



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES  
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Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Mr Mark Parton MLA

**Inquiry into the planning, management and delivery of road maintenance in  
the ACT**

**Submission 2 – Paul Coleman**

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	A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OFFICE
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The Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services  
Legislative Assembly for the ACT  
GPO Box 1020, CANBERRA ACT 2601

**Re: Inquiry into the planning, management and delivery of road maintenance in the ACT**

The Standing Committee

Thank you for the invitation for public submissions to your inquiry. By way of introduction and to outline my interest in your enquiry, may I state at the start that I am a bus driver with ACTION Buses who spends about eight hours a day, sometimes six days a week, traversing the ACT's roads, I also am a motorist, a cyclist and a pedestrian at times.

I have selected three main points that I would like to contribute to as part of your enquiry, believing that they fit within (my understanding of) the committee's "Terms of Reference".

**Signage**

Speed limit signage has always been very poor in the ACT. There is no evidence of any system or standards used as to the placement or size of signs used. While there was an upgrade to speed limit signage on arterial roads several years ago (several years after the introduction of mobile speed cameras) these have often been neglected, with signs now currently missing and not replaced, or if they have been replaced, often being replaced with smaller signs that are inappropriate, especially for arterial roads. The upgrade, I believe was done by an external contractor brought in to the ACT to complete this task and generally the signs were well placed and of a reasonable size and standard. However, signs installed by Roads ACT are generally not of this standard.

Speed limit signs are often too small. Roads ACT often uses signs that are much smaller than those used by our surrounding neighbours in NSW. I believe they are inadequate. At times small signs are even used on arterial roads, and when mounted on a light pole, are scarcely wider than the pole. Motorists should not be searching for speed limit signs, they should stand out.

Speed limit signage is often placed too close to intersections or corners and also too high rendering the signs unseeable by motorists as they turn into a street. Again, there seems to be no standard as to an appropriate distance from an intersection a sign should be to ensure it is useful and visible. Also no standard for mounting height appears evident.

A standard for speed limit sign placement has been to have one sign on the left of the roadway or one sign on the left and one on the right for emphasis. Roads ACT, sticking with its "no standard" approach now puts signs sometimes on the left, sometimes on the right and sometimes on the left and right. Motorists should not be searching for speed limit signs. There should be a reasonable standard of where and when one can expect to see a speed limit sign.

Speed limit signs become covered by trees or bushes and can remain that way for years on end. Other speed limit signs are actually installed behind tree branches and bushes which obstruct the sign. This to me is inexcusable – it is either deliberate or a demonstration of incompetence.

As part of the introduction of the 50km/h default speed limit in the ACT we were informed that “Street signs advising of speed limits other than 50km/h can be expected at: the start of the road; near major intersections; or at regular intervals along the road.” The works for this were never carried out, and examples abound across the ACT where speed limit signage is completely inadequate for streets with speed limits other than the default 50km/h.



**Slower**

From 1 June 2003, the default speed limit in the ACT will be 50km/h. The new 50km/h limit replaces the previous default speed limit of 60km/h.

This means that if you don't see a sign, the speed limit is 50km/h.

The new speed limit is being introduced due to favourable results from the 50km/h trial in the ACT and in line with the movement towards nationwide 50km/h default limits. Reports from the trial found significant reductions in speed and strong community support. Speed reductions translate into reduced crash risk, noise and pollution.

This new speed limit will be applied ACT wide. All streets included in the 50km/h trial will remain at 50km/h and a further 100, 60km/h streets will become 50km/h streets. The new streets are mainly used for access to residential and commercial properties. However, if a street is mainly used for traffic movements and access to main roads, the speed limit will remain 60km/h or above even if there are residential properties on this street.

**Simpler**

The new system is simple. Motorists should travel at 50km/h, unless otherwise notified.

School zones and other special areas will remain at their usual posted speed limit. Motorists are expected to observe speed signs at road-works. Any residential streets and roads where the speed limit is higher or lower than 50km/h will be clearly marked with speed signs.

