

National Freight Network Plan

ACT Government Submission

March 2010

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Scope of the ACT network	3
The Capital Region.....	3
The ACT road network	4
ACT Government Integrated Transport Framework	5
Freight associated developments in the eastern corridor of the ACT.....	7
Growth in the Fyshwick and Hume industrial estates	7
Commercial Estates	8
Improvements to the Monaro Highway	8
Development of the Canberra International Airport	9
Eastern Broadacre Planning Study	10
Master planning for ACT rail infrastructure.....	11
Enhancements required to improve the utilisation of ACT and Capital Region infrastructure assets.....	12
Federal Highway Link to Monaro Highway (Majura Parkway Project)	12
Rail	14
<i>Rail Freight</i>	14
<i>High-speed rail</i>	15
Summary of enhancements required	16
Regulatory strategic and policy frameworks	18
Regulatory Responsibilities	18
The ACT Government planning framework	18
<i>The Territory Plan</i>	18
<i>The National Capital Plan</i>	19
<i>Planning and Development Act 2007</i>	19

Introduction

The ACT Government has documented its vision for Canberra in the *Canberra Plan: Towards Our Second Century* and the economic component of the policy is expressed in the *Capital Development* document (Attachment A).

A component of the ACT Government's vision is the creation of efficient freight transport networks that serve the people and industries in the Australian Capital Region.

While the core focus for the ACT Government naturally rests in addressing the needs of ACT residents, it also sees itself as having a key role in supporting outcomes in the Capital Region, which encompasses most of south east New South Wales.

The ACT Government has significantly increased the quality of infrastructure in the Territory over recent years. In the 2009-10 Budget, the ACT Government committed to the largest capital works program on record. The Budget provided commitment to new infrastructure investment of approximately \$2 billion over the next four years.

The Capital Works Program provides substantial new infrastructure, supporting the growth of the city and ongoing capital upgrades to ensure that the existing asset base is not only well maintained but expanded to support continued growth in the region. This significant capital investment by the ACT Government is complimented by the Commonwealth's *Nation Building and Jobs Plan* and Roads programs which provide a timely and substantial investment in the ACT's schools, housing and transport infrastructure.

The ACT Government's significant infrastructure investment aims to support growth in the economy, minimise business input costs and enhance the social well being of the community by building productive capacity within the ACT's infrastructure.

A key criterion in the assessment of proposals to improve ACT Government infrastructure is the extent to which it will improve the use of existing assets. This ensures that the service potential of new assets is considered alongside improving the service capacity of existing infrastructure. The ACT Government has a priority of partnering with the Commonwealth and NSW Government's where opportunities exist to enhance outcomes that extend beyond the ACT's borders.

The ACT business community and the ACT Government have invested significant resources in developing the commercial sectors east of Canberra including:

- growth in the Fyshwick and Hume commercial estates;
- improvements to the Monaro Highway and linkages to the Federal Highway;

- expansion of the Canberra International Airport (CIA);
- investigation of commercial opportunities in the eastern broadacre area¹; and
- master planning for ACT rail infrastructure.

This investment has led to an opportunity for the Commonwealth Government and the ACT Government to partner in developing infrastructure in the east of the Territory which will make a major contribution to improving freight and passenger movements in south eastern Australia and achieve increased efficiency in the operation of national freight infrastructure assets.

Investment in transport infrastructure east of Canberra will provide for more efficient and effective use of existing infrastructure including the Federal and Monaro Highways, the Canberra International Airport, ACT rail infrastructure and the commercial/industrial precincts to the east of Canberra.

Increased volume and efficiency in the use of these assets will provide benefits to the ACT community and the residents of the broader Capital Region. In particular, it will support growth and employment in the city of Queanbeyan, which has been identified in the New South Wales Government's Sydney to Canberra regional corridor strategy as one of three major economic development zones in New South Wales.

In this context, the ACT Government has set a high priority on the development of the Federal Highway Link to Monaro Highway (Majura Parkway Project). The proposed project will significantly increase traffic efficiency, and reduce freight transit times. It will also result in the Canberra Airport being within a kilometre or so of a north-south freight transit link. This coalescence can be expected to have significant economic output and productivity benefits for the south eastern region of Australia.

¹ The eastern broadacre area is located on the eastern edge of the ACT, between Civic and the Kowen Plateau. It is close to the NSW border and contains key infrastructure including Majura Road, the Monaro Highway and the Canberra International Airport. It also includes industrial areas at Symonston, Hume and Fyshwick.

Scope of the ACT network

The Capital Region

Planning for infrastructure by the ACT Government takes into consideration more than the area within the borders of the ACT. The ACT is located in the centre of the Australian Capital Region—an area comprising 17 local government areas in south-eastern New South Wales (see Figure 1 below).

