

Council happenings . . .

with Mayor
Glenn Wall

2007 State Election Promises for Timber Bridges.

The NSW Labor Government has announced the Timber Bridges Partnership Programme to help maintain bridges under the REPAIR and Block grant schemes.

There are 285 timber bridges on council-managed Regional Roads in NSW which are eligible for upgrading under the Lemna Government's Timber Bridge Partnership program. There are also another 2,333 timber bridges which Local Government is solely responsible for.

Each of the 285 timber bridges on council-managed Regional Roads to receive upgrades has been assessed by a range of criteria, including safety, importance for freight or tourism in the local economy, bridge condition, and level of use by heavy vehicles. Funding is provided on a 50:50 matching basis with local councils.

Now whilst this seems equitable, what the State has effectively done is to replace the previous Timber Bridge Program with a programme that will take funding from Council Roads as we are now required to provide 50% funding for Bridge replacements on Regional Roads. When one considers that all the Regional road network and bridges were a State Government responsibility until 1995, this once again is cost shifting from the State.

In Dungog Shire alone there are 46 timber bridges requiring replacement at an estimated cost of \$24 Million, and our community like many others does not have the financial capacity to replace the network.

The recent election promises made by the Opposition would assist in addressing some of the problems with timber bridges. However, Council will be seeking long-term solutions rather than bursts of extra funding over limited time periods. We need to plan and prioritise our bridge replacement program with ongoing untied funding, without having to utilise our already limited Road funding.

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