PUTTING HUME FIRST

JAMES HARKER-MORTLOCK – INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE FOR HUME

STATEMENT IN REGARD TO

BARTON HIGHWAY DUPLICATION

12th December 2012

James Harker-Mortlock, independent candidate for the seat of Hume, stated today:

‘The saga of the duplication of the Barton Highway has been going on for too long.

Too often people are injured or even killed on the Highway.

Between 2009 and 2011, 16 people lost their lives and more than 160 were injured.

Now is the time for action.

I have made obtaining the funding for the completion of the Barton Highway my number one policy in my campaign for the seat of Hume.

Unfortunately, the Barton Highway duplication appears to have been forgotten by the major parties. The Coalition completed some work at the Canberra end of the highway in the early 2000s and promised $264 million in the federal election campaign in 2007 to complete the duplication.

The ALP Government has completed improvements on the Capricorn Corner and Gouyan Curves and has announced the installation of a right hand turning lane at Murrumbateman Road and the straightening of a one kilometre section of the Highway to its south. Whilst these improvements are much appreciated they are not enough. Not nearly enough.

In a Report released in 2007 by the Australian Road Assessment Program (AusRAP), the NSW section of the Barton Highway was shown to be the worst section of AusLink-funded road in NSW. The report gave a two-star (out of five stars, with five being the safest) rating to 43 per cent of the NSW section of the road, with three stars for the remaining 57 per cent. The Barton Highway was also deemed more dangerous than the Pacific Highway and the Great Western Highway.

The “Barton Highway Safety Review”, published by the Roads and Traffic Authority in February 2008 stated that the average daily traffic volume on the road varied from 10,000 near the Australian Capital Territory border to 7,000 near its junction with the Hume Highway. The most recent traffic data available from the authority for the Federal Highway shows that it has an average daily traffic volume near its junction with the Hume Highway of only 5,548 vehicles. However, the Federal Highway has been fully duplicated for years.

The same RTA report showed that as a corollary to increased traffic volumes there was also an increase in road accidents and, sadly, consequential injuries and deaths on the highway. Speed and fatigue were shown to be the most regular cause of accidents. The findings of the report confirm the need for not only the duplication of the Barton Highway but also a significant improvement in the availability of public transport. Commuters should be able to travel readily and safely without the need to travel long distances in a weary condition. Improved public transport in the electorate is another of my top policy priorities for Hume.

The Barton Highway duplication would provide significant benefits for the commuters, small businesses, farmers, transport and trucking industries which use it as their main lifeline between Canberra and the north west districts of the electorate of Hume. It is often forgotten that the Barton Highway also forms part of the main road connection between Canberra and Melbourne.
An important function of the Barton Highway is to bring tourists to the electorate. The Barton Highway is the main access for visitors travelling to major events such as the Murrumbateman Field Days where up to 30,000 people use the highway over a two day period. Traffic control has become a major issue, caused primarily by the poor state of the Barton Highway.

Whilst the residents of Hume no doubt understand the urgent need to upgrade the Pacific Highway, we have been waiting a very long time here for the completion of work on the Barton Highway, The Coalition has announced recently that it will spend $5.6 billion on the Pacific Highway upgrade and $1.5 billion on the WestConnex project in Sydney. The duplication of the Barton Highway would cost a fraction of the amount contemplated to be spent on the Pacific Highway and WestConnex projects.

The Barton Highway duplication is well and truly overdue. The time to act is now!"

Putting Hume First – Barton Highway Duplication.

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