Joint Media Statement

6 April 2017

Indigenous participation sought in Pacific Highway upgrade

- Information sessions aimed at Indigenous Australians will showcase business and employment opportunities for the Pacific Highway upgrade
- A number of initiatives to encourage Aboriginal participation already in place
- Australian and NSW governments keen to grow current project-wide figure of around 10 per cent Indigenous employment

Starting today, the project team for the Woolgoolga to Ballina section of the Pacific Highway upgrade will visit local communities to encourage Aboriginal participation as construction work across the project increases.

Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Darren Chester said the information sessions would highlight opportunities for Indigenous Australians and businesses to work with contractors to deliver the project.

“The overall Pacific Highway upgrade between Port Macquarie and Ballina has roughly 10 per cent Indigenous employment and we are looking to increase this participation for the Woolgoolga to Ballina section,” Mr Chester said.

“This is regional Australia’s largest road infrastructure project and a key part of the Australian Government’s record $50 billion infrastructure investment package. We are determined to ensure the benefits—including thousands of jobs—are shared right across the community.”

NSW Minister for Roads Melinda Pavey said it was important the local Aboriginal workforce had every opportunity to be involved in an infrastructure project of this size.

“Drivers only have to look outside their car window to see the extensive work to upgrade the highway, but they might not see the efforts being made to ensure the local Aboriginal workforce was engaged,” Mrs Pavey said.

NSW Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Sarah Mitchell said she was proud the government was building a workforce that reflected the diversity of the communities the Pacific Highway passed through.

“The Pacific Highway runs through the heart of regional New South Wales and while the government is building big infrastructure projects, it is also investing in the futures of both the local and Aboriginal communities along the highway’s length,” Mrs Mitchell said.
“A number of initiatives are already in place including implementing contracts with higher mandatory Indigenous participation, direct engagement of Indigenous companies to provide fit-out of contractor offices and using local Indigenous artists to design art for one of the project vehicles.”

Federal Member for Page Kevin Hogan said information roadshows would be held along the upgrade route to encourage the best possible participation rate by the region’s Aboriginal workers and businesses.

“All major work on the Woolgoolga to Ballina upgrade is expected to start by the middle of the year so this is a great time to find out how you can participate,” Mr Hogan said.

“Providing clear information on pathways to access employment and business opportunities is an important part of the project’s Aboriginal Participation Strategy.

“Whether it’s one person looking to work on site or a business hoping to provide goods or services, members of the project team and contractors will be on hand to talk about the process for getting on board.”

The information sessions will be held on:

- **Thursday 6 April**
  - 10am to noon at Grafton Community and Function Centre, 59 Duke Street, Grafton
  - 2pm to 4pm at Maclean Civic Centre, 50 River Street, Maclean.

- **Monday 10 April**
  - 10am to noon at Ballina Surf Club, Lighthouse Parade, East Ballina
  - 2pm to 4pm at Woodburn Memorial Hall, River Street, Woodburn.

- **Sunday 30 April**
  - 11am to 1pm at Yarrawarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre, 170 Red Rock Road, Corindi Beach

- **Wednesday 3 May**
  - 10am to noon at Casino Community and Cultural Centre, 35 Walker Street, Casino
  - 2pm to 4pm Lismore City Hall, 1 Bounty Street, Lismore.