

## **FITZROY CROSSING BRIDGE**

*Statement by Minister for Transport*

**MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport)** [1.08 pm]: I rise to update the house on the government's efforts to reconnect the Kimberley following ex-tropical cyclone Ellie. Following the flooding, which decimated Fitzroy Crossing in January last year, our government, in tandem with workers on the ground, worked tirelessly to re-establish connections between West and East Kimberley. Those efforts culminated in the opening of the new Fitzroy River Bridge on Sunday, 10 December, six months ahead of schedule and just 11 months after severe flooding destroyed the old bridge. The opening was marked by a morning of celebration, showcasing what can be achieved when government, industry and the community come together.

The opening event was attended by more than 300 people from Fitzroy Crossing, who spoke the native language groups of the broader Fitzroy Valley. There was strong representation from both Gooniyandi and Bunuba traditional owners, whose support and cooperation were vital in delivering this project and the opportunities associated with it. Opening the project to the community before the first trucks drove across it also allowed locals to be the first to walk on the bridge that many of them helped to build.

The new bridge not only reconnected the community, but also created new economic opportunities in the Fitzroy Valley and opportunities for people to develop new skills. This was achieved through extensive and wide-reaching engagement by Main Roads Western Australia and the Fitzroy Bridge alliance, which forged strong and productive partnerships with the local community and industry organisations. We achieved fantastic outcomes: more than 250 local Aboriginal workers were engaged on the project; 24 per cent of total hours worked were attributable to Aboriginal people; almost \$34 million was spent on Aboriginal-owned businesses; and over 100 construction white cards were issued, along with 27 traffic control tickets. This is particularly impressive, given the remote location and the expedited delivery. Although we know that the long-term benefits will be significant, the immediate economic and social benefits have been felt by the entire community, thanks to the new employment and training provided through the project. I also acknowledge the member for Kimberley for her role in supporting this project in the Kimberley.

The longer and stronger new Fitzroy River Bridge is also providing assurance for the freight industry, tourism operators and all those who rely on a safe and efficient road network in the north of WA. The bridge passed its first test in late January 2024, when the river level almost reached the tops of the new piers. We have delivered not only a more resilient road network, but also the skills training, business growth and development experienced on the project can now be utilised on construction and infrastructure projects across the region.

I thank the Fitzroy Bridge alliance, Main Roads and, most importantly, all the workers on the ground for their hard work in reconnecting the Kimberley in such a short time frame.