Unless you are travelling on a road signposted at 60 km/h or higher, you must not exceed 50 km/h. The lower limit will apply as soon as you turn off that road onto any road without a speed sign.

The ACT will be modifying signage and changing the laws to allow for the new default limit. All the 50km/h signs associated with the trial will be removed as well as 60km/h signs on those streets where the speed limit will change to 50km/h.

Street signs advising of speed limits other than 50km/h can be expected at: the start of the road; near major intersections; or at regular intervals along the road.

**Safer**

This program is part of a nationwide strategy to reduce the incidence of injury and death due to motor vehicle accidents.

All Australian states and many countries have introduced the new limit. Research from Australia and overseas shows that even small reductions in vehicle speed can significantly reduce the number of deaths and the severity of injuries as a result of road crashes.

We all know that speed can be a major contributor to crashes on our roads, as high speeds reduce drivers' ability to stop quickly. In residential areas this can make all the difference if a child suddenly runs onto the road or a vehicle unexpectedly reverses out of a driveway.

Research shows that a car travelling at 50km/h has a braking distance of 10m shorter than a car travelling at 60km/h. This is a significant difference, enough to save a life or avoid serious injury.

Extract from information brochure released by the ACT Government as part of the introduction of the default 50km/h speed limit in the ACT.

With the introduction of the 50km/h default speed limit our speed limit regime became very complicated (despite claims of it being “simpler”) and actually beyond comprehension. Though one may wish to be obedient and adhere to speed limits in the ACT, the continuously changing speed limits and poor signage,

makes it actually impossible for motorists to always accurately know a road's allocated speed limit (or limits, as some roads have several) or to keep track of what limit zone they are in. Some roads have a different speed limit for different motorists depending on which way they enter into the road.

The complication was added to with the addition of 50km/h zones outside child care centres, despite Roads ACT stating on their website that this was an unnecessary addition as children attending child care centres are always attended by an adult when near the road and they stated that it would be an unnecessary complication to our speed limit regime, but it was introduced. It matters not whether a motorist drives through this area at Midday when the centre is open or Midnight when it is closed, the speed limit changes outside a child care centre. Then we had added the addition of 40km/h Area zones around town centres and group centres, adding yet another regime of speed limits. Some roads are only 700 metres long and have three speed zones on them. Now some school zones are not the standard 40km/h zones, some are now 30km/h zones. It all gets too hard and too distracting. Driving is actually about continually monitoring and adjusting, but Roads ACT is trying to legislate for every possible circumstance. Driving just isn't like that.

In addition to too many speed limit changes, there are too many superfluous signs on ACT roads. If our roads need so many signs to explain them, then our road design is just too complicated. Too many signs mean that motorists cannot possibly read them all and motorists start to ignore signs which could mean missing an important sign such as a speed limit change. As an example, I do not believe we need yellow diamond signs throughout the suburbs warning motorists of pedestrians. Seeing rows of houses is enough for the average citizen to think there may be people around because HOUSES = PEOPLE as a general rule. The overuse of such warning signs means they are ignored when they actually warn of something out of the ordinary (the old story of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf"). Roads ACT appears detached from the world of driving. I agree with the road engineer from Europe who said "apart from a few well-placed speed limit signs, very few other signs should be needed. Our roads should be self-explanatory."

## **Road Design**

The ACT used to have nice wide roads, which were recognised around the world as one of the reasons the ACT had one of the lowest road tolls. The roads were relatively easy and safe to traverse, even in large vehicles (buses). Unfortunately, the current fad from Roads ACT is the narrowing down of the roads leading to greater risk of impact with another vehicle or a pedestrian. I have had an increase in "near miss" incidents around Canberra's CBD since the modifications that narrowed roads and tightened corners.

With wider roads too, vehicles tend to use slightly different "tracks" as they travel the roads, but when roads are narrowed, every vehicle follows the exact same track leading to repeated pressure on the exact same point of the bitumen surface, resulting in compression, uneven surfaces, cracking and pot holes.

