

State Backs Bridge Duplication

17 November 2017

Upper Spencer Gulf Mayors have welcomed the South Australian Government's promise of \$40 million towards duplication of the Joy Baluch AM bridge in Port Augusta.

Chair of Spencer Gulf Cities and Port Augusta Mayor Sam Johnson said the bridge crossing has long been identified as one of the key weaknesses in the region's road transport network.

"The Upper Spencer Gulf, and Port Augusta particularly, is quite literally located at the crossroads of Australia", explained Mayor Johnson.

"Given our location and combination of road, rail, sea and air infrastructure across the three cities, the Upper Spencer Gulf is ideally placed to develop as national transport and intermodal hub."

"We are seeing rapid growth in renewable energy, defence, agriculture/horticulture and mining operations right across the region. We have to make sure our transport infrastructure can cope with this growth and move goods and services efficiently without compromising safety and liveability."

"We have been strongly advocating for a number of years that this point of congestion over the bridge will need to be resolved if the region is to take full advantage of its economic potential."

A report by the Spencer Gulf Cities identifies the single lane, 40km/hour crossing as a real pinch-point in the national road network, with all road traffic heading east-west or north-south passes over the bridge. Adding to this, for over-dimensional vehicles, or during times when bridge access is closed or restricted the only alternative access is an unsealed, dry-weather only route via 'Yorkey's Crossing'.

At a local level, Mayor Johnson also notes the Port Augusta community is extremely vulnerable to issues with bridge access during medical, fire or other emergencies.

"Given our emergency services are located one side of the bridge and our hospital on the other, it has just been a matter of good luck that we haven't yet had a serious situation where an outage on the bridge has meant an ambulance has not been able to access a critically ill patient."

"We are very thankful that the State Transport Minister Stephen Mullighan has come to the table to help resolve this longstanding issue and now look forward to the Federal Government approving the remainder of the funding so we can finally get on with it."

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