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MEDIA RELEASE
Sunday 2 November 2014

ALMOST 20 YEARS LATE: LABOR’S EUREKA MOMENT ON THE KINGS HIGHWAY

Minister for Roads and Freight Duncan Gay and local MPs John Barilaro (Monaro) and Andrew Constance (Bega) today welcomed Labor’s support of the NSW Government’s work on the Kings Highway as the eureka moment Steve Whan didn’t have when he was in office.

“After 16 years of Labor in government and almost four years of Labor in opposition, I am thrilled Steve Whan and John Robertson have finally recognised the work that needs to be done to improve safety on this vital corridor,” Mr Gay said.

“If it wasn’t for the Liberals & Nationals Government funding $20 million of safety improvements I think they’d still be scratching their heads.

“The Kings Highway will enjoy a major boost in funding as part of the Restart NSW ‘Regional Freight Pinch Point and Safety Program’.

“A recommendation on the allocation of the $200 million works program will be made to the NSW Government by Infrastructure NSW by the end of the year.

“It’s hard not to be cynical about Labor’s new epiphany about the people of Monaro.

“If only Labor’s Steve Whan and John Robertson had felt as inspired when they were in government and in a position to act.

“Now in its second year, our three year package of work includes more overtaking lanes, a wider road in parts, improved bends and clear zones and better sign posting and linemarking.

“At the same time we have been progressing the exciting 4.6-kilometre Queanbeyan bypass, which is on track to start construction next year.

“This is a great credit to John Barilaro and his vision for the future of this great region.

“The Liberals & Nationals commitment to this project dates back to the 2011 election and earlier this year a $50 million injection by the NSW and Federal Governments enabled us to fast track construction.

“This is a government that delivers on its promises to these communities,” Mr Gay said.

Mr Barilaro and Mr Constance said the NSW Liberals and Nationals had been working closely with Eurobodalla Shire Council and Palerang Council to both develop and deliver upgrades along the Kings Highway.
“We’ve been busy rolling out a package of safety work following extensive investigations by this government during the the Kings Highway Route Safety Review report,” Mr Barilaro said.

“Since March 2013 works delivered include:

- Curve improvements near Larbert Road, including improvements to line markings finalised in July 2014 at a cost of $700,000
- Shoulder widening and an overtaking lane extension completed near Doughboy in July at a cost of $480,000
- Clear zone hazard management works worth more than $500,000 finished by June 2014 and further hazard management work is planned over the next financial year.
- Work to stabilise the slope on the Kings Highway between Pooh Bear Corner and the top of Clyde Mountain was completed in September to improve safety by reducing the risk of rock falls. The NSW Government provided $4.1 million to the project which included removing vegetation, rocks and boulders from the slope and install fencing, rock bolts and netting to reduce the risk rock falls onto the road.
- Work started in late August on an eastbound overtaking lane east of Shoalhaven River at an estimated cost of $2 million due for completion this financial year.
- Other work completed last financial year included signage and delineation improvements, road user safety and enforcement initiatives.

“Also in planning at present is a major curve realignment and enforcement bay one kilometre east of Nelligen, as well as safety improvements on the Clyde Mountain and a minor realignment and shoulder widening near Misty Mountain,” he said.

“We are not wasting any time, this is significant work aimed at saving lives and prevent more injuries,” Mr Constance said.

“If Labor had wanted to act, it had ample and golden opportunities when it was in government and it repeatedly failed the people of Bega and Monaro for 16 years.

“Now after three and a half years in opposition and without a plan to pay for its upgrades I am glad they have had their light bulb moment, but it’s too little and too late,” he said.

“Take the $200 million ‘Regional Freight Pinch Point and Safety Program’, funded through asset sales all of which were opposed by Labor. That’s a commitment they cannot deliver and cannot match,” Mr Barilaro said.

“In the meantime, this government’s busy thinking big for the communities of Monaro. Whether it’s safety upgrades on the Kings Highway or putting Queanbeyan in the economic fast lane with a bypass that will ease local congestion, unlock new housing areas and get heavy vehicles off local streets.

“I note Labor’s silence on the Queanbeyan Bypass. They know they can't fund it and won’t build it, in stark contrast to the NSW Government which is building for the future of Monaro,” he said.

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