Canberra is by far the largest city in the region with a population of around 340,000 of the total regional population of 580,000. The next largest city is Queanbeyan, which is immediately adjacent to the ACT, with a population of just under 40,000.

There has been significant growth in the ACT's cross-border region. Of the five fastest growing inland regions in New South Wales, three (Palerang Council, Yass Valley and Queanbeyan) border the ACT.

This growth is expected to continue in the short to medium term. For example, the proposed new Queanbeyan City Council developments at Googong, Tralee and Environa will result in some 20,000 to 25,000 new residents in the next 25 years.



Figure 1 – Map of the Capital Region

The ACT road network

The purpose of the ACT road network is to provide a smooth, and safe riding surface that is to a standard appropriate to the level of service and type of use. As at 30 June 2009 the ACT Department of Territory and Municipal Services' *Integrated Asset Management System* showed that the ACT Government was responsible for managing 5,938 lane kilometres (20,561,200 square metres) of Territorial² and Municipal³ Roads and 207 lane kilometres⁴ that are unsealed in the ACT.

The Territory's total physical assets are valued at \$13.8 billion as at June 2009. The ACT Government road infrastructure makes up 15 per cent of the Territory's total asset base, second only to the largest asset type of Public Housing.

The ACT Government has invested significant resources in enhancing and maintaining transport infrastructure in the Territory.

The ACT is a growing economy that needs a dynamic and responsive transport system to provide for the efficient flow of goods and to meet people's transport needs. Activities of residential, commercial, retail and industrial sectors are forecast to grow, and transport demand will grow accordingly. The ACT Government's continued investment in infrastructure and programs to support alternative transport modes along with its strong commitment to investing in the road network is vital to an integrated transport approach.

The ACT Government has an integrated approach to enhancing the transport system with the objectives of:

- providing net benefits for the economy by improving the efficiency of the whole transport system;
- addressing traffic congestion;
- improving social outcomes for the community;
- minimising the level of transport emissions; and
- providing the community with better transport options.

The 2008-09 Budget committed \$1 billion to the Territory's infrastructure investment – the *Building the Future* program with a focus on expanding and upgrading the ACT's inherited infrastructure to ensure that the needs of the population are met and that there is capacity for growth. In the 2009-10 Budget the Government announced that the *Building the Future* program would be enhanced, accompanied by a further \$274 million in capital allocated for new projects.

² Territorial Roads are state managed roads owned and operated by Roads ACT, and include all the arterial road network

³ Municipal Roads include all collector and local access roads owned and operated by Roads ACT with the exception of National Highways and NCA owned areas.

⁴ Lane Kilometres = Length of Road x Number of Lanes

There have been significant upgrades and improvements to the Territory's roads infrastructure during 2009-10, resulting in better traffic conditions and road safety across the Territory, these include:

- The Gungahlin Drive Extension – The ongoing growth in the Gungahlin area has led to significant increases in traffic flows necessitating the upgrade to a dual carriageway road;
- Upgrade of Airport Roads – This initiative was completed in December 2009 and comprised the extension of the Monaro Highway north to Fairbairn Avenue with a new bridge crossing over the Molonglo River, works which initiated construction of the first stage of the Majura Parkway project. The first stage of this project was funded through the Commonwealth Government's Building Australia Program; and
- Other upgrade works on the Monaro Highway including the duplication works on Lanyon Drive in Hume. This project is being funded by the Commonwealth's *Building Australia Program*, and the ACT and NSW Governments.

In addition to funding received from the Commonwealth Government through its *Nation Building and Jobs Plan*, the Territory will receive \$28 million over five years through the *Roads to Recovery Program*.

ACT Government Integrated Transport Framework

The *ACT Integrated Transport Framework* (the Framework) outlines a framework for providing Canberra with an efficient, accessible, sustainable and reliable transport system.

The Framework (see Attachment B) includes an Action Plan that details key capital works, planning priorities and future initiatives in road infrastructure, parking, public transport, cycling, walking and emerging transport issues.

Included in the *Integrated Transport Action Plan* and its aligning of transport decision-making and investment with the integrated Transport Framework is an integrated future transport focus. This highlights the ACT Government's planning for an integrated future by engaging more actively with the Commonwealth, other States, Territories and infrastructure providers to investigate and promote better connectivity between Canberra and the national transport network.

The Framework seeks to address emerging transport issues such as ensuring that:

- the national focus on road development includes upgrading of the major national road and highway links to the ACT;
- the focus centres on all transport areas, including roads and road transport, rail links and aviation networks; and
- safety and transport security issues are addressed.

