

KIMBERLEY FLOODS — FITZROY RIVER BRIDGE

223. Ms L. DALTON to the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the devastation caused by the Kimberley flood event and ex-tropical cyclone Ellie, particularly in the Fitzroy Valley.

- (1) Can the minister advise the house how this government is progressing with the rebuild of a new, more resilient Fitzroy River Bridge?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how community members have responded to this important recovery project?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

I thank the member for Geraldton for that question. I also acknowledge the member for Kimberley, who unfortunately cannot be here with us today, for all her work in supporting the recovery from those devastating floods.

- (1)–(2) Today we marked a major milestone in relation to the replacement of the Fitzroy River Bridge. We have signed a contract with some very experienced operators to begin the reconstruction of that bridge. The contract is with Georgiou Group, BMD Group and BG&E. Today was the execution of the formal alliance agreement. Just to put this into context, it would normally take nine to 12 months to get to this stage through a normal procurement process. We started this procurement process six weeks ago. We have now signed a contract with very, very experienced companies to rebuild the Fitzroy River Bridge. The bridge will be longer, wider and six times stronger than the original bridge. It will be 100 metres longer. As we know, the flood increased the size of the channel to about 270 metres and this bridge will need to cover the entire width of the wider river. The bridge will also be wider with two lanes either way. The new bridge will require 1 200 tonnes of steel together with 4 000 cubic metres of concrete.

Our target is to have some form of traffic operating over this bridge by the middle of next year. After talking to the contractors, we are confident that we can deliver this replacement bridge in that time. To again demonstrate the significant challenge, the existing piers were sunk to about 20 metres into the riverbed. The piers for this new bridge will be sunk to 40 metres to make it stronger to withstand some of that water pressure.

Of course, we have to demolish the existing bridge. Works are underway with the Water Corporation and Telstra in relation to relocating services as soon as possible to then be able to demolish the bridge. We are also working with traditional owners on opportunities for local employment and local businesses. We are also working with them in relation to the construction of a 100-person work camp located in the area to get this job up and going. I thank the federal government for its support so far and all those in industry who are working together. This is a challenging situation, but by working together we will be able to rebuild that bridge. A number of other initiatives are happening already. The barge is operating and the first low-level crossing will be complete, we believe, in the next few weeks. I thank all the workers who have already delivered so much in relation to opening the Willare section of the Great Northern Highway between Derby and Broome. This is another big project. I thank all the traditional owners, the local Kimberley people and the support we have had throughout the Kimberley from people on the ground. They have acknowledged not only the incredible work that has already been done by the government in opening up transport routes, but also the work that is about to commence in replacing that bridge.