



Minister for Main Roads Warren Pitt inspecting progress of the new Mulgrave River bridge

New Mulgrave River bridge steaming ahead

The new Mulgrave River bridge should be open to traffic by mid 2009, six months ahead of schedule, we take a look at the progress being made.

For anyone who travels regularly through Gordonvale the excellent progress being made on the new Mulgrave River bridge is obvious.

Work on the 15 bridge piers is nearing completion and within the next two months, girders will be placed on the bridge piers.

As a result of the progress made to date the bridge will be open to traffic by June next year, weather permitting, six months ahead of the original completion date.

According to Minister for Main Roads Warren Pitt this is great news for the local community, motorists, tourists, the freight sector and industry in the Far North.

“People who regularly travel in and out of Cairns via Gordonvale can tell you the major impact and inconvenience caused when the current bridge floods.

“Most far north locals have a Mulgrave River bridge story where they have been forced to wait either side for hours on end or substantially alter their plans or even delay their journey.

“Now we are rolling out a series of crucial works, including this new bridge, that will significantly reduce the duration of closures on the Bruce Highway from Townsville to Cairns due to wet season flooding.”

Mr Pitt said the State Government had played a major role in getting the project up and running.

“After cyclones Larry and Monica, flooding cut the Bruce Highway at the Mulgrave River and other locations around Tully and Ingham, hampering relief efforts.

“We were able to negotiate funding for a \$348 million package from the Federal Government to address these flooding troublespots.”

cont. page 3



In this issue

- NEW MULGRAVE RIVER BRIDGE STEAMING AHEAD
- TRAILER PROVIDES LIFELINE FOR INJURED ANIMALS
- MAIN ROADS IN TANDEM WITH CAIRNS CYCLISTS
- AUSTRALIAN FIRST SAFETY INITIATIVE RECOGNISED
- PREPARING FOR CYCLONE SEASON
- VICTORY CREEK OVERTAKING LANES ONTO A WINNER
- PERMANENT SMS SERVICE FOR KURANDA RANGE ROAD
- BLUE LIGHT MEANS "GO" FOR NEW BUS LANE

NEWS

New Acting Regional Director

Welcome to Main Roads Cairns District Office's new Acting Regional Director, Ron Michel who started with the Cairns Office on November 10.

Ron is normally based in Brisbane as Works Manager, RoadTek Assets Services South.

With the resignation of Bruce Gould as Cairns District Office's Regional Director, the department has started the recruitment process to find a new Cairns-based Regional Director.

Ron replaces David Atkinson who also acted in the Regional Director role for more than 14 weeks directly after Bruce's resignation.

David is normally based in Townsville as part of the Statewide Planning Group in the role of Acting-Director Road Systems Planning.

David initially agreed, at short notice, to act in the position for a three week period but instead stayed for 14 weeks.

Main Roads Director-General Alan Tesch praised David's enthusiasm and openness while in Cairns.

"Many staff were impressed with the way he placed trust in them to do their job while being able to keep people focused on priority tasks," Mr Tesch said.

"I wish Ron all the best in the coming months while the recruitment process is finalised for a permanent Regional Director."



Acting Regional Director (Cairns District Office) Ron Michel with Executive Assistant Kate van Namen

cont. from page 1



Inspecting the new Mulgrave River bridge progress are Main Roads former Acting Regional Director (Cairns) David Atkinson, Minister for Main Roads Warren Pitt and Main Roads Project Manager Gary Hicks

Federal Member for Leichhardt Jim Turnour said he knew how important improved roads and traffic flow were to local residents, particularly to those south of Cairns.

“This section of road is highly prone to flooding so it is tremendous to see construction running ahead of schedule,” Mr Turnour said.

“The good progress on the bridge demonstrates what can be achieved when the Federal and State governments work cooperatively together.”

Australian Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, Anthony Albanese, said the new bridge was one component of the federally-funded \$348 million Accelerated Bruce Highway Upgrade Package.

“It represents our commitment to achieving greater flood immunity for one of the wettest parts of Australia,” Mr Albanese said.

“The new bridge will stand five metres higher than the present one and is located on a better road alignment, about 30 metres upstream from the existing highway.”

Mr Albanese said the flood immunity project south of Tully was also making excellent progress, with 10km of the 15km project now open to traffic, including the new Tully River Bridge.

“The project south of Ingham is now fully open to traffic, with improved flood immunity at Palm Creek.”

