



## **Sealing the Cuttaburra Missing Link: Unlocking Regional Growth, Safety & Connectivity**

## Executive Summary

The Cuttaburra Missing Link project aims to seal a 16km section of the Eyre Developmental Road, connecting Birdsville to the sealed road network in the north.

This \$30 million\* investment will enhance regional connectivity, economic growth, and road safety, reducing disruptions caused by frequent flooding. The upgrade will support local businesses, tourism (including the Big Red Bash and Birdsville Races), and agricultural transport while improving access to essential services. With a Benefit-Cost Ratio of 1.43, the project promises significant long-term benefits, making it a crucial step in strengthening Western Queensland's infrastructure.

\*Approximate

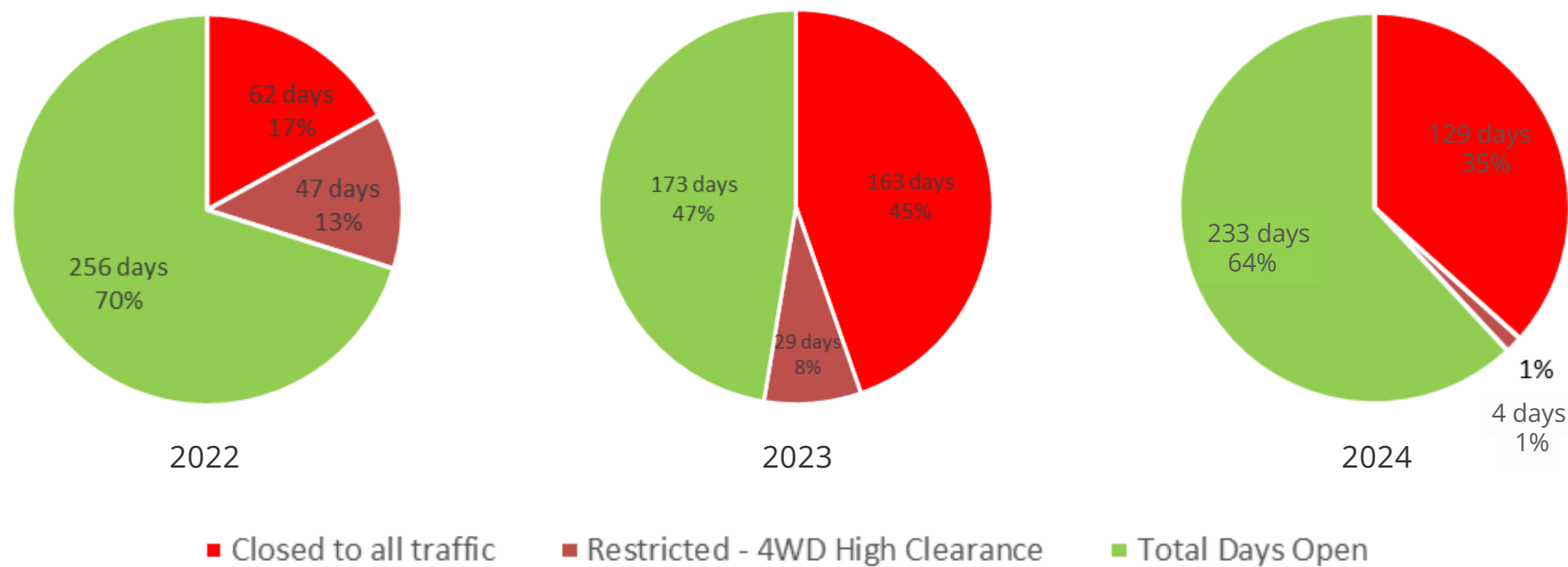


# Project Background and Strategic Importance

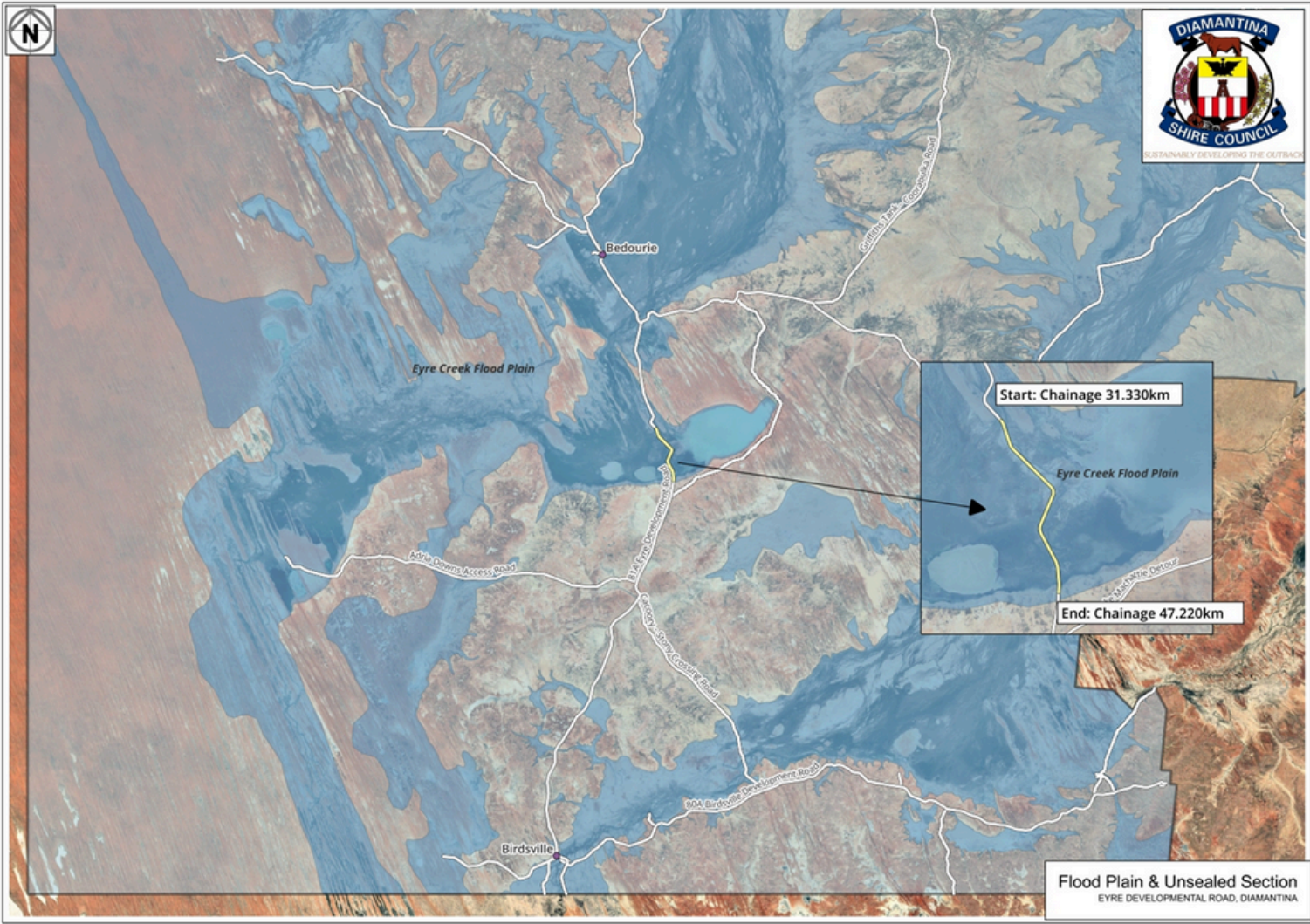
The Bedourie – Birdsville, (81A) Eyre Developmental Road plays a vital role in regional connectivity. The ‘Cuttaburra’ section experiences frequent and extensive flooding, leading to prolonged road closures—129 days in 2024 and 163 days in 2023. These closures severely disrupt local, regional, freight and tourist traffic, underscoring the critical need for upgrading this portion of the road to ensure consistent accessibility and connectivity.

