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RTA HAS 'GIVEN UP' SAYS STONER:

Bells line dumped

Leader of The Nationals and Shadow Minister for Roads Andrew Stoner said yesterday that communities in the Central West and beyond would feel let down as the RTA has finally admitted it has no plans to build the Bells Line Expressway.

The ABC has reported the RTA released its transport vision for the Central West at the NSW Local Roads Congress this week[1]

The report says the RTA has told local Mayors that planned upgrades to the Great Western Highway would

adequately address concerns about the region's transport shortfalls.

This despite the fact that in February this year it was revealed that the RTA regards at least 101 kilometres of the Great Western Highway as 'poor'. [2]

"People in country communities like Lithgow, Bathurst, Parkes, Dubbo and Orange will rightly feel let down by the Rees Labor Government," Mr Stoner said.

"It's no surprise that the State Government has finally walked away from the project.

"The project just hasn't been a priority for the Sydney-centric State Government, despite the benefits that could be realised from building the Bells Line Expressway.

"Central Western communities would gain economically from the shorter drive to Sydney and motorists would have a safer trip.

"In these tough economic times, local construction could provide no shortage of jobs and an injection of funds into regional economies.

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* JUST a walk in the park — well, though the bush anyway — for the Penrith personalities (pictured at Lake Lyell yesterday) walking from Bathurst to Blaxland on their second annual charity marathon. (Photo and story: LEN ASHWORTH)

It's a long, long walk in the name of sweet charity

According to that schmaltzy old song you 'walk on through the wind, walk on through the rain, and you'll never walk alone...! And literally you never walk alone when you travel with the enthusiastic group of charity footsloggers that made it into Lithgow yesterday afternoon.

Along the way the group had encountered their share of wind and rain. A little leg sore and weary but delighted with their progress and support, the group of Penrith dis-

trict identities was walking 165 kilometres from Bathurst to Blaxland raising money for a number of important charities.

They made the same walk in reverse last year and raised almost \$80,000. Led by former Rugby League international Mark Geyer and Penrith solicitor Mark Mulock they set out from Bathurst on Tuesday, reached Tarana on Tuesday evening and the Donnybrook Hotel at South Bowenfels yesterday afternoon after negotiating some

of the steepest hills anywhere in the region. This morning they were scheduled to make a significant donation to the Life education Van at Coerwull School before the next stage of their marathon to Mt Victoria via Browns Gap.

The Great Walk will end at Blaxland on Saturday. Next week another group of marathon charity walkers will be coming our way with the 'Nuns' Run' from Dubbo to Sydney.

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