The narrowed and tight corners now around the Canberra CBD show evidence of the curbing repeatedly being struck by vehicle tyres. The concrete gutters are black with tyre rubber, which over time makes the concrete crumble and collapse. Concrete of course is stronger than rubber so the damage to tyres is far more horrendous, but this is not covered as part of the roads maintenance program. At ACTION Buses drivers have been advised that there has been an increase in damage to tyre sidewalls due to hitting curbs. The financial and environmental cost of Roads ACT not constructing appropriate roads is showing.

Increased maintenance to the roads infrastructure, increased maintenance to the vehicles. This is not cost effectiveness. This is counterproductive to sustainability. This has a negative impact on road users.

Some of the modifications have also placed traffic light signals behind trees. I have had one incident where a car came straight through an intersection on Marcus Clarke Street, against a red light. Fortunately I saw the vehicle and stopped before I had gone far enough into the intersection for a collision to occur, but it was close. Another such incident I observed was on Constitution Avenue where new pedestrian lights are obscured by the trees that have been planted in front (part of the Constitution Avenue upgrade/downgrade). I was stopped at the red light in a bus in the left lane (bus lane) which obscured the traffic lights at the left of the road, a motorist coming down the right lane did not see the tree obscured traffic light on the right of the carriageway and continued straight over the pedestrian crossing. Fortunately on this occasion no one was on the crossing otherwise the outcome would have been different. I have advised Roads ACT of these two issues, sighting my examples.

### **Speed Humps**

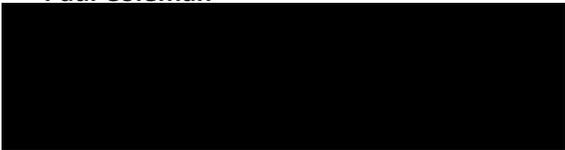
Speed humps also result in compression, cracking and pot holes before and after the humps due to the braking, thumping and acceleration of vehicles. They also have an impact on the suspension components of vehicles causing increased wear and tear. These components then need to be replaced which leads to increased economic and environmental costs. The other area of increased economic and environmental costs is of course in the extra fuel used as our road network creates an environment for the least efficient way of driving. The continuous braking and accelerating of vehicles massively increases fuel use, imitating the worst possible traffic conditions of being in "stop-start" traffic. This does not fit with an alleged desire for a more sustainable city.

The other major impact of speed humps is to road users themselves. Suspension components in cars and buses can be replaced, suspension components in people cannot. The wear and tear on human bodies, particularly our backs, from the continuous traversing of speed humps, and the wear on our shoulders from the continuous bracing of oneself and pulling on the steering wheel to negotiate our narrowing sinuous roads, is having an impact on our health. I have observed during my time at ACTION Buses that the two most common injuries to drivers are to their backs and their shoulders. At one point I had mentioned this to one of ACTION's Transport Officers who has been with ACTION since the 1980's, and he commented that he had seen an increase in this type of injury during his time at ACTION. I believe it will continue to be a growing problem as the ACT Government moves from a driver friendly road system to the abstract model it is developing.

Submitted for your consideration. Please see Appendix 1, 2 and 3 for additional information including photographs. The photographs are examples and are by no means exhaustive of the issues raised.

Sincerely

**Paul Coleman**



25 June 2017

# Inquiry into the planning, management and delivery of road maintenance in the ACT

## Submission—Appendix 1

### Speed Limit signs too small



This sign is a change down from an 80km/h zone to a 60km/h zone.

Not very convincing that Roads ACT wants motorists to see the change.

