

PLANNING, MANAGEMENT AND DELIVERY OF ROAD
MAINTENANCE IN THE ACT

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY
SERVICES

OCTOBER 2017

REPORT 2

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

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RESOLUTION OF APPOINTMENT OF THE COMMITTEE

The Legislative Assembly for the ACT appointed the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services (ETCS) on 13 December 2016.

Specifically the resolution establishing the Standing Committees of the 9th Assembly, as it relates to the Standing Committee on ETCS states:

- (1) The following general purpose standing committees be established and each committee inquire into and report on matters referred to it by the Assembly or matters that are considered by the committee to be of concern to the community:

.....

- (c) a Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services to examine matters related to city and transport services, public infrastructure, heritage, and sport and recreation and matters related to all aspects of climate change policy and programs, water and energy policy and programs, provision of water and energy services, conservation, environment and ecological sustainability;¹

¹ See, ACT Legislative Assembly, Minutes of Proceedings, 13 December 2016, p. 13.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

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, prioritization 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.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

3.13 The Committee recommends consideration be given to reviewing the Roads ACT signage strategy with particular consideration of the impact of signage on road users.

RECOMMENDATION 2

3.14 The Committee recommends Roads ACT provide more information to the community on how older roads are managed when existing loads exceed the expected loads when the road was originally designed or as those roads reach the end of their lifespan.

RECOMMENDATION 3

3.19 The Committee recommends Roads ACT seek to engage key user groups and representative bodies as part of its review into aligning the ACT roads standards and specifications with national and regional better practice.

RECOMMENDATION 4

3.20 The Committee recommends the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate take note of feedback on the lack of community awareness on road maintenance projects and consider ways this might be addressed, including but not limited to a community awareness program.

RECOMMENDATION 5

3.25 The Committee recommends Roads ACT delivers its road maintenance program in a manner which considers all road users, the surrounding infrastructure, and other ACT Government programs.

1 INTRODUCTION AND CONDUCT OF INQUIRY

- 1.1 The Standing Committee self-referred an inquiry into the planning, management and delivery of road maintenance in the ACT on 15 March 2017. The Committee resolved to conduct the inquiry and present its report by the end of 2017.
- 1.2 In accordance with practice, the Committee commenced its inquiry by publication of its terms of reference, and notification to the Assembly of the commencement of the inquiry on 9 May 2017.
- 1.3 The Committee's terms of reference set out in detail the matters the Committee proposed for inquiry. In addition to the submissions received by the Committee, the Committee notes the presentation and publication of a report by the ACT Auditor-General into the Maintenance of Selected Road Infrastructure Assets in the ACT in June 2017, shortly after the Committee commenced its inquiry.²
- 1.4 The Committee does not make any comment on the Auditor-General's report, as this will be a matter for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to consider as an aspect of its responsibilities under the Resolution establishing Assembly Committees. The Committee does however include references to the report made in the ACT Government submission.

CONDUCT OF INQUIRY

- 1.5 Under its resolution of appointment, the Committee is empowered to examine matters which are the responsibility of the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate (TCCS). The Committee took up this inquiry under that responsibility.
- 1.6 In accordance with established practice, the Committee advertised its inquiry on the Assembly Committees' website and invited written submissions be lodged with the Committee by Friday, 7 July 2017.
- 1.7 The Committee also wrote to a number of groups, individuals and organisations it considered likely to be interested in the Committee's inquiry seeking views on the inquiry. The Committee also invited the Minister for Transport and City Services to make a submission on behalf of the ACT Government and those of its agencies involved in the area of administration and government activities related to the terms of reference.
- 1.8 The Committee considered submissions received by the end of the period allowed for lodgement of submissions, and, following consideration of those submissions, allowed a further period to lodge a submission to the inquiry.
- 1.9 The Committee has decided that material submitted to it, whilst informative, relevant and valuable, does not support a major public inquiry at this time.

² ACT Auditor-General, Report on the Maintenance of Selected Road Infrastructure Assets in the ACT (Report5/2017), June 2017. <http://www.audit.act.gov.au/auditreports/reports2017/Report%20No%205%20of%202017%20-%20Maintenance%20of%20Selected%20Road%20Infrastructure%20Assets.pdf>

2 STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES

1.10 The Committee has prepared a report to the Assembly reflecting its consideration.

1.11 The Committee considered the Chair's draft report at meetings on 27 September 2017.

1.12 The Committee adopted the Report at a meeting on 27 September 2017.

2 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED BY THE COMMITTEE

- 2.1 The Committee received six submissions to this inquiry. A list of these submissions is attached as Appendix A to the report.
- 2.2 The Committee does not have any specific comments to make on the submissions, but notes most submissions addressed particular parts of the terms of reference rather than addressing all parts.

3 COMMITTEE COMMENT

GENERAL

- 3.1 The Committee notes that the submissions it has received do not require a full committee inquiry. This decision was reached as the submissions sufficiently captured the views put forward.
- 3.2 In view of the current programs affecting the continuing work and planning in relation to road maintenance issues being undertaken across Government, the Committee will conclude this reference with this summary report.
- 3.3 During the period this inquiry was open to submissions, the audit on the Maintenance of Selected Roads Infrastructure Assets (ACT Audit Office – Report No. 5/2017) was released. The Inquiry notes the Auditor’s Report recognised the sound governance and strategic asset management framework that supports Roads ACT activity.

