

The Sydney Morning Herald

National

This was published 19 years ago

Expressway plan for Blue Mountains

November 11, 2005 – 1.24am

A proposed four lane expressway from Sydney across the Blue Mountains to western NSW would reduce road deaths and provide social and economic benefits to the whole state, its backers say.

The proposed Bells Line Expressway would link with the M7 near Quakers Hill, cross the Hawkesbury River near Windsor and follow the route of the Bells Line of Road across the mountains to emerge north of Lithgow.

The Bells Line Expressway Group, which includes MPs from both sides of politics at a federal, state and local level, said the project would link Sydney with the central west of the state.

"The provision of a fast, safe road over the Blue Mountains has been a dream since the early days of settlement," said BLEG chairman and Nationals MP for Lachlan Ian Armstrong.

"We now have the ability to make that dream a reality."

The estimated \$2 billion road would be a 100-110 kph four lane route, with construction scheduled to start in 2008 for completion in 2012.

The two main roads across the mountains, the Great Western Highway and the Bells Line of Road, are the two most dangerous highways in NSW per kilometre travelled, according to an NRMA study.

Mr Armstrong said the expressway would save lives by providing the first flood-free escape route for people living in the Hawkesbury/Windsor area, and be much safer for motorists through reduced congestion and less bends in the road.

The expressway would also cut at least half an hour off existing travel times between Windsor and Lithgow, he said.

Mr Armstrong said the project should be jointly funded by the state and federal governments, and he was confident it would receive government approval.

"We said we would launch the project, we would walk it through the public ... and we will go back to them and talk serious business to get (the roads minister's) commitment to commence the plan of construction," Mr Armstrong said.

Mr Armstrong said the road would be popular with motorists despite recent problems with infrastructure projects like the Cross City Tunnel and Lane Cove Tunnel.

"Let's forget about what's happened with past (roads); I think we can learn from those experiences and we can do this one well and make a success of it," he said.

But Mr Armstrong did back away from putting a toll on the road.

"It could be a toll road but I must say I'm more attracted, in light of recent events, to the concept of a government-owned road," he said.

AAP

The Sydney Morning Herald

National

This was published 19 years ago

MP spruiks mountain freeway

Daniel Lewis Regional Reporter

November 12, 2005 – 11.00am

Given recent tunnel controversies, there has probably never been a worse time to spruik a major new road. But Ian Armstrong hit the bitumen this week with his campaign for the Bells Line Expressway.

The National Party MP finally has a feasibility study that says his dream of a four-lane super road across the Blue Mountains is an engineering reality that can be built for what he regards as a reasonable price.

But the planned road would carve through 16 kilometres of national park, of which six kilometres would be in the Blue Mountains World Heritage area.

The \$2 million study, funded by the state and federal governments, shows a 100kmh road can be built shadowing the Bells Line of Road without the need for costly tunnels.

Mr Armstrong said two construction companies, Thiess and Abbey Group, had quoted about \$2 billion for building the 94-kilometre route.

The main road over the Blue Mountains, the Great Western Highway, is still single-lane for much of its length and littered with traffic lights and different speed zones.

Mr Armstrong said the road would boost economic development in the west and provide a "safety valve" for Sydney by making it more attractive for people to live west of the Blue Mountains.

The Labor MP for Bathurst, Gerard Martin, is another backer of the expressway now doing the "hard sell". He said the Great Western Highway and the Bells Line of Road were two of the most dangerous roads in NSW and had to be superseded.

However, the Bells Line Expressway is not on the drawing boards of the NSW or federal governments. Both have already committed \$460 million to upgrading the Great Western Highway.

Environmental groups and residents who would be affected in communities such as Bilpin and Kurrajong have already vowed to fight a new super road all the way.

[Home](#) > [Legislative Assembly](#) > [Petitions](#)

Mr Armstrong - from certain citizens requesting support for the proposed Bells Line Expressway

Petition	Not available on the website
Registration Number/Qualifier	1597

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NEWS


Road splits for state and federal coalition

The NSW Coalition is at odds with its federal counterpart over an expressway across the Blue Mountains, which supporters say is as important to Australia's development as the Harbour Bridge.

 Drive Team
14:00 28 February 2007

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 + 3 Photos

Road splits for state and federal coalition

The Bells Line Expressway M2 Extension Group, backed by the NRMA, yesterday revived its push for a new four-lane road across the Great Dividing Range linking Sydney and the Central West.

They have the support of the State Opposition, which has pledged to begin construction in its first term.

The Federal Government does not support the road. A spokeswoman for the federal Minister for Roads, Jim Lloyd, said previous studies showed it was not viable, economically or socially.

A spokeswoman for the State Opposition's roads spokesman, Andrew Stoner, said he would negotiate with the Federal Government over any concerns.

The NSW Minister for Roads, Eric Roozendaal, said the project could only be built with federal support. He said Mr Lloyd had said on Tuesday that it could only be built in "an ideal world with unlimited money".