Streeton Drive, Rivett

Small signs used extensively around Canberra



### Small speed limit signs even on arterial roads

Athllon Dr, Greenway



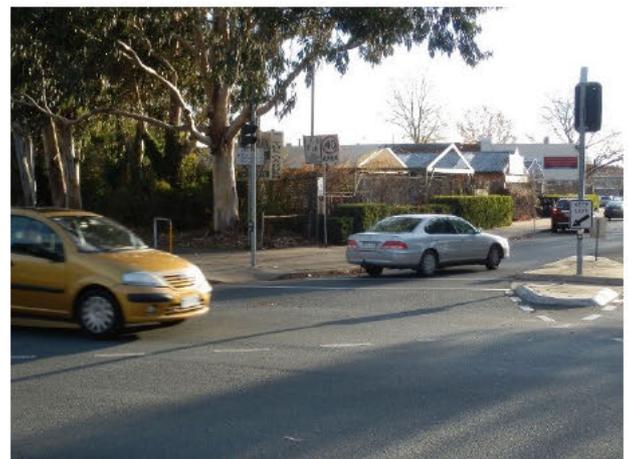
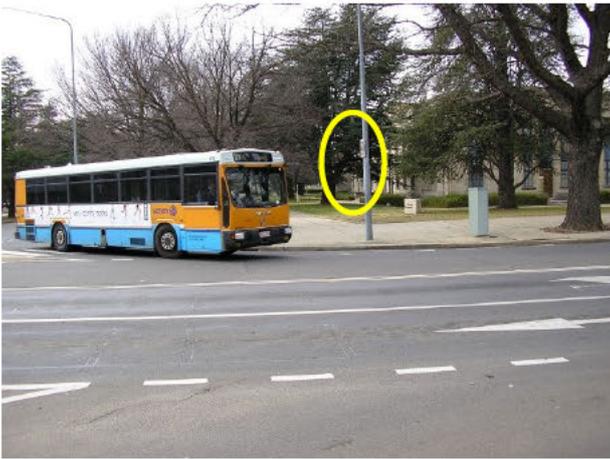
Small 50km/h signs with lots of writing.



Change of speed limit, Commonwealth Ave, Civic—the left sign is small and distracted with other signs. Repeater sign is small.



Signs too close to intersections or corners and too high—not visible to motorists



### The "Skyscraper" sign.

These are examples of signs placed so high they are well above where motorists are scanning for driving. These examples are in areas of probable high pedestrian activity. Motorists should be keeping their eyes low to observe pedestrians not planes.



### School Zones combined with 40 Areas

Surely a School Zone should be superseded when a 40 Area is applied. 40 Areas apply full-time, the School Zone is part-time but irrelevant in a 40 Area.

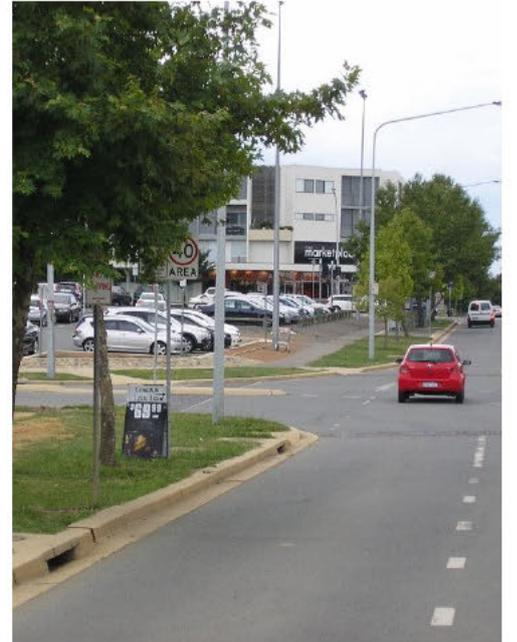
This does not give us confidence as to the competence or professionalism of Roads ACT in managing our roads. It certainly does not do anything to aid road safety, it detracts from it.



How many different speed signs can we have in short succession?



Signs overgrown by trees or bushes. Others are actually placed behind trees and branches.



## Too many superfluous signs.



We have come to dismiss yellow diamond signs in Canberra because there are so many of them.

More signs does not mean safer roads, it means more distractions.

