



ACT Peak Oil

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<http://act-peakoil.org>

Submission on National Capital Plan Draft Amendments 59 and 60

edited by Alex Pollard (alex-po@trevbus.org)

Mr Todd Rohl

Managing Director

Planning and Urban Design

National Capital Authority

GPO Box 373

Canberra ACT 2601

About ACT Peak Oil

ACT Peak Oil was formed early in 2005 by Canberrans who are concerned about the imminent peak and decline of world oil production.

We have previously made a submission to the ACT Government's Energy and Climate Change Taskforce. We appeared before the Senate inquiry into Australia's oil supplies earlier this year. Our submission to the inquiry is available online¹.

Peak Oil

Peak Oil has been making headlines recently. Peak Oil is specifically the peak of oil production in absolute terms. That is, not just can supply not keep up with demand, but supply shrinks year on year, forever. That is, there is no respite to be found in merely stabilising oil consumption. The problem is to become, over time, as independent of oil as possible. The Peak may have even passed already and we are badly under-prepared.

Concrete action required

Our most important message is that the NCA, like all government agencies, needs to take urgent concrete action to prepare for much higher oil prices and even actual oil scarcity. The evidence strongly suggests the Peak will happen by 2010, it may even be occurring now. Of course, actions to ameliorate oil peak need to be carefully considered against certain constraints, not least of which is carbon emissions.

¹ http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/rrat_ctte/oil_supply/submissions/sub116.pdf

Comment on Draft Amendments 59 and 60

ACT Peak Oil agrees that the National Capital Plan should fulfill Griffin's vision for Canberra². Griffin's vision included provision for trams. Although we cannot always be bound by the original vision and the technologies of the time, we are now approaching a period of dramatically higher fuel prices. Just as petrol was a little-used commodity over a century ago, so it will be again. The age of the car has been an anomaly, and we need to return to more sustainable transport modes, such as electrified mass transit.

Although buses will be an effective and flexible mass transit option post-Peak, they are overly reliant on dwindling oil supplies and are not our preferred option. The NCA has as one of its objectives to ensure that “*Canberra and the ACT are planned and developed in accordance with their national significance*”. It seems to us that a National Capital in the post-Peak world without electrified mass transit, relying on buses, is going to look pretty shabby. The planning of Canberra was supposed to provide an example of the ideal city, yet we are at risk of becoming one of the examples of how *not* to plan for Peak Oil.

We therefore endorse the plan to make provision for light rail on Constitution Avenue and London Circuit³. We endorse the intention to reduce the reliance on cars and makes areas more pedestrian-friendly.

Our key point in this area is that electrified mass transit really is required now. It is commendable to make provision for it, but the oil age is ending now. The NCA has the resources to undertake studies into the effects of Peak Oil, and drive the response in the ACT. We urge the NCA to take up its leadership role and provide a vision for Canberra without reliance on cars, as soon as possible.

Conclusion

ACT Peak Oil looks forward to seeing the NCA accelerate its efforts to confront the challenge of Peak Oil. The NCA has the resources to undertake ground-breaking studies into the impact and best approach to Peak Oil, and could lead the response in Australia and the world.

We believe the NCA should explicitly incorporate its starting assumptions into its planning process, and make provision for alternate scenarios. Will the car be the dominant transport mode 50 years from now? What happens with petrol at \$3/L, \$10/L or \$100/L? In this way the planning process will not fall into a business-as-usual approach and make it clear that preparing for Peak Oil is the highest priority.

² Draft Amendments #59 and #60, section 1.1.1

³ Draft Amendments #59 and #60, section 1.2.4