

# SEALING GOLDFIELDS HIGHWAY PROJECT (WILUNA TO MEEKATHARRA ROAD)

## PURPOSE

To seal the full length of road between Wiluna and Meekatharra (Goldfields Highway) to complete the last unsealed section of the State's highway network, to provide a more direct sealed route between the Goldfields, Mid West and Pilbara regions that will deliver lower freight costs and significant direct economic (jobs & growth) benefits to Western Australia. As demonstrated by the sealing of the Leinster to Wiluna Road, which has been the catalyst for substantial mineral exploration and mine site development which returns significant royalties to the State, employment and economic prosperity.

The proposed project delivery methodology leverages the remaining 124km road build section to allow for specific Aboriginal engagement, training and employment (under professional civil engineering guidance) that provides for industry recognised skills and qualifications to be imparted that is able to be transferred to other industry sectors (i.e. mining), leading to generational positive change to the wellbeing and prospects of local Aboriginal people for the future. The project would create a critical link in being able to diversify the Murchison economy by the development of a tourist route that would showcase Aboriginal people and remote communities.

## PROJECT BENEFITS

There are many social and economic benefits for the local, regional and broader State community and economy resulting following the completion of the sealed road between Wiluna to Meekatharra. A summary of these are provided below:-

- ✓ Proposed project delivery model will provide Aboriginal communities with on the job professional training leading to formal industry recognised qualifications and transferable employment options into other industry sectors i.e. civil construction, mining & resources, etc.
- ✓ Opportunity for Federal & State Government agencies to meet key performance goals around 'closing the gap', procurement targets and lowering the incarceration rates of Aboriginal people.
- ✓ Support a more direct, efficient inland freight link between the Pilbara, Goldfields and the Mid West regions, improving interregional connectivity and giving options to industry on different least cost pathway solutions.
- ✓ Support continued growth in the mining sector through improved connectivity and a reduction in freight costs, creating opportunities for new mine project/s development around both Wiluna & Meekatharra e.g. 11 new mines opened following the adjacent Wiluna to Leinster road seal.
- ✓ Provide a reliable and safe route for vehicles to travel between Wiluna and Meekatharra and deliver the final 'missing sealed link' of the State highway network located in regional Western Australia.
- ✓ Provide a travel distance saving of 144km connecting the Great Northern Highway to Wiluna, compared to the existing southern sealed link from Leinster to Mt Magnet, delivering both cost saving and freight efficiency benefits.
- ✓ The current maintenance cost is \$3-6m pa and is exhausting the available road building materials in the area. This is likely to increase substantially in the near future if the road is not sealed. The proposed method of construction will also deliver significant cost savings and have a short payback period.
- ✓ Enhance tourist visitation and cultural tourism opportunities throughout the region via a network (trail) of existing and new Aboriginal art centres i.e. Tjukurba Art Gallery in Wiluna.
- ✓ Provide increased community support structures for regional Aboriginal, small business and pastoral communities with improved road connectivity and access to essential services including medical support services, district high school whilst also strengthening social connections for families located throughout the region.
- ✓ Increase certainty of all year round supply for essential goods and services to regional communities and businesses, including mine sites near Wiluna, by reducing the number of road closures due to wet weather conditions, and the subsequent road repair costs.

- ✓ Improve road safety and reduction in current accident rates (i.e. the road has a crash rate triple of that for similar standard sealed roads with 61 crashes over a 15-year period).