



***NATIONAL AWARDS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ETHERIDGE SHIRE COUNCIL – EINASLEIGH RIVER BRIDGE
INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT
PRESENTATION***

Infrastructure networks are essential to driving sustainable economic development and growth, lifting levels of productivity and boosting employment.

Infrastructure is critical to encouraging business innovation and improving the global competition of our industries, they provide the foundation for vital community services such as schools, hospitals, and housing and they are key to managing population growth and meeting current and future environmental challenges.

However, without adequate and appropriate investment in infrastructure, Australia will struggle to achieve sustainable economic growth and environmental sustainability and improve the quality of life for current and future generations.

Infrastructure removes the bottlenecks and gaps that are holding back Australia's growth and identify opportunities for new capital investment.

Infrastructure such as water, energy, communication and transport has very complex relationships with economic, community and environmental issues.



Good Morning, my name is David Munro and I am the Director Corporate & Community Services for Etheridge Shire Council.

Etheridge Shire is located 4 hours west of Cairns and 4 hours from the Port of Kurumba in the Gulf of Carpentaria and has an area of 40,000 sq km's to service. The shire is part of the Gulf Savannah group of Councils, and has an estimated population of 1,200 people, and has 560 rateable assessments which returns approximately \$1.82 Million in revenue for the Shire. The main industries within the Shire are Cattle (beef), Small Crops, Mining and Tourism.

INNOVATION & BEST PRACTICE

The Bridge – The new Einasleigh River Bridge comprises of:-

- 416 metre x 8 metre high x 9 metre wide, two lane concrete structure on 900 mm diameter columns with rock protected embankment and road approaches joining into the existing Gulf Development Road. A large saving in cost has been realised by the innovative use of pre-cast concrete elements to reduce on-site works in this remote area.
- Delivery of fresh concrete to the site involves a 5 hour round trip from the nearest supplier, and therefore we needed to extend the life of the concrete by adding “Retarders and Superplasticizers” to the mixture.

Water reducers, retarders and superplasticizers are “admixtures” for concrete which are added in order to reduce the water content in a mixture or to slow the setting rate of the concrete while retaining the flowing properties of a concrete mixture. Admixtures are used to modify the properties of concrete or mortar to make them more suitable to work by hand or for other purposes such as saving mechanical energy.

The construction of the bridge is well underway, as we can see from the following pictures.

This particular bridge is situated 53 kilometres east of Georgetown on the Gulf Development Road which is part of the National Route called the “Savannah Way” which links Cairns to Broome.

The Gulf Development Road is the major access route into the Gulf Region and the economic lifeline for communities and townships across the Gulf, including the aboriginal communities of Doomadgee and Mornington Island. The Einasleigh River Bridge is the weak link in this road due to its low height and long periods of flooding.



On the 30th January 2009, a 12 metre section on the western approach to the bridge was washed away by flood waters and another 6 metres on the eastern approach. While temporary repairs were made to the bridge in late February to allow resumption of traffic there was a compelling need to replace the Einasleigh River Bridge.

PROCESS & PLANNING

The Gulf Development Road is the main arterial road access for the Gulf communities and is the heartbeat to the economic viability within this region. For Council to undertake this project, it needed to change its strategic thinking from its own backyard to a regional level.

The call to replace the bridge had the full support from a range of stakeholder groups including all six Gulf Shires, (Etheridge, Croydon, Carpentaria, Burke and the two Indigenous Shires of Doomadgee and Mornington Island).

The impacts of this inadequate bridge and the recent damage that it sustained were a major concern to stakeholders across the Gulf region.

- The inadequate bridge is a disincentive to investment in the region and to further economic development as it restricts wet season access to an unacceptable level.
- A bridge which due to damage sustained cannot be used or which requires a load limit will increase the costs of transporting goods and services into and out of the region, will impact severely on both the regional economy and to the community well being. The Gulf Development Road is used by freight trucks bringing goods and services into the region and is used by the cattle industry and the fishing industry to export products to the markets. It is the region's economic lifeline. It is also used to bring fuel into the region, including aviation fuel critical to air services in the region.