A major environmental rehabilitation project is being carried out on the banks of the Mulgrave River as part of the upgrade.

Some 5,000 native seedlings will be planted nearby as the project progresses and pest species will be removed.



Construction underway on one of the 15 bridge piers



Main Roads in tandem with Cairns cyclists

Main Roads continues providing cycle facilities and working closely with local cycling groups as its latest contribution to the Cairns Bicycle User Group highlights.

Main Roads has contributed funding to Queensland Bicycle User Groups as part of a commitment to support the provision of safe cycle facilities in Queensland.

Main Roads Minister Warren Pitt presented the Cairns Bicycle User Group (CBUG) with a \$2,500 funding contribution as part of a state-wide initiative to support Bicycle Queensland on October 27, 2008.

“Main Roads has a critical role to play in the provision of cycle facilities and works collaboratively with User Groups to ensure consideration is given to bicycle facilities in the planning stage of road projects,” Mr Pitt said.

“Main Roads Cairns District Office has an ongoing partnership with the Cairns Bicycle Group and regularly consults with them when planning these bicycle facilities.

“This funding contribution demonstrates our support for the valuable role Bicycle User Groups play in contributing to the development of the bicycle network,” he said.

Cairns Bicycle User Group Manager Lenore Evans said the funding will assist their organisation to continue promoting the need for quality bicycle facilities in far north Queensland.

“The provision of safe, attractive and direct bicycle facilities is essential to keep up with the continued growth of cycling for both transport and recreation,” Ms Evans said.

“This funding will enable us to update our administrative systems so we can communicate with our members and with key organisations like Main Roads,” she said.

Mr Pitt said the increased use of bicycles for transport and recreation contributes directly to the government’s agenda to reduce obesity, traffic congestion and vehicle emissions.

“In today’s society we are constantly being made aware of the need to find a healthy balance to our hectic lives,” he said.

“By continuing to work with organisations like Bicycle Queensland we can provide safe alternative transport options that will benefit the entire community.”

Awarded for safety first



The new prototype safety sign developed by Main Roads' Jeff Madsen

Cairns District Office Project Manager Jeff Madsen's innovative approach to safety was recognised when he recently walked away with one of Queensland's top community awards — a Queensland Road Safety Award.

The awards are a joint initiative of the RACQ and Queensland University Technology's Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety and recognise the work and efforts of individuals and groups who have designed programs dedicated to improving road safety.

There were more than 40 nominations and 15 finalists this year... highlighting how difficult it is to win one of these awards.



Minister for Main Roads Warren Pitt presenting a Queensland Road Safety Award to Inspector Antoni Lesic and Main Roads Project Manager Jeff Madsen

Jeff and police officers from both the Mareeba and Kuranda Police Stations worked together to develop a prototype safety sign - designed to help protect motorists and responding emergency service personnel at road accident scenes.

According to Jeff the sign was developed after a near miss at an accident scene for a local police officer on the Kuranda Range Road.

"While the police officer was attending a range crash he was holding a drip attached to a patient for an ambulance officer," Jeff said.

"Suddenly he was faced with a truck, its brakes locked up, bearing down on the ambulance and other emergency service workers.

"Fortunately everyone managed to get out of the truck's way but this incident was the catalyst leading to Queensland Police approaching the Cairns District Office for help developing a new type of sign that could improve safety around road accident scenes."

Jeff worked closely with Inspector Rolf Straatemeier and Sergeant Antoni Lesic to develop and produce 20 prototype signs that were then trialled by 10 police stations throughout Queensland.

» more information

Main Roads funded the trial of the sign which was so successful it has now been adopted by Queensland Police as a permanent safety resource.

Cyclone Season 08-09

As the far north knows all too well, November heralds the start of Cyclone Season. We take a look at the community effort behind this cyclone season's preparation, and find out how motorists can access information to help them travel safely after a cyclone hits.



Storm specialists, emergency service agencies, state Government departments, Ergon, Cairns Regional Council, the Red Cross, the ABC and the Building Services Authority joined together on November 5 to launch the 2008 Cyclone Season on the Cairns Esplanade.

The launch of Cyclone Season was celebrated with a free breakfast, a live radio broadcast and information displays to prepare people for the impending season.

Disaster management during cyclone season is a community effort and the launch highlighted the broad range of agencies and organisations involved in preparing the north for cyclone season.

