

GOLDFIELDS HIGHWAY

**227. Ms M. BEARD to the Minister for Transport:**

I refer to the unsealed and unsafe condition of the Goldfields Highway between Wiluna and Meekatharra and a local petition that has garnered nearly 700 signatures calling for action.

- (1) When will the community see the delivery of all works associated with the \$16 million committed by the former coalition government to start sealing this vital transport link?
- (2) Why was the time frame associated with this important project pushed out again?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:**

I thank the member for this question.

- (1)–(2) This is an interesting project because the Wiluna–Meekatharra road had not been considered for any upgrades under the previous government. In government, one of the key things we are doing in relation to all our projects, particularly those that are being delivered in areas of significant Aboriginal disadvantage and unemployment, is employing young and local people on that road delivery. I remember going up there a few years ago when we committed \$5 million for the first section of the resealing. Together with the commonwealth government, we have committed further funds. We partnered with a TAFE in Wiluna at that point to employ and train local Aboriginal people on the roads. For some of those projects, this means that projects are not delivered as quickly as they would be if we had a big tier 1 contractor come in and deliver the road, but then we would not have local Aboriginal employment and training. The feedback I got from the local Aboriginal people is that they absolutely want to be part of both the delivery and the maintenance of the road. I remember talking to some of the people who were employed in that road project. They said, “This is our road. We want to be part of building it and maintaining it into the future.” It was one of those times when I was out there and knew that the way we were doing those projects was actually going to make a difference. We are training local people and employing them in the future to maintain the road. We continually work with the local community to see how we can drive local training opportunities and deliver this road to make sure that local people are both engaged and empowered in both road construction and road maintenance.