$10 Million Esk Main Road Upgrade Completed

Work was recently completed on the final stage of a $10 million upgrade of 15km of the Esk Main Road, which connects the Midland Highway with Tasmania’s East Coast. The final stage, from Leona Road to Ormley Culvert, forms part of a total package of projects funded by the State Government since 2005.

The Esk Main Road, through the Fingal Valley, is one of Tasmania’s key tourist routes and is of tremendous importance to local residents and tourists alike. A planning study with extensive public consultation was undertaken to determine a strategy for the development of the Esk Main Road. The study found that widening the sealed width and strengthening the road pavement at key points were necessary to cope with current and predicted traffic volumes.

Work on improvements to the Esk Main Road began in late 2005, east of Killymoon Bridge, midway between Fingal and St Marys, at a cost of $2.8 million. The contract for this work was completed by Downer EDI Works Pty Ltd in March 2006.

The work improved safety on a 2.6km stretch by:
- Widening the road, including sealing of the road shoulders;
- Lowering two of the road crests to provide greater visibility and increase overtaking opportunities;
- Strengthening the road pavement; and
- Upgrading safety barriers on the culverts and on Killymoon Bridge over the Break O’Day River.

The second stage was a 7km stretch between Rostrevor Rivulet and Tullochgorum Creek. The contract for this work was completed by Van Ek Contracting and involved:
- Widening the road to provide two three-metre lanes with sealed shoulders;
- Strengthening the road pavement to improve ride quality and reduce maintenance costs;
- Removal of vegetation from some sections of road reserve, to improve sight lines and improve safety;
- Upgrading safety barriers; and
- Drainage improvements.

The third and final stage of the project involved road works on 4.6km between Leona Road, east of Avoca, and Ormley Culvert. The contract for this $3.5 million stage was recently completed by Van Ek Contracting Pty Ltd.

The work provided significant safety improvements, better ride quality, wider pavement with sealed shoulders, and improved sight distance.
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Legislation Toughens Up 40km/hour Limit

Legislation to strengthen the enforcement of new 40km/h electronic speed limit signs through school zones was recently introduced to State Parliament. The legislative amendment will allow the Transport Commission to issue an evidentiary certificate that an electronic speed limit sign is operating on a particular date, at a particular time, at a particular place, and is displaying a particular speed limit.

The certificates will be issued as evidence of a speed limit displayed on an electronic sign to assist in the prosecution of those drivers who break the 40km/h school zone limit. The first of an estimated 700 hi-tech speed limit signs to improve safety for students crossing the road outside Tasmania’s schools were officially unveiled earlier this year.

Further electronic speed limit signs will be progressively installed at all of Tasmania’s 40km/h school zones over the next three years, in accordance with priority selection criteria, and in consultation with education and parent bodies. Children are our most vulnerable road users. They can be unpredictable and, due to their size, may be hard to see.

The aim of this project is to boost the visibility of school zone speed limit signage and to lessen confusion for motorists as to exactly when the 40km/h speed limit operates. Most drivers want to comply with school speed limits to keep our children safe. Even a small reduction in travelling speed dramatically increases the chance of a child surviving a collision.

Tasmanian Motorcycle Handbook Launched

A handbook designed to help motorcyclists ride more safely in Tasmania was recently launched by the State Government. The handbook, funded by the Motor Accidents Insurance Board, targets both learner riders and those returning to riding after a long break, as well as offering experienced riders an opportunity to understand more about road safety and low-risk riding.

Motorcyclists are over-represented in crash statistics and, as vulnerable road users, they face a higher risk of serious injury and death on our roads. There have been 35 motorcycle riders killed on our roads in the past five years, and a further 327 seriously injured. The handbook has information on safe riding tips, motorcycle licences, rider management, safe riding, rules for motorcycle riders, motorcycle roadworthiness and offences and penalties.

The President of the Tasmanian Motorcycle Council, Shaun Lennard, said that the Council was pleased to have been involved with the handbook’s development. “With motorcycle riding increasing in popularity, this handbook will be of great benefit to an increasing number of novice riders. It’s not only for new riders though - information such as the sections on cornering, buffer zones and hazard perception I recommend to experienced riders as well,” Mr Lennard said.

The handbook complements the current Road Safety Task Force media campaign to help keep motorcycle riders safe. The Motor Accidents Insurance Board is also subsidising the Road Skills Refresher Course, which provides a follow-up to basic training and is aimed at older and/or returning riders and newer riders with limited skills.

Copies of the handbook are available at Service Tasmania shops for $3.50ea, or may be downloaded from www.transport.tas.gov.au.
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