- The yearly flooding of the bridge adds huge amounts to the emergency relief bill into the Gulf during the wet season. During flooding of the Einasleigh River Bridge, most communities across the Gulf Shires are unable to be accessed and Emergency Management Queensland are required to provide emergency supplies by helicopter and for those Shires closer to the Gulf of Carpentaria such as Burke, Carpentaria, Doomadgee and Mornington Island have to be barged in from Cairns via the tip of Cape York. It would be easier and much cheaper to truck these supplies not to mention less the carbon footprint during these times.

To enable the planning process to be successful, I cannot stress enough the ability to work in collaboration with the other Gulf Shires and also include the Indigenous Councils and not to exclude them was a key ingredient to the success of this project.

From this, the Gulf Shires have developed certain strategic infrastructure priorities that will provide benefits to the Gulf Region to ensure the area is enjoyed for future generations and to provide a strong economic footprint.

BENEFITS

The benefits of this infrastructure project are endless:-

- Improves the access into the Gulf Region;
- Improves the social amenity of the region and enhances liveability;
- Flood proofs the major arterial road;
- Reduces the State and Federal Natural Disaster funding requirements;
- Reduces the costs and improves the operational efficiency of industries across the Gulf in the wet season;
- Stimulates economic development in the Gulf Region;
- Improves competition and productivity of the Gulf Region;
- Supports the Federal Government's agenda for development of Northern Australia and Regional Australia;
- Improves the ability of the region to adapt to the higher intensity rainfall events projected for Northern Australia through climate change;
- Improves National Productivity by providing all year access to various markets;
- Provides additional opportunities for the tourism industry not previously experienced in the Gulf Region;
- Provides confidence in investment into the Gulf Region.



ETHERIDGE SHIRE

...a part of the Gulf Savannah Region.

Previous development plans for the Gulf Region have emphasised that the fortunes of the Gulf will depend fundamentally on the continuing development and diversifications of its resource based industries.

All of these opportunities will be facilitated by replacing the Einasleigh River Bridge which is the weak link on the Gulf Development Road.

- The economic viability of the Gilbert River Irrigation area in the Etheridge Shire would be significantly enhanced through improved transport corridors, particularly removing the seasonal closures into the region caused by flooding. The Gulf Regional Water Advisory Committee has said that the potential benefits of irrigation projects to the local populace could, with careful planning, be at least equivalent to other existing industries such as cattle and mining.
- Improving seasonal access to the region by a higher bridge over the Einasleigh River would open up much of the region to green “wet” season tourism. The seasonality of the Gulf Tourism Industry is a major impediment to development of the industry and greatly impacts on the viability of tourism operators in the Gulf whose season is restricted by access issues.

CONCLUSION

Infrastructure projects are essential to driving sustainable economic development and growth, lifting levels of productivity and boosting employment.

This project was funded through the Federal Government’s – Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program. This funding initiative has given the Gulf communities an all weather access, provided future economic benefits, provided much needed economic stimulus to the region which has been greatly impacted by the Global Financial Crisis.

It must also be mentioned without the support and the keen interest in Northern Australia from the Hon Anthony Albanese and the Hon Gary Gray this project would not have been possible and the outcomes that this project will deliver through economic benefits and community well being would have real implications on growing the regions economic base into the future.



The project is unique in the way that it has involved all tiers of government and the private sector and furthermore this project is the first of its kind, having Local Government as the principal to construct a state asset.

Federal Government – provided the funding to enable the creation of jobs and infrastructure.

State Government – benefited by having their infrastructure renewed and upgraded.

Local Government – being able to deliver to the communities' enhanced and better facilities and providing a positive correlation between activity and social engagement.

Private Sector – increase in economic benefits, creation and security of jobs in the construction industry.

One final note that other Local Governments could benefit from and be transferable back into their own regions is to ensure:-

- That Local Governments work in collaboration with their neighbouring shires to obtain key common goals and priorities that will benefit all communities, think global not local.
- It is important Local Government enter into discussions early with State and Federal Governments to enable the strategic planning to become reality. Even the best ideas will never get off the ground if you don't have the support of all tiers of government and the community and if you don't have this initial support, these ideas will always be just that... ideas contained within strategic planning documents. Just think... a waterfall is created by a single rain drop....

One last point that I would like to make is... that whenever we look at infrastructure, it just isn't a road or a bridge or a building... it is the flow on effects that the infrastructure has created... it brings new opportunities to a region through business innovation, jobs, economic growth, development, confidence and provides social networking. I for one have a new appreciation of what infrastructure can bring to the community and to regions.

THANK YOU

