



Australian Government

**BUILDING OUR FUTURE**



Transport for NSW

# \$203 million Newell Highway upgrade, Mungle Back Creek to Boggabilla open

Completion | April 2021



A section of the Newell Highway Mungle Back Creek to Boggabilla upgrade

The Australian and NSW Governments have upgraded a crucial 27-kilometre section of Newell Highway between Mungle Back Creek and Boggabilla.

After more than two years of construction on Australia's busiest freight route, this new section of road will ensure a safer, smoother and faster journey for motorists as well as meeting existing and future freight needs along this section of the Newell Highway.

This section of highway in Northern NSW was formerly a high maintenance area constructed over the highly reactive black soil plain. It was often severely impacted

by flood events which would disrupt travel reliability and freight efficiency.

The contract to upgrade this section of the Newell Highway was awarded to Fulton Hogan Construction, and has since provided almost 600 jobs and injected millions of dollars into local communities through its "buy local" strategy.



## Project Overview

The Mungle Back Creek to Boggabilla upgrade is a critical link in Australia's freight network. The newly opened section includes 27.2 km of new road, intersection improvements, widening of road shoulders and two new overtaking lanes to improve safety and travel times.

Delivery of this vital road safety upgrade has been particularly complex, given it is an environmentally and culturally sensitive area built on highly reactive black soil, and in a flood prone area with poor telecommunications. Construction was also difficult given it is one of Australia's main freight routes to the north, heavily used by road trains including wide and over-size loads.



A daily pre-start meeting at the site compound



## Local Jobs and Supplier Opportunities

Almost 600 people have worked on the project, with a focus on Aboriginal participation and locally employed staff.

As part of the Aboriginal Participation in Construction policy, local Aboriginal people have gained jobs, training and qualifications.

Against a target of providing the equivalent of five full-time positions for Aboriginal people on the project, to date the project has surpassed this with:



**51 Aboriginal workers, representing around 33 percent of the project team.**



**Over \$3.5 million was invested on Aboriginal participation across the life of the project, equating to 73,429 hours**

With only five percent of jobs in building trades currently occupied by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, this project has been an industry leader in both Aboriginal and local employment.

The project has injected millions of dollars into the local economy, with a buy local approach ensuring services and goods supplied to the project came within a 100-kilometre radius. This included everything from earthmoving services and construction material, fuel and vehicle services to food and personal protection equipment. Everything purchased for the Community Bush Garden was sourced from Goondiwindi and Boggabilla stores.



## Community Bush Food Garden

The project team worked with the local Aboriginal community and school to establish a bush food garden named 'Wirradoo' (meaning Old Time) on a hectare of land at Boggabilla Central School grounds which opened in November 2020, in time for NAIDOC Week celebrations.



The school led the design, planning and planting of the garden and students learned to weld and create striking large metal sculptures made from donated steel.



This year school students will study local Aboriginal history and prepare storyboard signs for the garden and build traditional bush humpies with guidance from Elders.



The bush garden will supply local communities with plant species, including bumble tree, saltbush and eurah, which have been used by Aboriginal people for thousands of the years for medicinal purposes, food and drink, and even soap.



This community asset tells the story of local Aboriginal history and also provides a practical educational experience for students and visitors.



Opening of the Bush Food Garden, Boggabilla

**"I've seen a lot of difference in the young people who work out there, because they've never had opportunities like this before."  
- Aunty Elaine Edwards**



## Community Engagement

Local employment and strong Aboriginal participation have been successes of the Mungle Back Creek to Boggabilla project, which has been driven by close relationships between the project team and Indigenous organisations, collaboration with the local Chamber of Commerce, businesses, Council. The project team also worked closely with surrounding property owners to source supplies and resources.

The project has been a major employment driver, with almost 600 staff and contractors working on the upgrade since work started in 2018. In collaboration with a dedicated local Cultural Heritage Advisor, the project team has worked with Boggabilla Central School to provide school-based traineeships and employment for two Year 11 Aboriginal students, the first of its kind across all Transport for NSW projects. The project team sponsored many local community events, including NAIDOC Day celebrations at Boggabilla Central School, Toomelah Public School, the North Star Show Jumping Event and Goondiwindi Kindergarten fete.

**“Because we had a drought here the building of the road couldn’t have come at a better time, lessening the impacts to towns people and farmers. Some bright times in a very dark time.”**  
– Dave Coulton, local farmer



Kelirra Armstrong and Maleika Craigie, local Gomerioi women and began working on the project early in 2019



Local Perry Duncan in action on the project



Boggabilla Central School NAIDOC celebrations



Community NAIDOC celebrations



Boggabilla Central School NAIDOC celebrations



## Protecting the local environment

The project upgrade is located in a known cultural heritage and environmentally sensitive area of NSW, which meant many measures were implemented to protect and enhance the location during construction.

Given the rich variety of bird and wildlife native to the project area, arborists and ecologists were brought in to install nesting boxes at strategic locations to supplement hollow trees and logs that were removed as part of the upgrade.

Wildlife specialists installed 35 nest boxes which are made from 100 per cent recycled plastic and Queensland cypress, which are termite and rot proof and have a lifespan of more than 30 years. The project team held various fundraisers to cover the extra cost associated with installing these superior quality nest boxes.

The nest boxes will likely be used by the Glossy Black-Cockatoo and Corben's Long-Eared Bat. They will also house squirrel gliders, owls such as the barking owl and masked owls, parrots and micro bats.

The boxes have been tailored to suit specific species and a detailed assessment was carried out to find the most appropriate trees to house them.

At the site compound south of Boggabilla, an irrigated waste-water system was installed to manage the site compound's effluent and to collect rainwater which was reused, including for dust suppression.

The project team held fundraisers for injured and orphaned wildlife which collected more than \$6,000.



Nest box installation



## Community involvement

The project was located in a remote farming district with many community members affected by drought and financial hardship. The project supported many local organisations and groups during this tough time including:

- The local rugby club in Goondiwindi
- Hosting barbecues at the local Boggabilla Centra School
- Sponsorship to the Goondiwindi Kindergarten
- Sponsorship and providing a water cart at the North Star Show Jumping Classic
- Hosting a clay target club function
- Providing a construction and engineering presentation to year 11 and 12 students at the local high school
- Sponsorship and participation in NAIDOC in Goondiwindi, Boggabilla and Toomelah Mission
- Sponsorship of the Toomelah descendants Womens' Rugby League
- Sports equipment and hall hire at Boggabilla Central School.



**461,185 m<sup>3</sup>**  
of earthworks



**172,267 m<sup>3</sup>**  
of foam bitumen placed



**2,928 m**  
of pipe culverts



**518,949 hrs**  
work person hours



**29 months**  
construction

April 2021  
21.060



Privacy Transport for NSW ("TfNSW") is subject to the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 ("PIIP Act") which requires that we comply with the Information Privacy Principles set out in the PIIP Act. All information in correspondence is collected for the sole purpose of assisting in the delivery of this project. The information received, including names and addresses of respondents, may be published in subsequent documents unless a clear indication is given in the correspondence that all or part of that information is not to be published. Otherwise Transport for NSW will only disclose your personal information, without your consent, if authorised by the law. Your personal information will be held by Transport for NSW at Level 1/188 Macquarie Street, Dubbo NSW 2830. You have the right to access and correct the information if you believe that it is incorrect.