Main Roads is one of these organisations, and as David Hamilton, Main Roads Cairns District Office's Road Operations Manager and Disaster Management Liaison Officer explains, his organisation begins preparing for cyclone season well in advance.

"We start undertaking maintenance at the start of the dry season and work towards minimising the impact of large storms on our roads," Mr Hamilton said.

"This involves activities like tree clearing, culvert cleaning and storing equipment.

"We always have an eye on potential damage and will talk to quarries about what materials they have in store, in case we need to undertake emergency road rehabilitation after a major storm event. We always have an eye on potential damage and will talk to quarries about what materials they have in store, in case we need to undertake emergency road rehabilitation after a major storm event.

"We also try and store enough equipment and material over the entire region so we can respond across all areas and not get trapped in any one spot if the road network is cut off because of flooding or damage."

Just as agencies and emergency response organisations begin preparing in advance, Emergency Management Queensland Executive Director Frank Pagano said every person living in a cyclone-prone area of Queensland should consider it a priority to prepare in the lead-up to the cyclone season of November to April.

"The Queensland Government, your local council and the emergency services can only do so much," he said.

"We invest heavily in getting cyclone and storm messages out to the community, but these efforts are worthless if individuals do not take the necessary precautions themselves.

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"People should check the condition of their roof and repair loose tiles, eaves or roof screws, trim any branches overhanging the house, clear gutters and ensure their home and contents insurance is adequate and current," Mr Pagano said.

"It's also a good idea to prepare an emergency kit including enough family supplies for three days (food, water and medications), a battery operated radio and torch, a first aid kit and important documents (wills, passports, insurance policies).

flooding, closures, road damage, delays, roadworks

When the wet season hits the far north it's the calls that start flooding into Main Roads' Cairns-based Traffic Management Centre (TMC).

13 19 40

During the last wet season, when over a three day period, flooding impacted all major roads — the TMC answered more than 5,000 calls from road users calling through on Main Roads' 13 19 40 number.

"The details we offer the public are invaluable when they are trying to safely travel in the aftermath of a natural disaster like a cyclone and are negotiating everything from road hazards to flooding."

By calling 13 19 40 or logging onto www.131940.qld.gov.au road users can find out what's happening on our roads from roadworks, flooding, closures, special events and delays to road damage.

Mr Hodgman said although the TMC could only provide information about roads that Main Roads were responsible for he would still encourage motorists to call 13 19 40 or go online.

Main Roads Traffic Systems Coordinator Ross Hodgman said motorists can access information via the 13 19 40 number or website that can help them plan their journey safely, especially in the aftermath of a cyclone.

"We don't expect people to know if a road is the responsibility of the state government or their regional council," Mr Hodgman said.

"Our Traffic Management Centre obtains information from a number of sources including our road crews and a network of traffic cameras, members of the public calling or emailing to report road damage or hazards, Closed Circuit Television surveillance, radio scanners and the police," Mr Hodgman said.

"We're more than happy for people to call 13 19 40 no matter what, and if it isn't a road we're responsible for, we can point them in the right direction."

"After a cyclone we source a lot of crucial information from our road crews who are often the first people back on the roads braving whatever the weather throws at them to assess any damage done.



Peter Grant and Elissa Watford, Cairns Traffic Management Centre officers



Minister for Main Roads Warren Pitt with Eagles Nest Wildlife Hospital founder and manager Harry Kunz. Minister Pitt is holding Pebbles, an orphaned Grater Glider rescued and now cared for by the hospital

Lifeline for injured animals

We find out how a new trailer for Eagles Nest Wildlife Hospital will help rescue our native animals.

Main Roads has donated a purpose-built trailer to Ravenshoe-based Eagles Nest Wildlife Hospital so it can transport large, injured native animals to and from the hospital.

Minister for Main Roads Warren Pitt said the trailer would now allow the wildlife hospital to rescue large native animals like cassowaries, kangaroos and emus.

“Before Main Roads donated the trailer, Eagles Nest Wildlife Hospital was unable to transport larger native animals to and from the hospital,” Mr Pitt said.

The purpose-built trailer also includes a large cage and provides the hospital with a low stress transport option for injured animals like cassowaries.

The Eagles Nest Wildlife Hospital was established in 2001 and currently has 160 animals in care.

Last year the hospital helped more than 1,000 injured animals.

Eagles Nest Wildlife Hospital founder and manager, Harry Kunz said the hospital had the facilities to care for larger native animals but previously had no way to transport them.

