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Backed up for miles

By Sarah Parkes

DRIVERS looking to cut through North Canberra to avoid traffic are causing congestion on suburban streets.

The North Canberra Community Council (NCCC) and Hackett Community Association (HCA) met with ACT Roads director Tony Gill last week to address the problem.

In Hackett, Maddigan Street and the intersection of Majura and Phillip avenues are the worst areas.

These build-ups are believed to be caused by traffic coming from Gungahlin via Flemington Road and Horse Park Drive turning into Antill Street.

HCA working group co-convenor James Walker said drivers chose to cut through Hackett and surrounding suburbs because they had the perception it was faster than going down Northbourne Avenue or Majura Road — a belief with which he disagreed.

In March, the NCCC and HCA undertook a traffic count from 7.30-9.30am that confirmed the groups' concerns.

The most alarming statistic revealed 13 cars per minute turned into Maddigan Street from 8-9am.

The residents believe the additional traffic poses a threat to pedestrians, causes wear and tear to the suburban roads, and has a negative impact on the suburb's natural environment.

"People think it is a through road and because the sign says 60, people do at least 10 above," Mr Walker said.

"They zip down Maitland [Street, off Maddigan Street], which has a blind curve right where a lot of the kids cross to go to Dickson College or the Church Primary School."

The HCA hopes to work with ACT Roads on a short, medium and long-term solution.

Short-term suggestions include a roundabout or lights at the Majura Avenue and Phillip Avenue intersection, clear signage indicating Maddigan Street is only 60km/h and is not a through road to Majura Avenue, and a speed bump.

Mr Gill said ACT Roads would assess the problem and go back to the NCCC and HCA in about two months with possible solutions. They would then have to apply for funding from the Government in the next budget.

In the long term, both the residents and ACT Roads representatives believe the construction of the Majura Parkway will have a significant impact.

This project will expand Majura Road and link the Monaro and Federal highways.

"Traffic in North Canberra has been an issue for a number of years, primarily due to the development of Gungahlin," Mr Gill said.

"The GDE [Gungahlin Drive Extension] will provide some relief and we are in the early planning stages of the Majura Parkway, which will take a number of years."

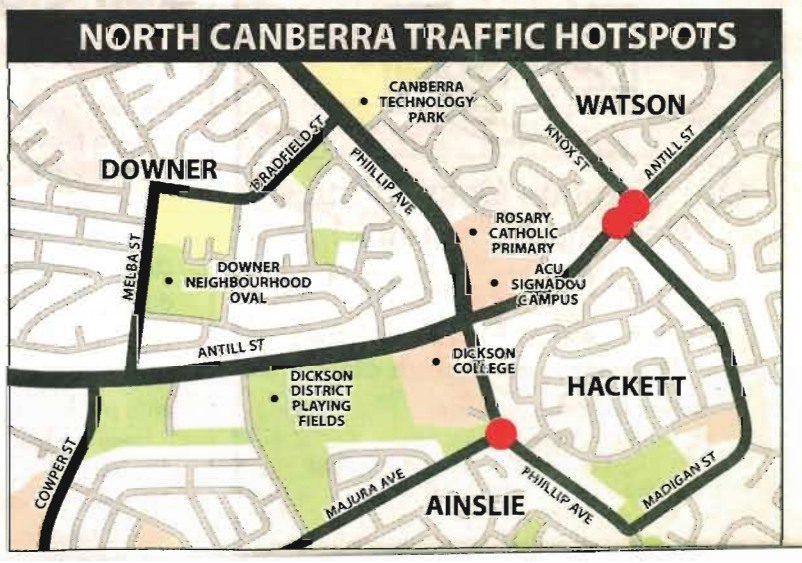
An environmental impact study is now underway. Shadow Minister for Urban Services and Transport Steve Pratt said the failure to upgrade significant North Canberra arterial roads had meant Canberra drivers chose to use suburban streets as "rat runs".

"The building of Majura Parkway will alleviate the problem to some extent but there needs to be a greater emphasis on forward planning."

Hackett Community Association (HCA) secretary Bruce Smith, Mike Hettinger and HCA archivist James Walker, at the corner of Majura and Phillip avenues, are concerned about the increased traffic flow through Hackett. Picture: Elesa Lee

TRAFFIC COUNT

Intersection of Antill Street and Maddigan Street

- 8 - 8.15am: 47 vehicles
- 8.15 - 8.30am: 237 vehicles
- 8.30 - 8.45am: 236 vehicles
- 9.15 - 9.30am: 24 vehicles

*Conducted March 3, 2008 by 10 members of the NCCC and HCA