

ORRONG ROAD CONSTRUCTION

by
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My wife and I moved into 35 Cornwall Street Lathlain in November 1956. Our postal address at that time was Lathlain Park via Rivervale. If you did not put the via Rivervale in it would go to Victoria Park and then be re-directed to the Rivervale post office for delivery causing a delay of two days.



The traffic flow from the developing Kewdale Industrial Estate was at that time via Orrong Road, Streatley Road over the level railway crossing and then Great Eastern Highway to the Causeway. Great Eastern Highway from the railway crossing at Rivervale is now known as Burswood Road.

The effect of these changes commenced with the lowering of the Great Eastern Highway and the construction of the railway bridge. These conditions went on progressively getting worse for a number of years until the entire project was completed. Property values went down and the tone of the area was lowered and Cornwall Street in particular never fully recovered.

Streatley Road is very wide and was constructed this way to cater for the volume of traffic at the time. When it was decided to dispose of the level crossing, access to the highway from Streatley Road was closed off and all traffic rerouted via Cornwall Street which was not suitable for the volume of traffic that had by this time developed.

Overnight Streatley Road became a quiet suburban street at the same time Cornwall Street became a nightmare of traffic, noise and an entirely different street in which to live. Cornwall Street was narrow and not suited for this type of activity.

Residents were unable to park their vehicles outside their homes and accessing or exiting your property particularly at peak hours was a nightmare. No controlled access was provided at Great Eastern Highway and the traffic would bank back almost the entire length of Cornwall Street.

The intersection of Gallipoli and Cornwall Street became a black spot with frequent accidents. One of the worst was a school bus with handicapped children on board collided with a car and the bus turned over on its side. Overhead power lines were torn down, wheels flew off trucks smashing fences as so the list goes on. The owner of properties started selling up and speculators buying them

using them as rental properties. Regular police visits occurred with drugs, noise and anti social behaviour and speeding vehicles. The police department set up regular speed traps with temporary relief. The worst case I know of was an empty fuel semi trailer booked for 102 km's per hour.

Several plans had been floated to overcome this problem however, as usual it appeared too hard and expensive so they went in the too hard basket. Old maps show that the current Hay Street from Barrack Street to the river was designated as Howick Street. One plan was even advertised in the Government Gazette linking the two portions of Howick Street with a bridge over the Swan River and an arterial road system along the river bank.

As we now know eventually the current system was decided upon and over a number of years purchases were made and properties acquired to make the plan a reality. Houses in Orrong Road between the highway and the top of the hill were purchased and subsequently used for emergency housing until required causing all sorts of problems for the surrounding areas with anti-social behaviour and tenants that were not interested in their surroundings.

The proposed changes received mixed reactions from resident in differing areas depending on the effect that it would have on them personally. Petitions with varying requests were passed to the Council and eventually a committee was formed to discuss these concerns. It was known as the Lathlain area traffic management committee. Delegates including the author were drawn

from the ranks of the residents and together with representatives of the Council efforts were made to reach a satisfactory outcome for as many as possible.

As a photographic project, Jean and I decided to record the progress of the project for the future. I will include a selection of these photos followed by a brief description of the location, direction and in a sequence of activities. By the time we started recording the project the dual carriageway existed from the junction of Cornwall Street and Orrong Road to Kewdale Road. All included photographs are by Ray Webster unless otherwise nominated.



Taken from the top of the hill looking towards the hills. By this time the dual carriageway existed to just past the Francisco Street Junction. Note the partially demolished home on the centre left. The closest road on the left is the junction of Gallipoli Street and the old Orrong Road.

The other small road is the junction of Durham Street and Orrong Road. Durham Street no longer exists.



Taken from the crest of the hill in Orrong Road looking towards Great Eastern Highway showing Maple Street on the left and the old Orrong Road to the right.



Taken from Great Eastern Highway looking towards the crest of the hill after clearing had started. In the top right hand corner alongside the palm tree is the two story house now on the embankment of the new road.



Taken from the crest of the hill looking towards Great Eastern Highway. Construction work had been limited to this side of the highway. Showing some of the existing buildings including the old liquor store owned by Mr and Mrs Jack Bell.



By the time this photo was taken demolition of the Caltex and Mobil service stations had been completed. Also demolished was the steam laundry on the corner of Maple Street.

On the other side of Orrong Road the Rivervale Newsagency and Chris Mills Speed shop had been demolished. Note the roof of the now demolished entertainment centre. The yellow fronted building in the centre left was the engine reconditioning workshop of Repco engines.

Further along Great Eastern Highway an old wooden Baptist Church and the Rivervale Post Office were demolished for road widening. It became necessary to build a pedestrian underpass at Surrey Road.

The next photograph shows the building of the 3 pylons for the new pedestrian footbridge over Orrong Road near the previous location of the junction with Gallipoli Street.



The building of a pedestrian bridge over the new multi lane Orrong Road was unusual in the manner it was achieved. A certain amount of the crest of the hill was removed and then the formwork for the bridge was set out on the remaining sand. The concrete work was then completed and when finished the sand was quarried out

and carted away leaving the new bridge at the correct height and position.



Taken from Orrong Road near the intersection of Cornwall Street showing the mountain of sand yet to be removed after the pedestrian bridge has been completed and the soil utilised on the abutment of the bridge over the highway.



Carting away the sand after the pedestrian bridge was completed. The new bridge can be seen with an interested spectator viewing the activities.



Taken from the new pedestrian bridge looking towards Great Eastern Highway with the sand abutments for the new bridge over the highway. On both sides you can see the concrete retaining walls.