If we need so many signs because there are now so many obstacles on our road network, we need less obstacles. It is sort of like deliberately breaking a window and sticking a sign on it to say "Warning, sharp broken glass".



Signs that tell us what is on a road we are not even on.



Signs as one approaches a roundabout that there are traffic lights ahead. (Every driver I saw was looking to the right for vehicles and did not even observe the "traffic light" warning sign on the left).

### An example: McCulloch Street, Curtin

There is a main street in the suburb of Curtin called McCulloch Street. It is about 1.2 kilometres long. A few years ago five speed humps were installed on this road and as part of the installation of these speed humps 54 additional signs to help warn of and explain the speed humps were also installed. These 54 signs were in addition to the already existing signs to do with the traffic calming measures that were already in place on McCulloch Street, as in the roundabouts.

Road Design and Speed Humps.



**Submission—Appendix 2**

**A look at Constitution Avenue, one of Canberra’s newest completed roads**

The design and construction of Constitution Avenue is, in a word, terrible—it is awkward to traverse, it is dangerous in that it increases the risk of sideswiping another vehicle or hitting a pedestrian or cyclist. It increases wear and tear on vehicles.

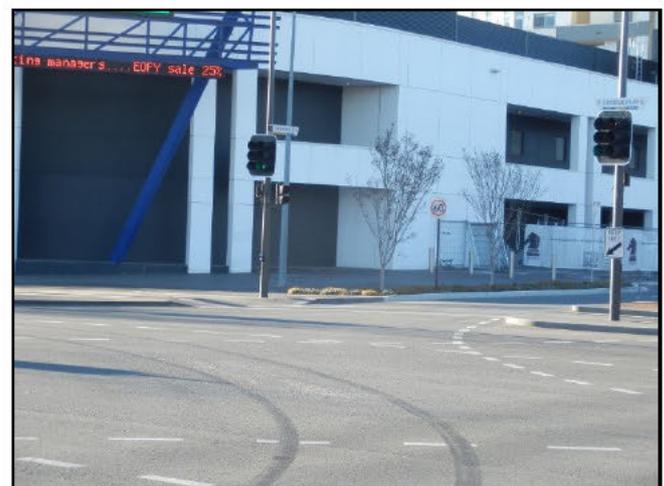
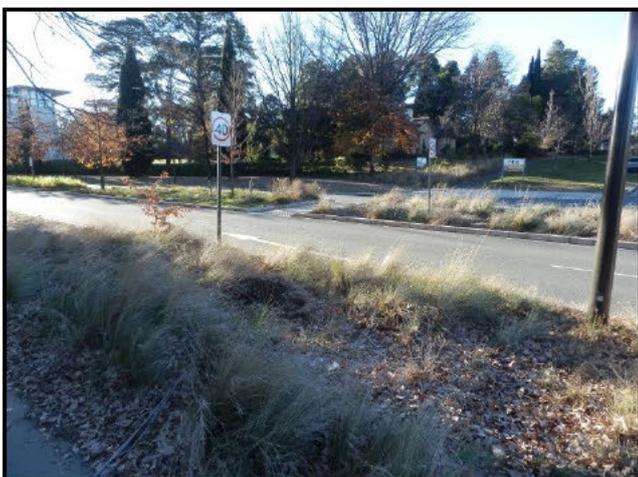
It is a sign of what, I fear, is yet to come.



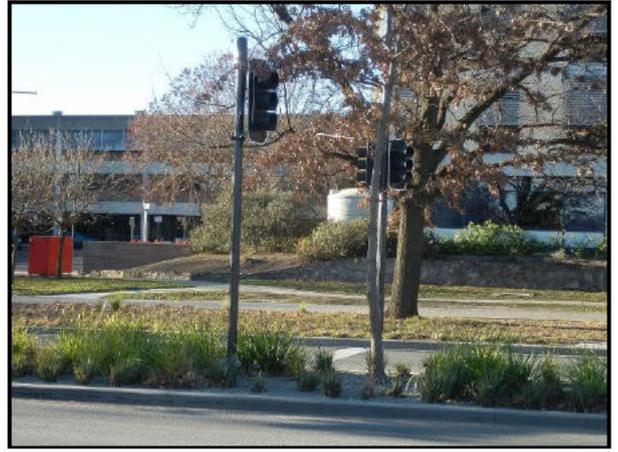
Awkward zig zag roads that increase the risk of sideswiping other vehicles and not seeing cyclists. They are especially uncomfortable in a bus because of the high centre of gravity for such a vehicle. And, on a wet night, all those abstract lines become invisible.