"[Opposition Leader] Peter Debnam's promise to build this road can't be believed."

The NRMA and the extension group, led by the retiring National Party veteran Ian Armstrong, released a third report on the \$2 billion road, which examined the impact on by-passed towns.

Researchers from the Western Research Institute at Charles Sturt University found towns that had been in a similar situation experienced an initial downturn in trade followed by improved quality of life.

Mr Armstrong said the report provided further evidence that the expressway would save lives. The Great Western Highway and Bells Line of Road are among the state's most dangerous.

It would also provide an economic fillip to western Sydney, he said. "Communities along the existing road should not be concerned about the impact of being by-passed. It's as important as the Harbour Bridge."

Legislative Assembly Hansard – 30 May 2007

**BELLS LINE EXPRESSWAY**

Mr RUSSELL TURNER (Orange) [5.29 p.m.]: Once again I wish to refer to the Bells Line Expressway over the Blue Mountains. I have raised this issue on a number of occasions in this House but this week it is appropriate given the announcement by the Federal Government that it would put \$10 million into design and engineering. I note the disappointment of everyone living to the west of the Blue Mountains at the refusal of the lemma State Government to match the funding. It has been noted that this funding is not coming from the Federal budget until 2009 but at least the Federal Government has put that money upfront, as opposed to the State Government which has consistently refused to acknowledge that this new fourlane highway will open up the Central West of New South Wales and do wonders for the whole of New South Wales.

Some years ago the State Government carried out a \$40,000 feasibility study. One always had the impression that the consultants who carried out the study were given the task of coming up with a negative result—that this highway was not needed and was not viable. It may not be viable from day one, but we know it will be viable. While sections of the Great Western Highway have the highest number of deaths per kilometre of any main road in New South Wales, it still may not reach the necessary criteria of deaths and accidents, but vision is needed to allow the Central West to grow. As I have said before, one only has to look at the growth that has occurred between Gosford and Newcastle since the F3 was constructed; that growth could not have occurred until the highway was built. Over time the Central West and areas further to the west would achieve similar growth.

The Electrolux white goods factory in Orange produces something like 2,000 fridges a day. That company loads Bdoublets each day and they are in Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane the next morning, but it cannot send Bdoublets to its main market, Sydney, because Bdoublets are not allowed over either Bells Line of Road or the Great Western Highway. That is a sad indictment of the State Government, which has no initiative and no vision, and which continues to prevent companies like Electrolux from sending their goods by modern road transport over the Blue Mountains.

It is interesting to note that while the member for Bathurst is a member of the Bells Line of Road Expressway Group and supports it in his own electorate, whenever the subject is brought up in this House he joins with other Labor members and ridicules the concept. He displays a double standard. He ridicules it in this House and tries to support it in his own electorate.

I was proud during the election campaign to go with my leader, the member for Oxley, to Lithgow, just near the Mudgee turn off, where it is roughly envisaged the western end of the new highway would start, to turn a ceremonial first sod. That is a positive initiative compared to the negativity of this Government, which tries to make out that the current road is suitable and that is all we are going to get. I call on the Premier to overturn the Minister for Roads' refusal to jointly fund this vital infrastructure, and make a positive statement on this initiative that will benefit the Central West and the overall economy of New South Wales.

Hope for Bells Line 'progress'

Road Transport Industry

Mon 12 Dec 2011 at 9:16am

The Bells Line Expressway Group says its campaign is gaining momentum after a meeting with the chairman of Infrastructure New South Wales.

The former premier, Nick Greiner, asked the group to provide the financial case for the road to the committee determining the state's infrastructure priorities.

The group's chief executive, Ian Armstrong, says he told Mr Greiner the road would be vital for the expansion of Sydney in the future.

"What we've said was the most urgent thing is to preserve the route as far as that it can be, work can commence on it at some time in the future," he said.

"We got a good reception from Mr Greiner, we're looking forward to hopefully making some progress."

He says Mr Greiner gave the issues a good hearing.

"I'm sure he will consider it along with his fellow committeemen and we'll be talking to some of those too as time goes through," he said.

"We seen it's a good step forward into getting some real progress for the first time for a long time."

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Posted Mon 12 Dec 2011 at 9:16am

Australian Rural & Regional News

Independent news from across rural and regional Australia

INFRASTRUCTURE NEWS NSW OPINION POLITICS STATE POLITICS WEATHER

By Kookaburra, ARR.News 23 March 2021

The Bells Line of Road, which provides the alternative route over the Blue Mountains to the Central West from Sydney, will be closed indefinitely due to landslides caused by the recent heavy rains. This is a timely reminder of the many years of inaction on building the long overdue Bells Line Expressway.



Bells Line of Road. Source : Local Resident, Bowen Mountain, NSW

Residents are no longer able to access their homes. North Richmond, Gross Vale and other areas between the Hawkesbury River and the collapsed section of Bells Line of Road are now, in effect, isolated. All this within one hundred kilometres of Sydney, in a region with a rapidly growing population.