Sealing this section will complete a fully sealed route connecting Birdsville to Mount Isa, the closest hub for residents, thereby enhancing access to essential services and broader regional markets. The project aims to transform this vulnerable stretch into a resilient infrastructure component, mitigating the recurrent impacts of flooding and improving network accessibility throughout the year.

Bedourie - Birdsville (81A) Road Closures



Located in the Diamantina Shire, the unsealed ‘Cuttaburra’ section of the Bedourie – Birdsville, (81A) Eyre Developmental Road begins 31.330 kilometres south of Bedourie and ends 47.220 kilometres south of Bedourie. This section of the road transverses the Eyre Creek Flood Plain, an area prone to flooding.



**Map 1: Cuttaburra Crossing location on 81A Eyre Developmental Road**



***Map 2: Unsealed section of 81A Eyre Developmental Road – Chainage 31.330km – 47.220km***

The 'Cuttaburra' section of the Bedourie – Birdsville, (81A) Eyre Developmental Road is subject to flooding's damaging effects.



***2023 Flood Damage: Eyre Developmental Road - 81A.***

# Project Objectives

## Enhance Economic Opportunities

The sealing of the Cuttaburra section of the Eyre Developmental Road is projected to significantly reduce transportation costs by providing a more direct and reliable route, reducing the need for lengthy detours through Lake Machattie. This improvement will directly benefit local businesses by decreasing logistical expenses and enhancing supply chain efficiency. Additionally, the project will boost tourism by improving access to Birdsville, making it more attractive to visitors and enhancing the economic vitality of the region through increased visitor spending.

## Improve Safety Measures

Currently, the unsealed section of the road poses significant safety risks, particularly when adverse weather leads to hazardous driving conditions. By sealing this section, the project will drastically reduce the likelihood of accidents. Improved road conditions will ensure a safer and more comfortable travel experience for residents and tourists, fostering a more positive perception of the region as a safe destination.

## Boost Social and Community Connectivity

Reliable road access is crucial for the well-being of the Diamantina Shire's communities. The upgraded road will facilitate consistent access to essential services, including healthcare and education, which are often disrupted during the flood season. By reducing the road's vulnerability to flooding, the project will enhance the social resilience of the communities along this route, ensuring that residents can maintain contact with one another and access critical services without interruption, regardless of weather conditions.