Building the concrete retaining walls through the cutting near the pedestrian footbridge.



Taken from the new footbridge looking towards Great Eastern Highway showing the link from the highway to Orrong Road. The banks are all sloped and the retaining walls in place. The surplus sand was utilised to build up the area for the abutments of the new traffic bridge over the

existing highway. The fences on the private properties affected are being replaced. Later hardy plants were planted and reticulation installed to beautify the project and stop soil slippage.



Taken from Great Eastern Highway looking towards Orrong Road showing the new off ramp where Maple Street formerly existed. It was in the foreground of the picture at the rear of the van where there was an incident took place and unfortunately I did not have my camera with me.

A very heavy Western Power truck had pulled in to an excavated area and became hopelessly bogged. A tow truck was called for, and after arriving, endeavoured to rescue the stranded vehicle. It was not up to the task and

in trying to get the vehicle free, bent the chassis of his tow truck behind the drivers cab. It was so badly bent that they could not get more than three wheels on the ground at once. Next they called for a heavy wrecker who eventually freed both vehicles and then delivered the bent tow truck to a repair shop.



Looking toward the Airport.

Taken by Ray Webster



Congested traffic exiting the city utilising the new portion of Great Eastern Highway while the old section is being upgraded. Also shows the traffic exiting Cornwall Street.



Taken from the new pedestrian bridge looking towards Great Eastern Highway showing the overpass bridge abutments starting to take shape.



Taken from the pedestrian bridge showing the depth of the cutting. Gallipoli Street can be seen on the right.



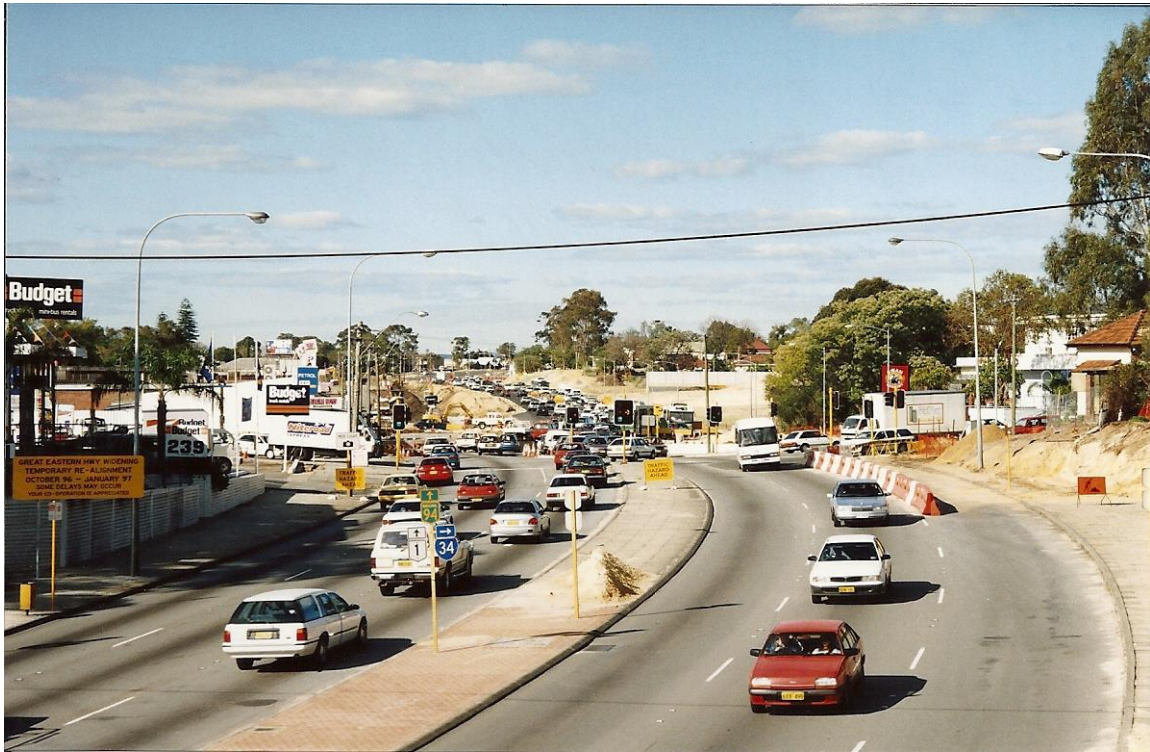
Showing the new roads nearing completion, but not yet ready for traffic. In the distance can be seen traffic still turning into Cornwall Street.



Partially open showing the congestion during construction



Peace at last !



The yellow sign gives the dates of the progress



The Old railway bridge at East Perth that had to be replaced by a new dual line plus road bridge.



The Replacement Bridge

After only two years of the opening of the Polly Farmer Freeway and Orrong Road, traffic surveys showed that the Orrong Road portion was carrying the traffic that had been estimated for 10 years ahead.

It will be interesting to see the future developments and the effect they will have on this section of road. The closure of Riverside Drive in the city for Elizabeth Quay will force some additional traffic on the route. A Political announcement indicates that they are looking at light rail

down the middle of Orrong Road for an express service from Perth Airport to the CBD with priority crossings for the trams. Will the proposed heavy rail from Meltham to Perth Airport take some of the existing loadings?

In 1954 when I commenced working for an airline, there was only 2 daily night flights to the eastern seaboard plus several local services to the North West and south west. Now there are 20 or 30 flights to the eastern seaboard.

There were no International services from Perth Airport, now there are at least 12 airlines, most daily and some multiple daily and the size of the aircraft has also grown.

I hope that you enjoy this compilation of information and pictures as much as I have in collecting and producing the article.