“We have an animal ambulance van but it is just too small to carry the larger animals safely and without causing them further injury and stress,” Mr Kunz said.

“Thanks to Main Roads’ generosity we can now begin rescuing large injured animals that would otherwise have no other hope of recovery without our help.”

Eagles Nest Wildlife Hospital is a not-for-profit organisation that rescues all injured, sick and orphaned native animals like grater gliders, possums, hawks, wallabies, quolls, kangaroos and reptiles.

NEWS

Victory Creek onto a winner

The working partnership between Main Roads and CEC to deliver overtaking lanes on a 3.2km section of the Bruce Highway between Victory Creek and Todd Road, north of Innisfail, is proving a winning one.

The new overtaking lanes for both northbound and southbound traffic are on schedule for completion at the end of December.

This is one of a number of projects to construct overtaking lanes along the Bruce Highway in north Queensland under the Federal Government's \$220 million AusLink 1 program.

The two images below show the progress being made on the new 3.2km stretch of overtaking lanes between Victory Creek and Todd Road



Kuranda Range \$1.1 million curve widening begins



Kuranda Range Road

Work will start early December on a \$1.1 million curve widening project on the Kuranda Range Road that will include the widening of the range road width near Avondale Creek and the hairpin bend.

Minister for Main Roads Warren Pitt said the curves were identified by Main Roads as a safety concern as truckies find the corners difficult to negotiate on the current road width.

“This widening work will enable heavy vehicles to easily pass each other on the corners when travelling in opposite directions.”

Mr Pitt said survey and design work was currently underway for widening several other curves along the range road.

“A formal pull-over area for trucks at the top of the range will also be designed so drivers can check their loads and brakes before beginning the descent,” he said.

Through the Queensland Government's Safer Roads Sooner program more than \$3 million has been invested in safety improvements and enhanced traffic conditions on the Kuranda Range Road.

Early signs show the ongoing safety program has successfully reduced crash rates by 63 per cent since it was introduced late last year.

New welcome to Yarrabah

A new sign at the small indigenous community of Yarrabah is helping make a positive first impression.

A new “welcome” sign at the entrance to Yarrabah has helped to build a sense of pride in the community.

When visiting Yarrabah on October 30, Main Roads and Local Government Minister Warren Pitt was impressed with the positive image the sign has created.

"Yarrabah is a close community, in a beautiful location and with a strong sense of community pride," Mr Pitt said.

"The welcome signage – jointly funded by both my departments, Main Roads and Local Government – is located right at the doorway to the shire and presents the Yarrabah community as 'paradise by the sea'.

"The sign includes a fan palm, representing the region's rainforests, colourful coral, to represent the reef and the sea, and a sea hawk, which watches over the Yarrabah community.

"Council should be congratulated for the initiative they have taken to improve the town's image through this signage.

"It really displays the sense of pride the people of Yarrabah have for their community."

Chief Executive Officer of Yarrabah Shire Council, Leon Yateman, said the idea for the sign was initially developed during a Community Cabinet meeting held at Yarrabah in July last year.

"We wanted to create a welcoming entry to the town that would impress visitors and help build a sense of pride in the community," he said.

"We worked in partnership with Main Roads in regards to the sign's artwork and design, with installation by both council and Main Roads work crews.

"Previously, visitors and locals arriving into town would be greeted by an alcohol management sign.

"They are now greeted by a large welcoming sign that represents our beautiful surroundings."

Mr Pitt said the health and wellbeing of Indigenous and island communities was a key priority for the State Government.

"Like all of us, people living in remote Indigenous communities deserve proper access to essential local government services.

"We will continue to work closely with the state's Indigenous councils to build their capacity and to improve infrastructure and environmental health services."



From left to right Councillor Michael Sands, Deputy Mayor Sandra Houghton, Mayor Percy Neal, Minister for Main Roads Warren Pitt and Bevan Walsh

Helping remote communities get connected

Thanks to Cairns Main Roads, and its dedicated Information Technology team, more than 90 computers have been donated to organisations and schools throughout the far north.

Main Roads has donated more than 90 second-hand computers to remote far north communities in the last 18 months.

Minister for Main Roads Warren Pitt said the second-hand computers had gone to remote communities where they would make a real difference and help young people get connected.

“Nearly all of the computers have been donated to remote Indigenous communities in the Torres Strait and Cape York,” Minister Pitt said.

