



The Hon Anthony Albanese MP

Minister for Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional Development
and Local Government
Leader of the House

27 JAN 2009

Reference: 11609-2008

- 2 FEB 2009

Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Irwin

Thank you for your letter dated 4 December 2008 about a petition forwarded to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions regarding an election commitment by the Coalition for passing lanes on the Bucketts Way. I apologise for the delay in replying.

Since 2002 the Australian Government has provided around \$24 million towards road improvements along Bucketts Way under the former Roads of National Importance Program and the AusLink Strategic Regional Program.

The Australian Government provides considerable funding to local councils for them to use on roads at their discretion. In addition, councils may also choose to utilise their allocation of the Australian Government's Local Government Financial Assistance Grants towards road funding as this grant is untied. Bucketts Way travels through four Local Government areas, Gloucester, Port Stephens, Great Lakes and Greater Taree Councils. For the 2008-09 financial year, these councils will receive a combined total of \$18,208,689 in Financial Assistance Grants.

In addition, you will be aware that recently the Australian Parliament passed legislation that will provide councils and shires with more resources to maintain and improve local roads across Australia. The legislation will provide extra road funding to local governments by extending the Roads to Recovery Program for another five years until 2014 and increasing the program's funding from \$300 million to \$350 million each year.

The local Councils in the area may also wish to contact the Hon Michael Daley MP, NSW Minister for Roads, seeking NSW Government funding towards this project, as

Bucketts Way is classified as a regional road and as such is eligible for NSW Government funding which has been provided previously for the upgrade of this road.

Thank you for raising this matter.

Yours sincerely

ANTHONY ALBANESE