Speed limit signs on the side roads are impossible to see when turning in off Constitution Avenue. Absolutely no system and no sense applied in these installations.



Small speed limit signs used along Constitution Avenue. The 40km/h zone is not a usual speed limit for a major road in Canberra, it should be signed more adequately. The turn into Coranderrk Street has a small 60km/h sign which is inappropriate for a major road, it is also placed too close to the corner to be seen as vehicles turn left into the street. Also placed behind a tree.



Traffic lights with trees planted in front of them. I have seen a near miss here as a result.



These two intersections, Coranderrk St (left) and Allara St (Right) have both been designed in a way that sends vehicles towards each other. The Allara St intersection is the more hazardous. Vehicles turning right must continue a straight course to clear the traffic island, while vehicles in the centre lane are directed across into the same section of road within the intersection. This is made worse if the vehicle turning right is a large vehicle or if the driver swings left before turning right (which is a common occurrence). I personally have had several near misses at these intersections and now straddle both lanes to avoid having a vehicle next to me while traversing the intersections. Driving to compensate for bad road design.

I have traversed Constitution Avenue for many years before the reconstruction took place, without any incident or near miss that I can recall. Since the modifications I have had several near misses and observed others. I have no confidence left in Roads ACT. And they are spoiling Canberra.



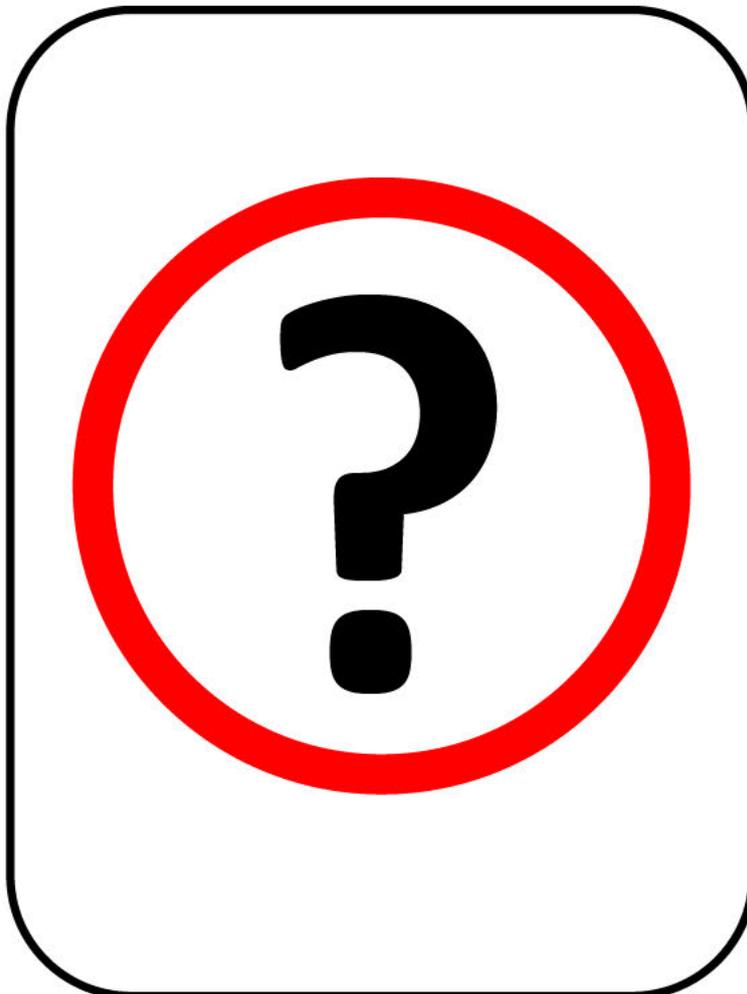
Intersection with London Cct. The lane is tight for large vehicles and at the end the last bit of island juts to the left increasing the risk of striking the vehicle tyres on the curb. It's working, the curb is black with tyre marks.