“For example some recipients include Thursday Island’s Sacred Heart Primary School, the Injinoo Youth Centre, Pormpuraaw State School, Pytham Women’s Shelter and the Puuya Community Centre.”

Minister Pitt said rather than auctioning the computers for a limited return it made sense for the department to donate them to communities where they will represent a valuable long term social investment.

“Information technology staff could spend anywhere between three to six hours preparing each computer before it could be on-sold,” he said.

“At auction the department would not come anywhere close to recouping the preparation time or the value of the computer.”

Helen Kett, principal of Thursday Island’s Sacred Heart Primary School said Main Roads’ second-hand computer initiative represented a wonderful opportunity for her school and community to gain 10 computers.

“It normally would take us a lot of time and community effort to buy this number of computers ourselves, through either fundraising efforts or applying for a grant,” Ms Kett said.

“Not only will the computers extend our students’ online research skills and basic computer literacy but they will also enable the children greater access to our online tutoring program that specialises in improving maths and science skills.”

Acting Cairns Regional Director Ron Michel said Cairns IT staff should be commended for their hard work in preparing the computers.

“This is something our IT team members are passionate about and fit into their already demanding work schedules,” Mr Michel said.

“Without their dedication to the project we could not have donated so many computers to the community over the last 18 months.”



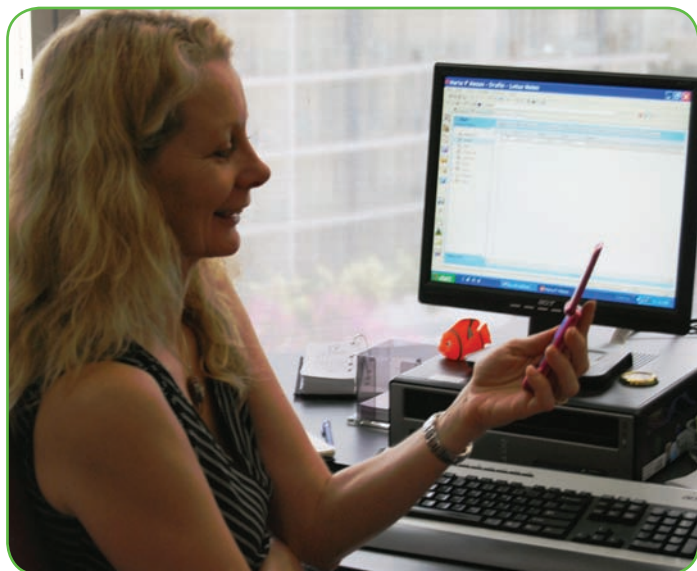
NEWS

Permanent SMS alerts for Kuranda Range Road

The trial SMS message service introduced by Main Roads in January to alert motorists of closures on the Kuranda Range Road is now a permanent service.

The service is triggered when there are closures on the range exceeding 30 minutes.

According to Member for Barron River Steve Wettenhall more than 380 motorists had signed up to receive message alerts by mobile phone.



“On 19 February, the system was successfully used for the first time to alert motorists of long delays due to a landslide,” Mr Wettenhall said.

“This alert allowed motorists to plan an alternative route or make other arrangements to avoid being stuck in their cars for hours.”

Mr Wettenhall said as the SMS alert was introduced at his suggestion, he was very pleased that Minister for Main Roads Warren Pitt had decided to provide the service on a permanent basis.

Motorists wishing to sign up for this free SMS service can call Main Roads on 13 19 40.

Public Sector excellence

The work of Main Roads Cairns based Remote Community Services Unit (RCSU) has been shortlisted for a Premier’s Award for Excellence in Public Sector Management.

The RCSU was recognised for its work with the Northern Peninsula Construction Alliance.

The Alliance is made up of a group of Indigenous private sector contractors from the remote Indigenous communities of Bamaga, Seisia, Umagico and Injinoo.



*Remote Community Services Unit
Manager Col Moore*

The RCSU has worked with these communities for more than 20 years, providing road and transport related infrastructure, construction and maintenance training.

The winners of the Awards will be announced at a ceremony on December 8, 2008.

Blue light for Cairns’ first priority bus lane

For the first time Cairns has a dedicated bus lane with its own traffic light.

The bus lane is located next to the inbound traffic lanes near Balaclava State School and allows public buses to queue in a separate traffic lane.



Cairns’ first priority bus lane

The lane is controlled by a separate blue “B” traffic light and is triggered by the bus. The “B” light comes on before the green light to give buses priority.