START OF PILING MAJOR STEP FOR ADDITIONAL CROSSING OF THE CLARENCE RIVER AT GRAFTON

Major work on the additional crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton started today with the first of five supports for the bridge being installed in the river.

Clarence Nationals MP Chris Gulaptis said the $240 million State Government funded project involves building a 525-metre long bridge 70 metres downstream from the existing road and rail bridge.

“The completed bridge will improve traffic efficiency between Grafton and South Grafton immediately with the ability to be expanded to two lanes in each direction when traffic volumes require it in the future,” he said.

“The project also includes upgrading parts of the road network in Grafton and South Grafton to connect the new bridge to the existing road network.

“The start of land and marine piling is an exciting milestone for the project putting the bridge well on track to meet its targeted date for opening to traffic in 2019, weather permitting.

“A total of 25 piles will be driven into rock for the project – 10 in the river and 15 on land.

“Five river-based piers will each comprise two piles, varying in length from 21 to 26 metres and three metres in diameter.

“Five land-based piers will each comprise three piles, varying in length from 18 to 34 metres and between 1.2 and 2.1 metres in diameter.

“The river piles will be built from a barge using specialised equipment,” he said.

Mr Gulaptis said installing the bridge foundations is expected to take about 12 months to complete.

“Since work started in November last year, the first stage of a new 30 space car park on the corner of Pound and Clarence streets has opened, the temporary jetty on the south bank of the river was completed, work has started to establish the precast yard at South Grafton and work to relevel sections of the levee system is nearly complete.

“In coming months work will start to manufacture concrete bridge segments for the bridge at the dedicated pre-cast yard in South Grafton.
“Work to re-level sections of the Grafton levee is almost complete, clearing the way for the project team to start working in the river.

“We are also making good progress on building the embankments for the bridge approaches.

“Work on the new bridge is already supporting economic development locally and across the region,” Mr Gulaptis said.

PHOTO: Fulton Hogan Project Manager Mark Stephenson gives Clarence MP Chris Gulaptis and RMS General Manager Bob Higgins and insight into the piling works about the take place.