TCCS ROADS MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

- 3.4 Throughout the submissions received from the community, there were concerns raised over the adequacy and appropriateness of signage. There was commentary on the size of signs, the frequency with which signs are used to notify drivers of various obstacles or road conditions as well as concerns raised over the possibility for drivers being confused as to the applicable speed limit.
- 3.5 It is the recommendation of the Committee that Roads ACT consider reviewing the current system of signage used on our roads. This should consider the current placement of signage and any changes deemed necessary be made.
- 3.6 While the Auditor’s Report also suggested the need for long term planning of upgrades to improve traffic signal components, which was an element raised in submissions received, the Committee notes the work already undertaken by Roads ACT in developing a new draft strategy.
- 3.7 The Committee notes it is Roads ACT policy to set the ACT resurfacing target below the National Guidance rates. This reflects the cooler weather and lower freight volumes in the ACT compared with elsewhere.
- 3.8 Roads ACT does highlight, as other submissions have, that traffic composition has changed significantly since the construction of older suburbs and much of the road network is carrying higher traffic than it was designed for. The Roads ACT submission also notes the high traffic volumes on pavements in new suburbs that are in operation but not designed to handle the level of traffic experienced while the suburb develops.

- 3.9 Concerns over spray sealing were raised, particularly in terms of older roads reaching the end of their lifespan. The Committee notes more information could be provided on Roads ACT's strategy for managing older roads that are either experiencing heavier loads than they were designed for or reaching the end of their lifespan. The Committee also notes more information should be provided on why spray and chip sealing is appropriate in different circumstances.
- 3.10 Issues were also raised over sustainability issues in broader terms, considering the impact road design and maintenance have on vehicle components and parts. The Committee notes the need for considering the sustainability of road maintenance at the design phase to better accommodate the impacts on all road users.
- 3.11 The Committee also recognises the importance of climate change adaptation measures to the ongoing maintenance of ACT roads in order to remediate the impacts of climate change. The maintenance of roads and surrounding green infrastructure must be done in a way that is safe to ensure all types of road users have clear visibility of signage, signals and other road users.
- 3.12 The ACT Government submission highlights the impact road crashes, fuel and oil spills, chemical spills, fires and extreme weather events have on roads. The Committee notes the need for these to be repaired in a manner that meets the requirements of all road users. It agrees spills should not be considered complete until the treating material has been removed from the road surface.

Recommendation 1

- 3.13 The Committee recommends consideration be given to reviewing the Roads ACT signage strategy with particular consideration of the impact of signage on road users.**

Recommendation 2

- 3.14 The Committee recommends Roads ACT provide more information to the community on how older roads are managed when existing loads exceed the expected loads when the road was originally designed or as those roads reach the end of their lifespan.**

Comment:

- 3.15 The Committee notes that Roads ACT has advised its resurfacing target is different. The Committee would appreciate clarification regarding this program, given Canberra's variation between very hot and very cold weather conditions. The Committee looks forward to this matter being addressed in the Government Response to this recommendation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 3.16 Roads ACT are in the process of reviewing and updating the standards and specifications in line with the national and regional better practice. TCCS has worked closely with certain groups through this process. The Committee notes however this is an opportunity to consider the recommendation of the Motorcycle Riders Association of the ACT Incorporated, to broaden engagement to include key user groups such as the Road Users Working Group and ACT Road Safety Advisory Group, and key representative bodies such as the NRMA.
- 3.17 The Committee notes some submissions raised concern over a lack of transparency and community awareness on road maintenance projects. The Committee recommends consideration be given by TCCS on how to raise community awareness in regards to how road maintenance works are planned and delivered in the ACT; why different seals are used in different areas; what causes damage to roads; how the Government determines what roads will be resealed; and how the community can have their say.
- 3.18 In making the recommendation above, the Committee notes the ACT Government's submission draws attention to the fact Roads ACT announces all road maintenance on its website. Major maintenance activity for existing road pavements are a part of a planned program that can be found on the TCCS website.

Recommendation 3

- 3.19 The Committee recommends Roads ACT seek to engage key user groups and representative bodies as part of its review into aligning the ACT roads standards and specifications with national and regional better practice.**

Recommendation 4

- 3.20 The Committee recommends the TCCS take note of feedback on the lack of community awareness on road maintenance projects and consider ways this might be addressed, including but not limited to a community awareness program.**
- 3.21 The Committee also looks forward to receiving advice in the response to this report on why particular road re-sealing programs are undertaken. The Committee considers that TCCS should take this matter into account in any awareness program.

OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS

- 3.22 The key message that was taken away from the submissions received was the need for all road users to be considered when designing and maintaining roads and the surrounding infrastructure.

- 3.23 The ACT Government has a number of programs aimed at activating public infrastructure such as cycle paths and parks. How these different elements interact with one another and the impact this has on road users and, in turn, road maintenance requires a considered approach.
- 3.24 The Committee notes the effort already being made by Roads ACT. The Committee's recommendation seeks greater clarity from TCCS to illustrate to the public how these different elements of infrastructure fit together and how they are managed accordingly.

Recommendation 5

- 3.25 The Committee recommends Roads ACT delivers its road maintenance program in a manner which considers all road users, the surrounding infrastructure, and other ACT Government programs.**

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Committee acknowledges the importance of this area of government services and activity in the ACT. The planning, monitoring, assessment and improvement of infrastructure issues affects all residents and it is important current programs and associated activity continues as a focus for the ACT Government City Services.

Suzanne Orr MLA
Chair

October 2017

Appendix A SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED BY THE COMMITTEE

Submission 1 – Master Builders Association of the ACT

Submission 2 – Mr Paul Coleman

Submission 3 – Yarralumla Residents' Association

Submission 4 – Motor Cycle Riders Association of the ACT Incorporated (MRA ACT)

Submission 5 – ACT Government

Submission 6 – Mr J Barrie