*81A Eyre Developmental Road –  
2024 flood damage.*

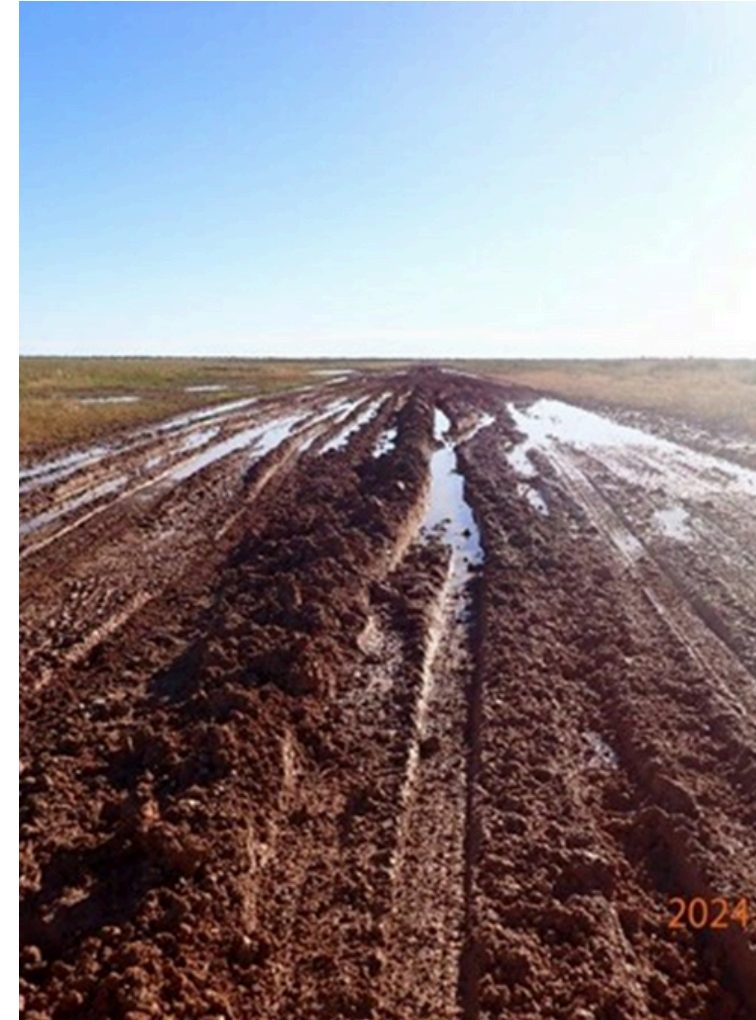
## Economic Analysis

The sealing of the Cuttaburra section of the Eyre Developmental Road is a strategic investment that is expected to yield significant economic and social benefits for the region. With an estimated project cost of approximately \$30 million, this investment will enhance the economic development of the Channel Country by improving a vital link for the agricultural and tourism industries, as well as essential access for the communities of Bedourie and Birdsville.

An exhaustive economic analysis was undertaken by KPMG (Connecting Birdsville to the Region – Business Case for Sealing the Eyre Developmental Road) who have identified that the overall project results will deliver significant benefits and that the project will deliver significant value for money with a Benefit Cost Ratio of 1.43 at a 7% discount rate.

### Direct Economic Benefits:

- **Reduced Maintenance Costs** - Sealing the road will significantly decrease the frequency and cost of maintenance required on this section, particularly due to damage from flooding and regular wear and tear. Currently, maintenance costs range from \$50k to \$100k per year, with gravel re-sheeting required after most flood events.
- **Enhanced Transportation Efficiency** - The project will reduce travel times and provide a more reliable route for local and tourist traffic, eliminating lengthy detours currently necessary when the road is unpassable.



*81A Eyre Developmental Road –  
2024 flood damage.*

## Indirect Economic Benefits:

- **Boost to Tourism:** Improved access to Birdsville will likely increase tourist visits, especially during major events like the Big Red Bash and Birdsville Races, significantly boosting local business revenues.
- **Agricultural and Livestock Transport:** The road is crucial for hauling livestock from surrounding properties to major sale yards and ports. Sealing this section will facilitate smoother transport of goods, enhancing the profitability of agricultural operations.

## Ancillary Gains:

- **Improved Quality of Life:** Residents will benefit from more reliable access to essential services, including emergency and medical services, which can be critical during flood events.
- **Safety Improvements:** A sealed road will reduce the risks of accidents associated with poor road conditions, thus enhancing safety for all road users.

The project is expected to deliver long-term economic advantages by ensuring the resilience of the road network, thereby supporting sustained economic activities and providing a stable and reliable infrastructure that underpins the social and economic fabric of regional Queensland.



*Aerial view of the Cuttaburra section under floodwater, May 2024.*

## Conclusion

Sealing the Cuttaburra Missing Link is more than just a road upgrade—it is a transformative investment in regional resilience, economic growth, and community well-being. By ensuring year-round access, the project will reduce isolation during flood events, improve safety, and unlock new opportunities for tourism, agriculture, and local businesses in Outback Queensland. The enhanced connectivity will strengthen Birdsville's role as a key destination, attracting more visitors and supporting major events like the Big Red Bash and Birdsville Races.

With a strong economic return and social impact, this project is a critical step toward securing a thriving, connected, and sustainable future for Western Queensland. The strategic investment in this infrastructure promises substantial long-term benefits, warranting decisive support and action from all stakeholders.



*Aerial view of the Cuttaburra section under floodwater, May 2024.*