In the last two days, with the [sunken Windsor Bridge](#) and the collapsed Bells Line of Road, we have seen demonstrated clearly the misallocation of resources by NSW Roads & Maritime Services. So focused on building inner city tunnels, RMS has forgotten about essential corridors in regional NSW.

One of the last roles held by the the recently departed former Leader of the National Party in NSW, Ian Armstrong, was as Chairman of the Bells Line Expressway Action Group. As Mr. Armstrong said in 2010 – “the road was built for a previous age”.

Other National Party members have supported the proposal in the past including the former Minister for Roads, Duncan Gay, and Andrew Gee, Federal Member of Parliament for Calare.

Sadly, however, in recent times, Mr. Armstrong’s former colleagues have failed to realise his vision.

The relatively recent RMS Bells Line of Road Corridor Improvement Program (sic) is really just tinkering on the edges. It is not a long term, or even medium term, solution.

In the case of Bells Line of Road, questions should be raised also as to the use of the road in recent years by large trucks dumping waste rubble from developments in Sydney into now disused mines which have added to the wear and tear on the road. *Australian Rural & Regional News* understands from locals that the road is being repaired constantly due to this additional traffic. Such heavy truck traffic could be a significant contributor to undermining the road which, when combined with heavy rains, leads to the current disaster. Not good enough.

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INFRASTRUCTURE ROADS LETTERS & RESPONSES NSW OPINION POLITICS FEDERAL POLITICS STATE POLITICS

By Kookaburra, ARR.News 28 October 2022



Bells Line of Road winding through the Blue Mountains after the Black Summer bushfires of 2020.

Readers will be familiar with Kookaburra's support for the construction of the long discussed Bells Line Expressway.

So, it was heartening for Kookaburra to receive the submission below from a Concerned Citizen of New South Wales who wishes to see that infrastructure funds are spent wisely – both by the existing NSW government and any new NSW government – including on the Bells Line Expressway!

The Concerned Citizen was inspired to make the submission after reading the media release issued on 15 October last by NSW National Party Ministers Toole and Faraway entitled '[Labor must come clean with regional NSW on federal budget cuts](#)'.

It is perhaps interesting to note that back in 2016, during the election campaign of that year, the then Federal Minister for Transport and Infrastructure Darren Chester, a member of the National Party, was reported by the ABC to have stated that '[he is working with his New South Wales counterpart to ensure a proposed "superhighway" through the Blue Mountains is made a priority](#)'.

This was reinforced by the calls by [Andrew Gee, the Federal National Party M.P. for Calare, for the Bells Line Expressway to be built](#).

In addition, the late Ian Armstrong, the former National Party Leader in NSW, members of the CENTROC group of Central West councils and the Bells Line Expressway Group all expressed enthusiasm for the project and [disappointment that it had not progressed](#).

Here is the Concerned Citizen's submission:

Australian Rural & Regional News



Independent news from across rural and regional Australia

The "upgrade" is confined to that section of road between Katoomba and Lithgow.

The "upgrade" will cost, realistically, between \$10-20 billion in today's money.

The "upgrade" will deliver 6 minutes' saved travel time.

The delivery of the project is decades away, even if construction commenced today.

The project does nothing for travel from Katoomba to Sydney and never will.

The project does not deliver an expressway to Sydney – it leaves the Central West and Western Tablelands the only region in NSW without an expressway to Sydney.

The project is not future-proof. It is not a "game-changer". It is not "transformative". It will not improve social or economic connectivity between Sydney and the Central West.

The project is overwhelmingly opposed by the regional communities it paves over because of the environment, heritage and socio-economic value of those communities which it trashes.

The vision that should be adopted and made a reality is a standalone expressway between Western Sydney and Lithgow: the Bells Expressway.

The Bells Expressway would be a stand-alone entirely new freeway between the Central West and Sydney.

The Bells Expressway would deliver a 30-minute journey across the Blue Mountains.

The Bells Expressway would not be interrupted by traffic lights or school zones – it would be an expressway!

The Bells Expressway would connect Lithgow to the Castlereagh Corridor (which has received Federal funding in the recent budget) and the Richmond Road onramp to the M7 orbital road.

The M7 orbital is the connecting expressway to Sydney, Sydney's North West and the Central Coast via the M2 and M1/F3 to the north of NSW.

The M7 orbital is the connecting expressway to the second Sydney airport, Southern Highlands and Canberra via the Hume Highway to the south.

The blueprint for the Bells Expressway is the M1/F3 from Sydney to the Central Coast and beyond.

The M1/F3 was constructed in the 1960s-1980s through National Park and was an engineering feat.

The M1/F3 was nation-building. The M1/F3 was and is future-proof.

The Central West and Western Tablelands badly need effective representation, connectivity and vision – we need an expressway.

Who among our politicians – State and Federal – will be a nation-builder and visionary for the Central West and Western Tablelands?

It is a real pity that no such nation-builder or visionary has yet emerged as a political leader in and for the Central West and Western Tablelands or indeed, the Mountains communities.