

MARTUWARRA FITZROY RIVER — BRIDGE

240. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the minister representing the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the challenges with road freight in the Kimberley and the likely severing of the Perth–Darwin national highway over the next two wet seasons.

- (1) Has the minister considered building a temporary road bridge over the Martuwarra Fitzroy River?
- (2) If no to (1), why not?
- (3) If yes to (1), what was the cost estimate to build such a temporary bridge?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1)–(3) Main Roads considered the installation of a temporary bridging structure—Bailey bridge—across the Martuwarra Fitzroy River, which currently spans 200 metres. However, this was not considered a viable option due to the damage sustained to the existing bridge and piers; the additional extensive piling work required to make it safe and secure for use as a superstructure; and the requirement for a complete rebuild of the eastern bridge abutment and bridge approach roads.

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Does the member want the answer or not?

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I had better start again.

Main Roads considered the installation of a temporary bridging structure—Bailey bridge—across the Martuwarra Fitzroy River, which currently spans 200 metres. However, this was not considered a viable option due to the damage sustained to the existing bridge and piers; the additional extensive piling work required to make it safe and secure for use as a superstructure; and the requirement for a complete rebuild of the eastern bridge abutment and bridge approach roads.

Further investment on making the old bridge safe was not deemed appropriate, given that demolition of the structure is due to commence in May. As an alternative, a ferry service was progressed to provide pedestrian access across the river in the first instance. This commenced yesterday, and this answer is dated Wednesday, 15 March. Subject to water levels, the ferry service will be scaled up to take essential vehicles.

In the meantime, Main Roads is also working on establishing low-level river crossings for vehicles. Development work for the construction of two temporary crossings is underway. Timing of construction is dependent on future rainfall events and river conditions, but it is expected that the first of these crossings, which will initially be accessible only to four-wheel drives, may be available in late March. A second crossing is planned near the existing bridge and should be available in May for use during the dry season when river levels are low.