The ACT Government is continually investing in its road infrastructure to ensure that the ACT's road system can manage the demands placed on it. Congestion has clear economic implications by delaying the movement of people and goods. Investment in key road infrastructure is required to allow larger trucks and other commercial vehicles to travel more efficiently around and through the city.

Among the key objectives of the road infrastructure focus of the Framework is the provision of an efficient network for longer, cross regional travel by completing the development of the parkway system within the ACT, in particular, by constructing the Majura Parkway and duplicating the Gungahlin Drive extension; and the maintenance and extension of the transport system to support continued development of the ACT economy.

Freight associated developments in the eastern corridor of the ACT

In a growing and vibrant city, the ACT transport system is continually encountering new pressures to adapt and improve. In the 2008-09 Budget, the ACT Government provided for a fund of over \$250 million to enhance our transport infrastructure and make Canberra a more accessible city for all in the community. This fund was to be allocated over five years. \$111 million worth of projects were announced as part of the 2008-09 Budget. Projects valued at a further \$96 million were agreed in the 2009-10 Budget.

The ACT Government is keen to develop areas in the eastern part of the Territory to better support freight movements in the Capital Region. A number of actions have been undertaken by the Government and the ACT business community which support this objective. These are described below.

Growth in the Fyshwick and Hume industrial estates

Solid employment growth and a high level of construction activity in the ACT have helped to generate strong demand for industrial premises. The demand for industrial land has mainly been focussed on the Fyshwick and Hume estates and also Symonston in the south-east of the ACT.

Existing facilities at Fyshwick and Hume are well situated, suitable for warehousing and freight forwarding purposes and are in the vicinity of the Canberra Airport where the development of a freight hub and airfreight operations are likely to lead to freight volumes increasing. As a result, demand for freight based land use is expected to rise.

The 2009-10 to 2011-14 Indicative Industrial Land Release Program features the release of approximately 96,800 square metres of land in Fyshwick and Hume in 2009-10.

While the Government's intentions for industrial land release in these areas is dependent on un-changed market conditions, the Indicative Industrial Land Release Program features over 500,000 square metres of land being released in Fyshwick, Hume and Symonston over the 4 year period from 2009-10 to 2013-14. The Program intends to supply sufficient land to meet increased demand for industrial land and increase the ACT Government's responsiveness to market changes by developing an inventory of land stock, where serviced industrial sites are available for immediate release.

The development of further industrial estates will serve to increase the industrial base of the Canberra economy, and will provide a greater diversity of employment opportunities in the Territory.

Commercial Estates

The ACT Government is also enhancing the ACT's productive capacity by releasing land into the commercial property market. The 2009-10 to 2013-14 Indicative Commercial Land Release Program is predicated on the demand for vacant land for new commercial space continuing through 2009-10 and into the future. The release of more commercial land spaces in the ACT will serve as a contribution to the vision set out in the Canberra Plan of a city that represents the best in Australian creativity, community living and sustainable development.

In 2009-10, the Indicative Commercial Land Release Program proposes the release of nearly 100,000 square metres of land in areas such as Kingston, Gungahlin and Greenway. In total, the 2009-10 to 2013-14 Indicative Commercial Land Release Program features close to 430,000 square metres of land being released over the 4 year period.

Improvements to the Monaro Highway

Starting in Canberra, the Monaro Highway runs south past Michelago and Bredbo to Cooma. It therefore provides a vital transport corridor and connection passage for the ACT and northern NSW regions.

In June 2009, stage 1 works of the Lanyon Drive – Monaro Highway Upgrade were completed. These works included an upgrade of the intersection between the two roads to improve the safety and capacity of this major intersection in south-east Canberra. Other works included, in this stage and stage 2 of the project, are the construction of an additional lane on the Monaro Highway north of the intersection with Lanyon Drive. The package of works is funded by the Commonwealth Government's Roads to Recovery program in joint development with the ACT and NSW Governments.

The 2009 works build on Monaro Highway projects that were undertaken between 2001 and 2005 which saw the duplication of the Monaro Highway over Dairy Flat in Fyshwick and also the provision of on-road cycling lanes on the highway from the suburbs of Symonston through to Hume in the ACT.

Further works are now being progressed to upgrade the Monaro Highway by duplicating the remaining single carriageway section in the ACT near Fyshwick.

The ACT Government and Canberra International Airport have also jointly funded an upgrade to access and egress roads for the Airport, which included the duplication of Pialligo Avenue.

Development of the Canberra International Airport⁵

On 28 August 2009 the Commonwealth Government endorsed the *2009 Canberra International Airport Master Plan (Attachment C)*. The key objective of the Plan is to “develop Canberra International Airport as a multi-modal transport hub for passenger and freight connections.” The development plans are large scale with significant potential impacts for the ACT and its region.

