19 July 2017

GRAFTON BRIDGE CELEBRATES 85 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

On this day in 1932 the community changed forever when the Grafton Bridge across the Clarence River opened to traffic for the very first time.

The magnificent structure has connected the north and south Grafton communities for 85 years and was the last part of the rail line between Sydney and Brisbane to be completed.

Clarence MP, Chris Gulaptis said it remains the only bascule span on a railway bridge with a road on the upper deck in the world.

“The Grafton Bridge is famous for its bends at both ends of the upper deck, designed so the trains below have a straight and direct path as they traverse the crossing.”

“The need for a bridge across the Clarence River at Grafton was first identified in 1915 and 13 years later work started.

“Work on the vehicle, rail and pedestrian crossing took about four years to complete and cost a total of half a million pounds, which is equivalent to about $47 million in today’s currency.

“The Grafton Bridge was commissioned by the Governor General four months and one day after the Sydney Harbour Bridge was opened.”

Mr Gulaptis said the bridge will continue to be an important link for the community when the new $240 million NSW Government funded second crossing of the river opens in 2019.

“An additional bridge is needed as the existing crossing operates at capacity during peak times, with about 27,000 vehicle movements a day.

“A new era of travel is dawning, as the second bridge will ease congestion in the town, improve travel times and safety and connect the Pacific and Gwydir highways at South Grafton.

“As part of the 85th birthday celebration, staff helping to deliver the new bridge are at Grafton Shopping World between 12pm and 3pm today.

“Members of the community can share birthday cake and stories and look at historical photos of the bridge as well as ask questions about the second crossing of the Clarence River.”