

## SITE MEETING TO DISCUSS THE EXISTING GUNDAROO BRIDGE

On 22 July, together with Phil Langworthy, Ron Miller and Anneke Myer (representing Roger Meishke) I was present at a site meeting to discuss the existing bridge. Also present were Project Manager Brian Hansen and Bridge Maintenance Planner Alan Pottie, both from the Wagga Wagga RTA. These are my notes from that meeting.

To summarise, there are alternatives to demolishing the bridge, but the viability of the options depends upon both cost and community preferences. The new bridge will have a verge of 1.5m on each side, suitable for bicycles, but probably not safe for horse-riders, and separate from the bi-directional vehicular lanes.

The RTA has already submitted an application for the bridge to be demolished. This does not mean that the bridge will be demolished as the application can be withdrawn, however the report resulting from the most recent RTA survey of the bridge indicates that significant replacement of existing timbers will be required in the future to maintain the existing bridge in a safe condition, for vehicular traffic (assuming a maximum load of 25 tonnes). The RTA was unable to provide current advice on the integrity of the bridge for non-vehicular loads.

Estimated costs to:

- bring the existing bridge back to "original" condition - \$5m;
- transition the bridge to pedestrian, cycling and equestrian loads – not yet assessed;
- build the new bridge - \$3m;
- demolish the existing bridge – not yet assessed.

There are ten Allen Truss bridges in the RTA South West Region which are classified by the National Trust and prioritised for maintenance and retention. The Gundaroo bridge is one of five whose relative historical value indicates that they can't and won't be retained using State Government (RTA) funding. The replacement of the wooden post and rail structures on the approaches and the bridge with Armco contributes to this assessment.

**Option 1 -Demolition:** Dismantle the bridge, identify and safely dispose of all materials, including any contaminants. The RTA will pay all costs associated with this option.

**Option 2 - Full Relocation:** Remove the spans and decking to an alternate site within the village as a part of a historical display. The RTA will pay for the removal and placement. Experience such as in Cowra has shown, however, that this is not really a long-term option. Safety and insurance complicate this option.

**Option 3 - Partial Relocation** Retain the superstructure which is the most visible aspect of the bridge, placing the wooden structure on either side of the road at Harrow Creek, midway between the existing bridge and the village sign. This would mean the sides only, no structural work at all, and no decking. It maintains the highly visible entry-point to the village but without the costs of maintaining any of the structural elements. It would require a (low profile) concrete foundation for support and to keep the wood off the ground. This option has not been costed but is unlikely to be prohibitive.

**Option 4 - Retention:** Retain the bridge as a pedestrian/cycle/equestrian crossing. The RTA will require the bridge to be formally handed over to a legal entity which would take responsibility for safety, maintenance and possibly insurance. This option would come with the transfer from the RTA of the amount (as yet unassessed) earmarked as the cost of demolition plus funding required for a pre-demolition environment and heritage study and funding to rehabilitate the existing bitumen approaches to the bridge as these will not be used on the new bridge alignment). It might also include some repairs to enable the old bridge to sustain non-vehicular loads for the immediate future. Safety and insurance again are issues.

This option infers that the cost of maintaining the bridge in condition to bear its own weight and ½ tonne pedestrian, cycling and equestrian loads could be predominantly borne from the interest on the transferred demolition money and would therefore be largely cost-neutral. The major drawback to this option that should the condition of the bridge later deteriorate to the point where it has to be demolished, today's cost of safe demolition may not be sufficient.

As you can see, the costs of demolition and of relocation are the key to decision-making about the future of the bridge. I will keep everyone informed as new information comes to hand. It will be the villagers who make the final decision, so please consider the options and their implications, very carefully.



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