Airports are a crucial part of the infrastructure of a modern economy. The primary economic function and wider social importance of airports is to facilitate the efficient movement of people and freight in and out of the region it serves.

The development of a vibrant airfreight operation at Canberra Airport is expected to deliver significant economic benefits for the region, including job creation, and open the region up to a broad range of new industry sectors benefiting from being located adjacent to Australia’s key freight hub.

Canberra is an existing key origin and destination city in the Australian overnight express airfreight market. Only three hours by dual lane motorway from Sydney, Canberra Airport offers an attractive and cost-efficient alternative: a curfew-free and slot-free airport. It offers existing available apron and warehousing space as well as land area available for freight expansion. It is also centrally located in south-eastern Australia at the meeting point of the east-west and north-south network of curfew-free airports to provide a hub for both road and airfreight connections to other major centres.

Overnight airfreight to and from Canberra Airport is already a key component of Australia’s express airfreight network. Whilst much of Canberra’s airfreight (as it is across Australia) is carried in the holds of passenger aircraft and by road where possible, requirements of business, government and the community dictate that a number of scheduled airfreight operations currently operate each night to and from Canberra. Current freighter routes include a service from Bankstown-Canberra-Cooma, a nightly service to and from Sydney and a twice nightly service operates to and from Melbourne.

In addition to the express overnight airfreight services, a significant amount of road freight travels to and from Canberra (including overnight) to a variety of destinations including Sydney and Melbourne. Given the reduced cost of road freight over airfreight, road transport will generally be preferred over airfreight where time allows it.

While a freight hub has implications for land use within the Airport, significant impacts are also expected outside its precinct. Demand for warehousing, freight-forwarding and similar facilities in the vicinity of the Airport will increase as airfreight operations increase.

⁵ This section draws material from the 2009 Canberra International Airport Masterplan.

The *Strategic Transport Network 2010* document prepared by the South East Australian Transport Strategy (SEATS) notes that “Development [at Canberra International Airport] is well advanced in creating the site as a freight hub, light industrial technology park.”



Figure 2 – Road freight network to support Canberra International Airport Freight operations.

Canberra’s role in the freight network is also acknowledged by the Australian Government in its *2009 National Aviation Policy White Paper*. The White Paper identifies the importance of maintaining a network of curfew-free airports, including Canberra International Airport on north-south and east-west axes, to allow for the ongoing successful operation of overnight airfreight. It also states that airports must develop appropriate arrangements to minimise the noise impacts of night time operations.

Eastern Broadacre Planning Study

The ACT Planning and Land Authority is looking at ways to create an employment corridor in the eastern area of the ACT (incorporating the area from Majura to Hume).

This is consistent with actions identified in The Canberra Spatial Plan (2004), the ACT Government’s key plan for the growth of Canberra over the next 30 years.

The eastern broadacre area is located on the eastern edge of the ACT, between Civic and the Kowen Plateau. It is close to the NSW border and contains key infrastructure including Majura Road, the Monaro Highway and the Canberra International Airport. It also includes commercial and industrial areas at Symonston, Hume and Fyshwick.

Much of the area to the city's east is currently zoned Broadacre under The Territory Plan. The Eastern Broadacre Planning Study will help identify areas which may be suitable for future development for employment uses, and those which should be set aside for environmental, transport or other needs.

It may lead to changes to the Territory Plan to provide a greater range of employment uses (such as industry, commercial, warehousing, tourism etc).

Consultation on a draft study is likely to occur in 2010. Details will be provided closer to this time. Following consultation, the study will be considered by the Government.

A fact sheet on the study is at [Attachment D](#).

Master planning for ACT rail infrastructure

The ACT Railway Masterplan Report ([Attachment E](#)) was published in December 2009. *The Railway Masterplan* proposes a direction for rail infrastructure and facilities in the ACT. It will be followed by further detailed analysis, consultation and consideration by the ACT Government on providing rail infrastructure in the ACT.

Future steps in developing rail in the ACT include consultation with stakeholders to confirm facility requirements, detailed costing and design and preparation of a detailed staging and construction program. This is to be facilitated through the preparation of a feasibility study that will inform future capital works and planning for the East Lake precinct. This feasibility study is expected to be delivered to the ACT Government in mid-2010.

Enhancements required to improve the utilisation of ACT and Capital Region infrastructure assets

Freight and commercial infrastructure assets have been significantly expanded and upgraded in the east of the Territory. The development of further infrastructure in this area will enable the existing assets to be used more efficiently.