## Speed limits on Constitution Avenue

Inbound to the City the speed limit is 60km/h until just after Anzac Pde, where two small signs advise that it drops down to 40km/h. There is a small repeater sign on the left just after Coranderrk St, obviously intended for those coming in off Coranderrk St, but it is very likely drivers do not see it as they swing wide to immediately clear the bus lane and go into the right lane. There is no further 40km/h signs (that I have seen) for the rest of the road so those coming in off Allara St and those coming in off London Cct from an anti-clockwise direction would have the "50km/h unless signposted otherwise" apply to them. If they came in from London Cct from a clockwise direction they have not left the "40km/h Area" as the "40km/h Area End" signs were not re-installed on London Cct near Constitution Avenue after the completion of the road works, therefore the driver will never pass a "40km/h Area End" sign. I guess they just have to assume when they see another sign of a higher speed.

Travelling in a Russell bound direction on Constitution Avenue, coming in off Vernon Circle there is a small 40km/h sign right on the corner and way too high to ever be seen by a motorist, so this would mean the "50km/h unless signposted otherwise" would apply in the motorist's mind (and I believe, in the mind of a Judge, if it was ever taken to court). Coming in off London Cct from an anti-clockwise direction there is no sign until near Coranderrk St, so again "50km/h unless signposted otherwise". Coming in off London Cct from a clockwise direction, again, due to the missing "40km/h Area End" signs they have not been alerted that they have left the "40km/h Area", so 40km/h would apply. Coming in off Coranderrk St there is a small 40km/h sign and then the 40km/h zone continues until well passed Anzac Pde, where the 60km/h zone starts with a sign near the HIA Building. However, if one comes in off Anzac Pde the "50km/h unless signposted otherwise" would apply or if one knew of the 60km/h sign up further could assume it was a 60km/h zone.

Confused?!! So are we.



# Terms of Reference

## **Inquiry into the planning, management and delivery of road maintenance in the ACT**

The Committee, noting the importance the condition of roads has in terms of road user safety, the distribution of essential goods and services and the facilitation of efficient commuter activities and emergency services, resolved to inquire into and report on the planning, management and delivery of road maintenance in the ACT, including:

- 1) The role of all levels of government in facilitating, and the regulations governing, road maintenance in the ACT;
- 2) The procedures for identification, prioritisation and scheduling of road maintenance in the ACT;
- 3) The need for, and frequency of, road maintenance in the ACT, including:
  - a) The impact of the level and type of road usage,
  - b) The impact of road accidents, fuel and chemical spills, and extreme weather events,
  - c) The impact of design and structural deficiencies,
  - d) The impact of vegetation, animal activity, topography and surrounding land use,
  - e) The role and adequacy of traffic signals, signage and road markings;
- 4) The level of responsiveness to road maintenance issues in the ACT and the extent of maintenance backlogs;
- 5) Technical and structural considerations including the role, and type of materials used in road maintenance in the ACT, with a focus on cost effectiveness, sustainability and their impact on road users;
- 6) The adequacy of traffic management during road maintenance in the ACT;
- 7) Administrative, budgetary, planning and procurement practices, including reporting structures, funding sources, investment and expenditure, oversight and accountability mechanisms, work health and safety compliance and the implementation of related territory and national specifications and standards;
- 8) The level and adequacy of engagement and communication with key stakeholders, with particular reference to road users; and
- 9) Any other relevant matter.