more well-designed roundabouts, for example, could ease congestion and reduce crashes. Variable speed limits, combined with automated enforcement, can reduce journey times, enable smooth-flowing traffic and reduce crashes.</p>