To improve the movement of freight to and through the ACT, two key areas need to be addressed. Firstly, improved eastern access by road from the Federal Highway to Fyshwick and Queanbeyan, the Canberra International Airport and Canberra's industrial estates. Secondly, greater utilisation of rail as a means of freight transport.

Opportunities for enhancing transport infrastructure to enhance freight movements east of Canberra to eastern NSW are discussed below.

Federal Highway Link to Monaro Highway (Majura Parkway Project)

The Majura Parkway Project will create an efficient 11 kilometre dual carriageway road-freight transport, business travel and personal travel link between the Federal Highway and the Monaro Highway.

As well as providing a vital transport link relevant to a significant population and geographic region of Australia the project will also improve north – south links along the eastern seaboard and improve access to the Canberra Airport, the Fyshwick and Hume Industrial Estates in the ACT and regional areas of NSW, including South East NSW and the Snowy Mountains region.

The initiative will address an apparent decline in productivity in the transport and storage industry in the ACT and surrounding regional NSW.

The deteriorating performance of the transport and storage industry in the ACT adversely affects not just the ACT, but also the broader south east region of NSW. The project has significant benefits for the national freight transit system, essentially by providing a highway bypass to Canberra and improving the level of access to the Airport.

A full Environmental Impact Assessment of the project has been undertaken over the last 18 months and is nearing completion with the final EIS report to be submitted to the ACT Planning Authority soon. The project has also been assessed by the Federal Department of the Environment under the requirements of the *Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act*. The project was confirmed in December 2009 as an uncontrolled activity and the Commonwealth Department required no further referrals for the project.

The ACT Government and Commonwealth Department of Defence are currently negotiating land acquisition at Duntroon to enable the progression of

the project. An application for land acquisition was lodged with Defence in September 2009.

The detailed final design and documentation for the project is currently underway and will be finalised shortly.

The project cost estimate is \$250 million. The Majura Parkway has a benefit to cost ratio of 3.328 when discounted over a 30 year period using a 7% discount rate.

The Monaro Highway is an important passenger and heavy vehicle freight route which has been declared as part of the expanded route for Higher Mass Limited (HML) vehicles in NSW. This HML route currently stops at the ACT border and continues again in NSW on the Federal Highway.

The construction of the Majura Parkway will address this gap in the HML network. Given the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) forecast of the doubling of the freight task by 2020, this upgraded freight route will add significantly to the economic development of the Capital Region and provide improved connections with the Federal, Barton and Hume Highways which are part of the National Road Network thus contributing to the productivity of the nation.

The declaration of routes for HML vehicles and performance based vehicles will be well established and heavy vehicles routes will form part of a national network, seamless across jurisdictional boundaries and managed through a national transport regulatory framework established with the assistance of the Federal Government.

The initial assessment of this project by Infrastructure Australia in 2009 confirmed the progression of the project as a priority to improve passenger and freight transport both nationally and in the ACT/NSW region.

Improvement to the national freight network by linking the Federal Highway to the Monaro Highway will only increase the significance of this link in the route between Sydney and South East NSW and the Snowy Mountains, as well as the truck freight bypass of Canberra.

The proposed project will significantly increase traffic efficiency, and reduce freight transit times. It will also result in the Canberra Airport being within a kilometre or so of the north – south freight transit link. This coalescence can be expected to have significant economic output and productivity benefits for the south eastern region of Australia.

Passenger numbers through Canberra Airport are already the highest per capita of any airport, notwithstanding that Canberra Airport is largely a domestic airport with limited international flights. In part, the relatively large traffic flow at the airport reflects a high proportion of business travel and Canberra's increasing role as a freight hub.

Rail

Rail Freight

Rail freight in the ACT has typically been low compared to freight coming in via other means.

A report published by the Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics on Freight between Australian cities predicts that the Sydney-Canberra corridor will host a total of 3,822 annual kilotonnes of freight by 2020, comprising of 3,821 kilotonnes of road freight and 1 kilotonne of rail freight. This is a significant increase from the 2,699 annual kilotonnes predicted for 2010 (2,697 kilotonnes of road and 2 kilotonnes of rail freight).

However, the recent *ACT Railway Masterplan Report* indicates that there are opportunities to capture national growth in freight by making greater use of rail assets in the ACT.

The Railway Masterplan recommends excluding freight rail from the East Lake precinct and retaining the rail corridor through Fyshwick and opportunities for rail freight in this industrial area.

One freight service was operating to the ACT—a fuel train to the Shell siding at Fyshwick, generally three to four times a week. However, this service has been recently cancelled. The main freight service on the Sydney–Canberra line is carting rubbish from Sydney to the Woodlawn Waste Management Facility at Tarago, which operates five days a week but does not use the line to Canberra.

