Meander Valley Gets its Fill

Construction of the long-awaited Meander Dam commenced in earnest in January 2007, when the first of over 200,000 tonnes of roller-compacted concrete was placed on the prepared rock foundation in the riverbed.

The Chairman of the Rivers and Water Supply Commission, Scott Ashton-Jones, said that preparatory work commenced on-site in late 2005 with clearing of the left and right abutments, construction of the diversion conduit, and the upstream and downstream cofferdams. “When the left and right abutments were exposed and thoroughly cleaned, it turned out the site was close to ideal for the construction of a dam, with the dolerite showing no faults and a low incidence of jointing,” he said.

During construction, weather conditions included high rainfall events, which resulted in flooding of the work site on several occasions, to temperatures that ranged from minus 9° C in June 2006 to almost 40° C on the abutments in January 2007. Even with these testing conditions, the employees of the principal contractor, McConnell Dowell, persisted, making sure the dam had the best possible foundations by cleaning the rock by hand with grinders and wire brushes. On 1 February 2007, the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, David Llewellyn, placed the first roller compacted concrete to signify the commencement of the dam wall.

The speed and quality of construction of the project has underlined the advantages of using roller compacted concrete (RCC). In particular, the use of a conveyer system to transport the mix from the pug mill to a hopper located on the crest, and then a wheel loader to move the mix to where it was to be spread in a 300mm layer and compacted. The RCC was, in effect, sandwiched between the upstream and downstream faces by over 4,000 precast concrete panels, manufactured in Launceston by Duggans concrete. The panels give the upstream face a smooth vertical surface and the downstream face a stepped incline. Long periods of fine weather throughout the duration of the project gave the contractors the opportunity to maintain the concrete placement process and keep to schedule.

The final phase of construction was the installation of a geo-composite PVC ‘membrane’ on the upstream face. This was sealed against all sides of the dam, making the wall essentially impermeable. Once the membrane was fitted and tested, the diversion conduit was sealed by way of a steel plate, backed by a 4 metre concrete plug. Under normal conditions, it is anticipated that the dam will take 60 to 70 days to fill.

For further information, go to www.meanderdam.net.au.

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Each year in Tasmania, more than 400 people are seriously injured or killed as a result of road crashes, with just over half of these crashes occurring in rural areas. Kingborough Council has undertaken a new road safety initiative to help address the issue.

In conjunction with the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, Council has commenced the Kingborough Safer Speeds (KiSS) demonstration - the first of its kind in Australia. Council agreed in August to the demonstration, which is one of the safer travel speed actions from the recently released Tasmanian Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan.

Now well underway, the demonstration is being independently evaluated by the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC), and involves the application of a reduction in the default rural speed limit from 100km/h to 90km/h, and a gravel road default speed limit of 80km/h (reduced from 100km/h). There has been no change to current speed limits on the Southern Outlet, the Huon Highway within the Kingborough Municipality and Algona Road.

The project is intended as a demonstration of reduced rural speed limits based on harm reduction principles. There is clear evidence that reducing speed limits, and therefore reducing vehicle travel speeds, produces significant road safety benefits. Reducing vehicle speeds not only reduces the severity of injuries in a crash, but also gives drivers greater opportunity to avoid a collision in the first place.

The KiSS demonstration provides an ideal opportunity to look at how lower speed limits on rural roads would work in real life. The Kingborough municipality is particularly well suited to the demonstration with its mix of rural, semi-rural and urban environments. While an immediate reduction in road accidents is not expected, a change in driver behaviour over time is anticipated, along with an improved tolerance by the Kingborough community of lower speeds.

Tasmania has already seen evidence of the benefits of lower speed limits with the introduction, five years ago, of a 50 km/h urban speed limit. In 2004, analysis showed that, following implementation, there were 143 fewer casualty crashes in 40 km/h, 50km/h and 60km/h speed zones, than in the one-year period before the urban speed limit was lowered.
Restrictions on Roadside Messages

In September 2007, State Parliament passed legislation to restrict the use of roadside electronic billboards to traffic management and road safety messages.

The primary aim of the legislation is to avoid potentially dangerous distractions, created by the use of electronic billboards for commercial advertising purposes, and to prevent the significance of important road safety and traffic messages from being compromised.

Estimating Urban Traffic and Congestion Cost Trends

A paper released by the Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics shows that travel in Australian urban areas has grown tenfold over the last 60 years. Private road vehicles now account for about 90% of the total urban passenger task (up from around 40% in the late 1940’s).

Estimating Urban Traffic and Congestion Cost Trends for Australian Cities estimates that total kilometres travelled in urban areas will increase by 37% between 2005 and 2020. Commercial vehicle traffic is forecast to grow substantially more (approximately 3.5% per annum) than private traffic which is forecast to grow at about 1.7% per annum.

The paper also estimates the cost of congestion for Australian capital cities to be about $9.4 billion in 2005, a figure that is projected to increase to $20.4 billion by 2020. The estimated cost of congestion in Hobart in 2005 is $50 million, and $70 million in 2020.


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What is the KiSS Demonstration?

The Kingborough Safer Speeds (KiSS) Demonstration is about safer travel speeds on rural roads. During the KiSS Demonstration, speed limits on rural roads in Kingborough will be lower than the 100 km/h rural default that applies elsewhere in the State.

The new lower rural speed limits in Kingborough, including Bruny Island, will be:

- Rural sealed roads: 90 km/h
- Gravel roads: 80 km/h

UNLESS OTHERWISE SIGNED

When does it start?
The KiSS Demonstration starts on 24 September 2007.

Where can I go for more information?
More information on the KiSS Demonstration is available from:
- e-mail: kissdemonstration@dier.tas.gov.au
- internet: www.dier.tas.gov.au

RURAL SPEED LIMITS
90 km/h - SEALED ROADS
80 km/h - GRAVEL ROADS

UNLESS OTHERWISE SIGNED

Members of the Tasman SES demonstrating the Jaws of Life at the Rally

Sorell Joins National Road Safety Campaign

On 15 November, Sorell hosted a road safety rally for the community, as part of the national Slow Down Now campaign, promoting responsible driving around the country.

Of the 600,000 road crashes reported each year in Australia, 1,600 people are killed, 200,000 are injured and 22,000 are seriously injured, requiring long-term care and treatment. * Each fatal accident costs $1.7 million, equating to $40 million per day, or $17 billion annually.

The Slow Down Now campaign provides opportunities for individuals and businesses to participate towards increasing road safety awareness in their communities.

Sorell's road safety rally was supported by Sorell Council, the Tasmanian SES, Tasmania Police and the Midway Point Fire Brigade. Community members had the opportunity to see the potential consequences of dangerous driving, witnessing first-hand a Jaws of Life demonstration on a mock car wreck by SES members. ▼

For further information, contact Sorell Council Event Coordinator, Jess Radford on 6265 6463.