Joint Media Statement

23 July 2012

FIRST BRIDGE IN EASTERN SECTION OF HUNTER EXPRESSWAY COMPLETE

Another major milestone has been achieved on the $1.7 billion Hunter Expressway, with the completion of the first bridge in the eastern section.

Federal Member for Hunter, Joel Fitzgibbon, visited the works today to view the first of 29 bridges that is now complete on the 13 kilometre eastern section of the project.

“The 25 metre bridge spans Surveyors Creek at Buchanan and will form part of the new route for John Renshaw Drive,” he said.

“This is part of the greater Hunter Expressway project, which is being built to improve freight transport efficiency and safety.

“The project will see construction of a 40 kilometre, four lane divided road linking the F3 Freeway near Seahampton and the New England Highway, west of Branxton.

“The Hunter Expressway will reduce congestion for towns between Maitland and Branxton by allowing heavy vehicles travelling from Newcastle and Branxton to bypass the New England Highway.

We are also making significant progress building three high bridges, or viaducts, to carry the new expressway through the steep terrain in the Sugarloaf Range – so the overall project is tracking quite well.

It is good to see work progressing on what will be a visually stunning drive, with some bridges, such as the viaducts, being built as tall as 42 metres above the valley floor,” said Mr Fitzgibbon.

NSW Minister for the Hunter, Mike Gallacher, said the bridge over Surveyors Creek was one of two bridges that would replace two existing 50 year old bridges, with the other to be built nearby over Wallis Creek on the new John Renshaw Drive route.

“The new bridges will provide one lane in each direction for motorists travelling west towards Kurri Kurri and east towards the northern end of the F3 Freeway at Beresfield.

“Both bridges on John Renshaw Drive and the western bridge on the Buchanan interchange are expected to open to traffic in early August, weather permitting.

“As part of the project’s commitment to environmental sustainability, a fauna passage was incorporated into the design of the bridge to provide a safe crossing for native wildlife,” said Mr Gallacher.

The $1.7 billion project is jointly funded, with the Australian Government providing $1.5 billion and the NSW Government contributing up to $200 million.

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