

Sealing the Cobb and Silver City highways



The Hon. Jenny Aitchison, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, Transport staff and community members mark the completion of the Cobb Highway with a plaque unveiling at Mount Manara on the 14 November 2023

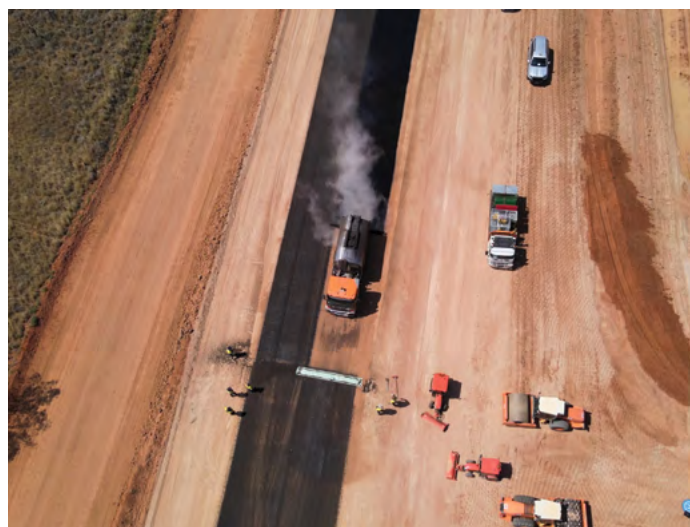
The Cobb and Silver City Highways are key routes connecting our far west communities between Victoria and the Queensland Border. The completion of the Cobb & Silver City Highway initial seal project from 2018 to 2023 marks the end of a decade long project which commenced in 2011.

Entire state road network completely sealed

The NSW Government has provided \$145 million to rebuild and seal the remaining sections of both the Cobb and Silver City highways, bringing the total invested since 2011 to \$195 million. With the final section at Halfway Tree on the Cobb Highway completed in October 2023, the entire NSW state road network is now sealed.

This is an historic milestone for the NSW highway networks improving safety and providing reduced journey times and more reliable access to hospitals, schools and businesses.

Read on for some great stories from the community in this commemorative community update.



Coming in hot! Sealing at Halfway Tree on the Cobb Highway, October 2023

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The History

The Cobb Highway stretches from Moama on the Murray River and follows a travelling stock route reserve to Wilcannia on the Darling River. The stock route known as the Long Paddock, was the main corridor for the movement of large mobs of sheep and cattle from Queensland to the Victorian markets. It was also a transport corridor for wagons carrying freight, coaches carrying mail, transporting passengers, providing gold escorts, and lone travellers crossing the vast plains. The Cobb Highway was named in 1947 in honour of the Cobb & Co stagecoach company and follows the tracks once used by them.

The sealing of the last section of the Cobb Highway between Wilcannia and Ivanhoe is an historic milestone for tourists, freight operators and for the local communities in the Far West. Wet weather has often made the road impassable and sealing this section of the Highway completes the final piece in the state's highway network right across NSW.



Sealing at Bushley on the Cobb Highway, May 2023

What we have delivered – Cobb Highway

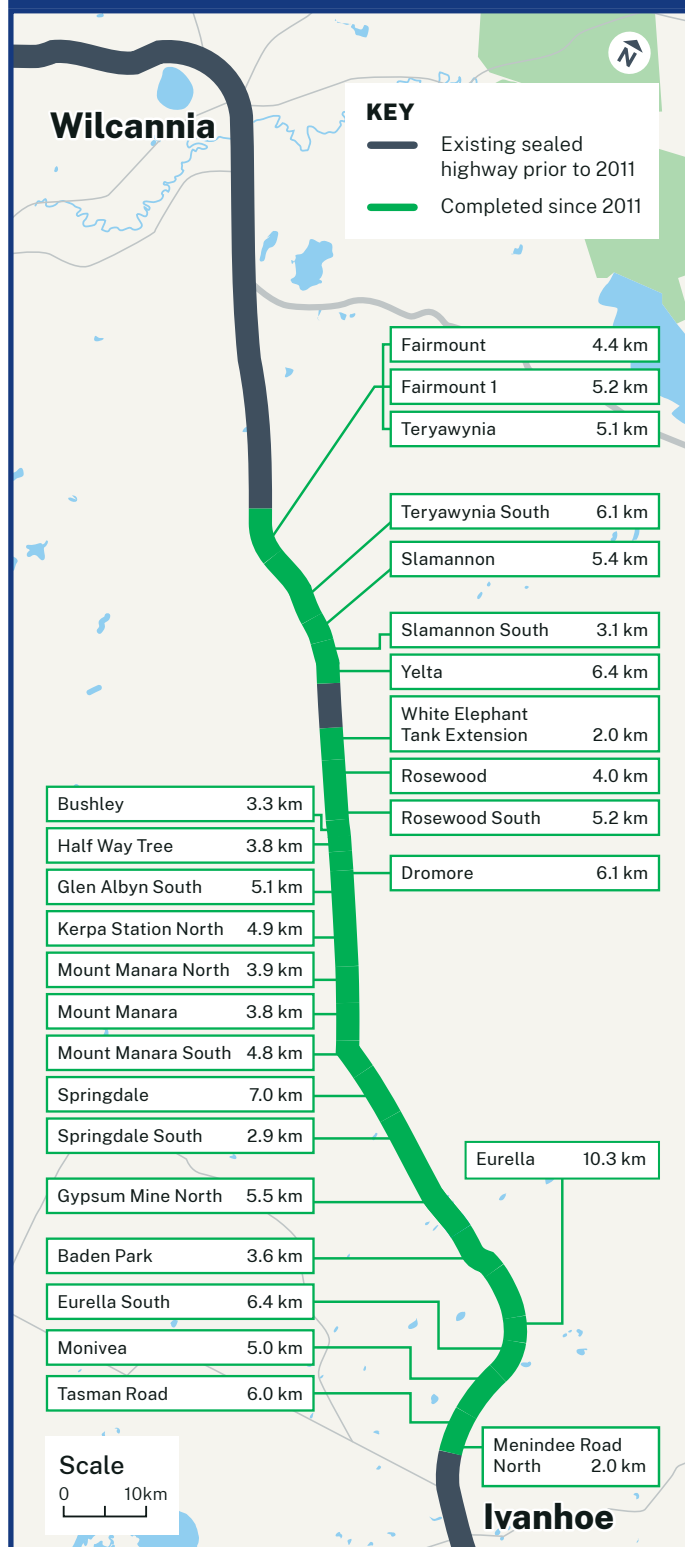
The NSW Government invested \$73 million between 2018 to 2023 to seal all remaining sections of the Cobb Highway. This included:

