SAFETY AND FREIGHT ON THE NEW ENGLAND HIGHWAY - DARLING DOWNS DISTRICT’S STRATEGIC APPROACH

BEST PAPER, SWQ CONFERENCE

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Born and raised on the Darling Downs, Joseph Marstella started his career with the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) in 2007. Joseph gained his Bachelor’s degree and started working with TMR RoadTek in 2010. Joseph worked for RoadTek as a site engineer and has more recently worked as a delivery engineer for TMR’s Program Delivery and Operations Branch. Joseph has completed his RPEQ registration and has obtained a Graduate certificate in Business.

Background

The New England Highway between Warwick and Wallangarra was rated a two – three star from the AusRap Safety Star rating 2013. In 2014 through Safer Road Sooner funding, Darling Downs District implemented some of the first Wide Centreline Treatment (WCLT) works. In conjunction with the Federal Government’s Safety Infrastructure Program, TMR’s Darling Downs District is implementing several safety initiatives on this network link, including widening to accommodate further WCLT, overtaking lane provisions, intersection improvements and hazard zone improvement. Through a risk based approach TMR Darling Downs has secured funding at strategic locations where crash rates and network deficiencies exist, to undertake targeted safe network improvements.

Project need

The New England Highway is a critical inland freight route. TMR is committed to the safe and efficient transport of freight while also providing a safer road environment for passenger, commercial and tourist vehicles. In the Darling Downs District the New England Highway varies vastly in topographic and demographic environments (from the granite belt and backpacker tourists in the southern region to the trap rock and grazing land in the north). The environment and local community diversity is extreme. These extremes present many challenges in terms of constructability and community expectation/requirements.

Profile and key facts

New England Highway (Warwick – Wallangarra):
- is part of the National Highway Land Transport Network
- 35km between Warwick and Wallangarra < 10m sealed width
- 27km between Warwick and Wallangarra < 9m sealed width
- 5km between Warwick and Wallangarra < 8m sealed width
- has traffic volumes vary between 2,200 – 4,700 average daily traffic (AADT)
- allows commercial heavy vehicle movements approximately 20% of AADT

Roughness
- 13% has a roughness count of > 100 counts/ km
- 7% has a roughness count of > 110 counts/ km
- 4% has a roughness count of > 120 counts/ km.

Crashes
- 68 crashes recorded between 2009 to 2014.
- 13 fatalities recorded between 2009 to 2014

Stanthorpe Southern Bypass, one such location is the

Implementation or initiatives

In conjunction with the Federal Government’s Safety Infrastructure Program, TMR’s Darling Downs District is implementing several safety initiatives on this network link, including widening to accommodate further WCLT, overtaking lane provisions, intersection improvements and hazard zone improvement. Through a risk based approach TMR Darling Downs has secured funding at strategic locations where crash rates and network deficiencies exist, to undertake targeted safe network improvements.

Outcomes – successes or lessons learned

Through all assessments and recommendations to date that have been made on the New England Highway, there is a common theme of constructability issues. These mainly being management of traffic, provision for wide loads, work in extreme weather climates (hot and cold), availability of suitable construction materials and engagement with local industry. Through challenges such as these TMR is looking at suitable pavement design options, drainage considerations and is targeting longevity of the asset for the future.

Through planning, designing, implementing and focusing on the needs of the Public, TMR is improving driver safety on the New England Highway into the future.