There is potential in the ACT to establish an intermodal terminal facility to reduce the need for long-haul road transport by transferring rail freight to road for further distribution. Currently, a significant quantity of freight is transported to the ACT in containers using road transport.

Ideally, such a facility would be located next to the rail corridor and would be close to the industrial and manufacturing areas of Fyshwick and Hume. The facility would also require good connection to local trunk roads for ease of freight distribution.

Throughout Australia there are a number of smaller intermodal terminals servicing regional populations with most of these terminals handling consumer goods. If current freight projections are accurate Canberra could potentially sustain a freight terminal similar to that operating at Belfield, in Sydney, which is situated on a 20,000 square metre site, of which 10,500 square metres is paved hardstand. Total annual throughput by rail was in the order of 10,000 TEU during the last financial year. This site acts as a distribution centre with no warehousing or other supply chain management facilities.

Should such a facility be feasible in the ACT, a number of sites next to the rail line could potentially accommodate such a development. This will be considered further in conjunction with freight policies for the ACT and the Government’s land release program.

The use of railway for freight has suffered substantially in recent years, with the ACT’s sole rail freight service (for fuel) having recently ceased. However, it is broadly acknowledged that rail remains important, especially given climate change and road safety considerations. *The Railway Masterplan Report* also suggests that an intermodal freight terminal and distribution centre could be established adjacent to the rail corridor and close to the industrial areas of Fyshwick and Hume.

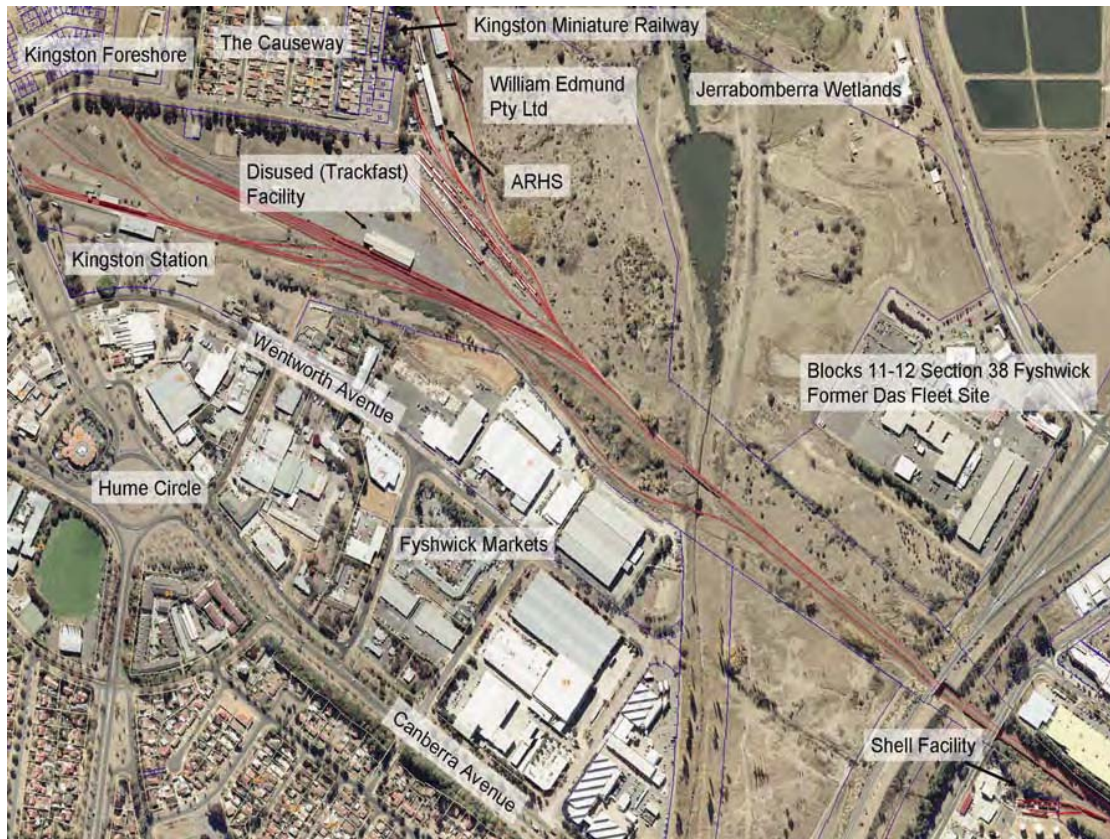


Figure 3 – Ariel view of the Canberra Railway Station and Precinct

High-speed rail

High-speed rail is a long-term prospect for rail connections from Canberra to Sydney and Melbourne. It has been considered at various times since 1981. It has been the subject of various studies and demand analysis during this time, and more recently was the subject of a bid for Commonwealth funding through the Building Australia Fund administered by Infrastructure Australia.

