

MEDIA ALERT

STATE CANDIDATES SUPPORT BELLS EXPRESSWAY

Four western region MPs have thrown their support behind the Bells Line Expressway Group (BLEG) proposal for an expressway across the Blue Mountains to link north-western Sydney with the Central West of the state.

Independent member for Dubbo Dawn Fardell, Nationals member for Burinjuck Katrina Hodgkinson, ALP member for Bathurst Gerard Martin and the Nationals member for Orange Russell Turner have all responded to a request by BLEG for in principle support of the project.

All candidates in the western NSW area were approached ahead of this Saturday's March 24 NSW election and asked for an indication of support for the proposed expressway. With the exception of Ms Fardell, Ms Hodgkinson and Mr Martin no other candidates have responded at this time.

The Chairman of BLEG, Ian Armstrong MP said he welcomed the support of the three candidates given the importance of the project for the future of western NSW communities.

"This new expressway has the potential to provide a much needed economic boost to drought ravaged western NSW while at the same time protecting the heritage values and charm of communities along the existing access roads by reducing traffic," Mr Armstrong said.

"Most importantly this new expressway has the potential to save lives, if this project means just one less life is lost on the states roads we can claim it as a success".

BLEG is a politically bi-partisan group which has commissioned a number of studies into a proposed \$2 billion four lane expressway across the Blue Mountains following the existing Bells Line of Road.

Research from the reports conducted indicates the economic benefits to the Central West would be significant. Road infrastructure investment can increase productivity, provide greater flexibility, facilitate innovation, reduce costs, improve efficiency and provide firms with a competitive advantage.



Bells Line
EXPRESSWAY

Chairperson

Hon. Ian Armstrong OBE MP

Secretary

Bob Roach

All correspondence to
Bathurst Regional Council
PMB 17 Bathurst 2795
T 02 6333 6257
F 02 6331 7211

www.bellslineexpressway.com.au

The potential for growth in the CENTROC region is considerable, the construction of the Bells Line Expressway could not only drive business growth but also encourage flow on benefits such as population growth, tourism development and new business investment.

In the five years from completion of the expressway total economic growth induced by the project is expected to be \$268 million in GRP and 3,062 jobs.

Safety audits conducted by the NRMA of the current access roads over the Blue Mountains have found significant crash and casualty rates on both the Great Western Highway and the Bells Line of Road. A report by the Western Research Institute based at Charles Sturt University has estimated accident cost savings to be around \$2.7 million per annum.

The BLEG proposal has the full support of the NRMA who have noted the expressway would provide a much needed route for B-double trucks to travel between the Sydney basin and western NSW.

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Media contact: Ian Armstrong 63424911