- 99 kilometres sealed since 2018, a total of 153 kilometres sealed since 2011
- New automated electronic road signs designed to improve safety and better inform motorists about road conditions
- New drainage structures to combat the impact of floods
- Cobb Highway realignment near Mount Manara to create a safer, straighter road.



700,000 tonnes
of crushed gravel

Cobb Highway initial seal program as at October 2023



43,000 tonnes
of aggregate used to build
and seal the Cobb Highway



Smoking ceremony at the opening event on 14 November 2023

Cultural significance

The Cobb Highway realignment near Mount Manara is a culturally sensitive area for the Ngiyampaa and Barkindji people, and our teams worked closely with local Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) to preserve and document the existing environment.

Warren Clark is a proud Barkindji man and RAP for the project, “I definitely appreciated the opportunity and collaboration on this project with Transport for NSW. It was great to share my cultural knowledge with the group. It certainly was an honour and a privilege to work on our Country with my people.

I recognise that Transport actually cares about the footprint/impact of this project on Country and which greatly assist the Ivanhoe Wilcannia communities and other road users in this space.”

Mount Manara is a significant place for both the Ngiyampaa and Barkindji people as ceremonies and gatherings took place within the hills. Mount Manara is also part of a significant line of dreaming places and rock art sites. This line of art sites delineates the boundaries of Ngiyampaa Country, where Ngiyampaa overlaps with Barkindji, where important events occurred and where significant pathways intersect.

Transport for NSW would like to acknowledge and thank the RAPs for their time and contribution to the project.



Sealing at Halfway Tree on the Cobb Highway, October 2023



150+

Workers each year including engineers, road workers, trainees, apprentices and contractors

Wilvandee to benefit

Since the 1970's the Wilcannia, Ivanhoe and Menindee Central Schools have conducted interschool sports known as 'Wilvandee'. This is an important social and sporting get together for the kids in this remote area with each school taking it in turns to host this prestigious sporting event.

Wet weather used to have significant impacts on the day, and it was often cancelled if it was wet. “These kids don't have the same opportunities as their fellow students on the east coast and now that we can rely on the Cobb being open, we can give these kids the experiences they deserve,” said Alison Johnstone, Assistant Principal, Ivanhoe School.



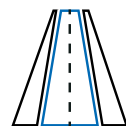
Students from Menindee Central School, accepting the Wilvandee Trophy in June 2023

Benefits to the community

Sealing the Cobb Highway has improved flood resilience and provides more reliable access to hospitals, schools, and essential services for local communities during flood events.

Other benefits for locals and the wider community include:

- Reduced travel times by up to 30 minutes between Wilcannia and Ivanhoe
- Improved connections for the freight and livestock industry in remote NSW
- Reduced time, cost and resources used in road maintenance
- Improved wet weather resilience and more reliable road access
- Smoother and safer road surface.



132 Kilometres

Constructed and sealed on the Cobb Highway since 2011

Sealing the Cobb and Silver City highways

Silver linings

The completion of the Silver City Highway initial seal project in December 2022 was an historic milestone, and one that was achieved six months ahead of schedule. On 14 December 2022, the Silver City Highway was opened to the public, providing a fully sealed Silver City Highway, connecting Victoria and Queensland via Broken Hill and Tibooburra.

The completion of the Cobb Highway now finalises the decade long project to seal all the remaining unsealed sections of the state highway network and provide more reliable and efficient transport links for our far west communities.

The sealing of both the Cobb and Silver City Highways ensures fewer highway closures, provides greater economic opportunities for local and interstate businesses and make trips faster, smoother and safer.



Above: Alistair Lunn, Paul Polansky, Neville Monaghan and Tom Carruthers from Transport for NSW cut the ribbon to officially open the Cobb Highway, 14 November 2023



Minister Aitchison speaking with Wilcannia Tourism Association President, Bill Elliott at the opening in November 2023

Community feedback

"We never thought we'd see this sealed. It's such a great achievement – especially for tourism."

Bill Elliott, Wilcannia Tourism Association

"I don't think anyone realises how much this will change the lives of people in Wilcannia and Ivanhoe."

Ray Longfellow, Ivanhoe Postmaster



Above: Transport for NSW staff at a breakfast to celebrate completion of the Cobb and Silver City Highway project, November 2023

Contact us

If you have any questions or would like more information on the Cobb and Silver City Highways please contact our project team:



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