Studies have identified a new railway corridor for high-speed rail through the Majura Valley to connect with the Canberra International Airport at a new terminal. The Canberra International Airport Masterplan identifies that the airport has the potential to become a major transport hub integrating all transport modes. The Canberra Spatial Plan and The Sustainable Transport Plan make similar statements identifying the potential of the airport as a regional transport hub.

If such a high-speed rail service was to be developed it would be highly unlikely that the current commitment to the existing heavy-rail service could be sustained. The corridor and facilities may be retained for freight movement and adapted for other transport uses.

A high speed rail development for the Sydney-Canberra-Melbourne corridor would contribute to the achievement of a number of nationally recognised goals including:

- developing our cities and/or regions through more efficient rail freight transport and effective passenger travel on a national scale;
- increasing Australia's productivity; and
- expanding Australia's productive capacity.

A high speed rail would also have the following benefits:

- it has the potential to reduce growth pressures in major metropolitan areas with the construction phase also generating significant regional employment in the mining, quarrying and construction industries and downstream benefits to a range of service industries. For example, the Sydney-Melbourne route would require 20,000 tonnes of structural steel;
- it could add significant value by linking in with Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra airports, providing viable options for sharing the future demand for incoming international air transport and rapid interstate transfers; and
- it has the potential to integrate production and distribution networks in the connected areas, improving productivity. Similarly, it provides the opportunity for improved linkages and integration of regional and metropolitan labour markets. High speed passenger rail would enable many Australians to reach the central business district of a capital city within ninety minutes. This component of the project would facilitate tourism between major metropolitan destination centres and would be an attraction in its own right.

Summary of enhancements required

As noted within the section *Freight associated developments eastern corridor of the ACT*, considerable planning and construction of infrastructure has occurred in the Majura Valley / Monaro Highway transport corridor.

As can be seen in Figure 4 below, there are a number of existing assets and facilities which could be used more efficiently, subject to some enhancements.

In the short term significant benefits would be derived from the construction of the Majura Parkway, which would improve North – South freight movements and provide efficiencies for air and express freight distribution by leveraging off existing infrastructure at Canberra International Airport.

In the longer term, enhancements to rail infrastructure in the region would also provide significant benefits.

Such enhancements could lead to further freight related development opportunities such as the establishment of a regional freight transport and bulky goods distribution hub servicing Canberra and regional NSW.

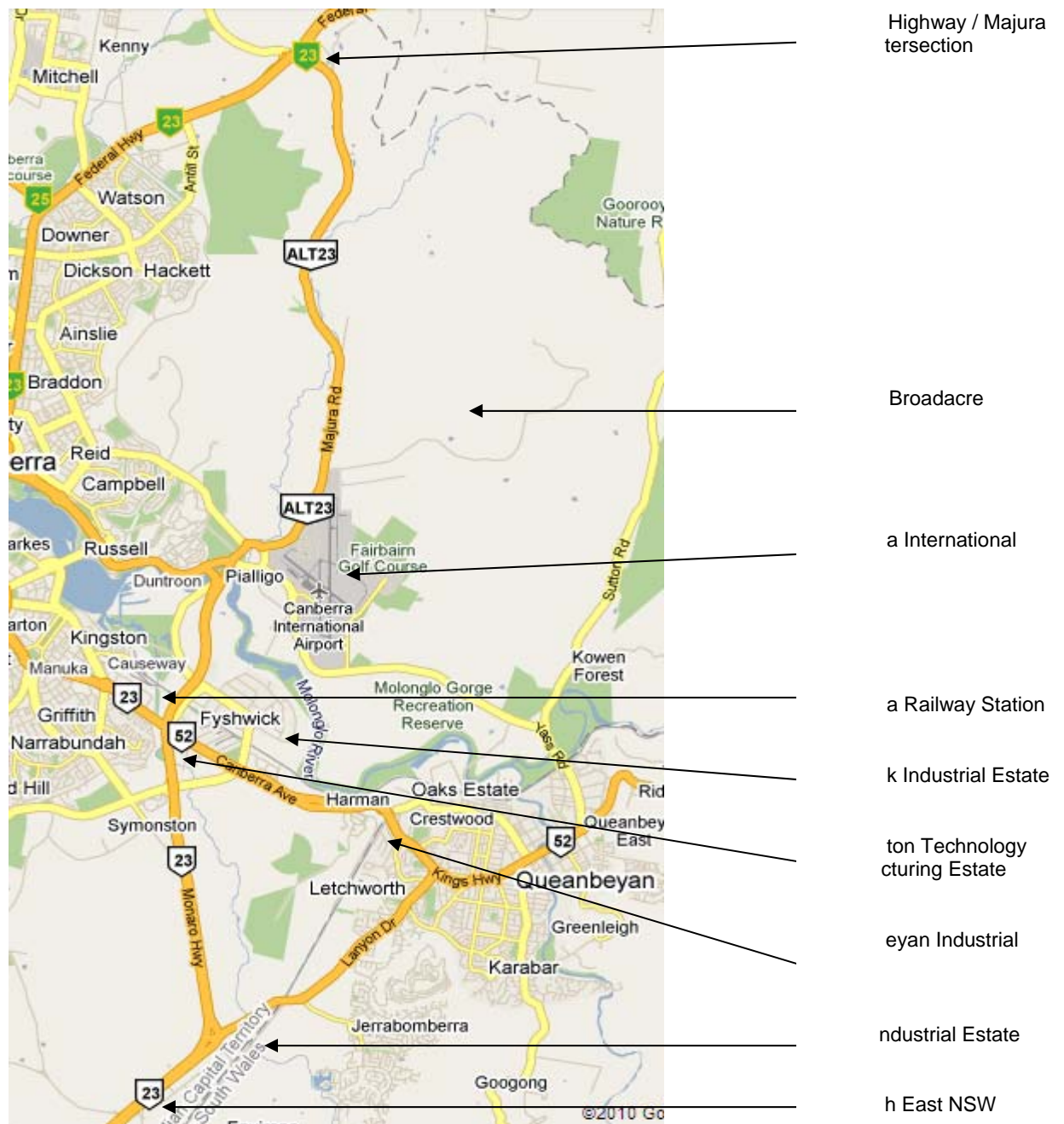


Figure 4 – Map showing the high number of freight related (existing or planned) infrastructure in the Majura Valley / Monaro Highway corridor (Source: Google Maps)

Regulatory strategic and policy frameworks

The ACT Government has documented its vision for Canberra in the *Canberra Plan: Towards Our Second Century* and the economic component of the policy is expressed in the *Capital Development* document.

A component of the ACT Government's vision is the creation of efficient freight transport networks that serve the people and industries in the Australian Capital Region.

The ACT Government has also put in place robust regulatory frameworks to ensure that infrastructure assets are built and maintained at the highest possible standards. These frameworks are briefly described below.

Regulatory Responsibilities

Regulation impacting on transport infrastructure protection is the responsibility of the ACT Road Transport Authority (RTA). Road transport legislation, consistent with nationally agreed transport reforms, is in place to ensure the protection of transport infrastructure assets, while at the same time affording industry required access to the road network.

The ACT Government planning framework

The ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA) is the statutory agency responsible for planning the future growth of Canberra in partnership with the community.

The Territory Plan

The Territory Plan is the key statutory planning document in the ACT, providing the policy framework for the administration of planning in the ACT. The purpose of the Territory Plan is to manage land use change and development in a manner consistent with strategic directions set by the ACT Government, Legislative Assembly and the community. It must not be inconsistent with the National Capital Plan.

The Territory Plan includes a statement of strategic directions, a map (the Territory Plan Map) which sets out zones and precincts in the ACT, objectives and development tables applying to each zone as well as a series of general, development and precinct codes. It also includes structure plans and concept plans for the development of future urban areas.

The statutory requirements for the Territory Plan are set out in the *Planning and Development Act 2007*, primarily in Part 5.

The object of the Territory Plan is to ensure, in a manner not inconsistent with the national capital plan, the planning and development of the ACT to provide the people of the ACT with an attractive, safe and efficient environment in which to live, work and have their recreation.

The National Capital Plan

The National Capital Plan, gazetted by the Australian Parliament in 1990, is the overarching plan for the ACT – a strategic plan that reflects the national significance of Canberra and the territory.

The plan, which is managed by the National Capital Authority, sets out broad planning policies and principles for the overall development of the territory.

Planning and approval of development within designated areas (land designated as having the special characteristics of Canberra as the national capital) is the responsibility of the National Capital Authority (NCA).

Planning and Development Act 2007

The *Planning and Development Act 2007* (the Act) has made the Australian Capital Territory's planning system simpler, faster and more effective. The Act replaced the existing *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991* and the *Planning and Land Act 2002*.

The Act provides for a planning and land system that contributes to the orderly and sustainable development of the ACT in a way that is consistent with the social, environmental and economic aspirations of the people of the ACT, and which is in accordance with sound financial principles.

The most significant change under the Act was simplified development assessment through a track system that matches the level of assessment and process to the impact of the proposed development. As well as being simpler, more consistent, and easier to use, this system was a move towards national leading practice in development assessment.