

# **KINGS AVENUE OVERPASS OFFICIAL OPENING**

**PROF. DON AITKIN, NATIONAL CAPITAL AUTHORITY CHAIRMAN**

**TUESDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2011, 8.30AM**

Good morning, my name is Don Aitkin, and I am the chairman of the National Capital Authority. It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the official opening of the Kings Avenue overpass.

Firstly, I would like to show my respect by acknowledging the traditional custodians of this land, the Ngunnawal people, and their elders past and present.

We have come a long way in two years. When this project commenced, the Russell Roundabout, as it was known, had the highest number of traffic accidents in the ACT, and was usually a difficult encounter for most drivers. It was also the worst bottleneck in Canberra, causing traffic issues in all directions, particularly during the morning and afternoon peak periods.

To cross the road from the Russell Defence precinct to Lake Burley Griffin, pedestrians would run between moving cars. Given there were 70,000 traffic movements through this intersection each day, you can understand why this practice was labelled by some as "Russell Roulette".

Today, you can see before you the new Kings Avenue overpass. Parkes Way has been lowered, and the new bridge carries Kings Avenue traffic over Parkes Way through to the Russell Defence precinct. The new intersection allows traffic movements in all directions. Traffic between the city and the airport flows smoothly under the bridge: there's no need for drivers to give way.

We staged the construction to ensure the intersection could remain operational throughout the construction period, and that worked well. But today, all the lanes are open for the first time.

The number of traffic accidents at the intersection has dropped already, and already there is less of a bottleneck. From today, pedestrians will be able to cross Parkes Way safely, using the traffic signals.

This is clearly a massive engineering project, but it is the finer details that have made this overpass exceptional. You may not be able to work this out, but the

overpass itself is within the footprint of the original roundabout, and fits neatly and seamlessly into the surrounding landscape setting and topography. Over time, when the plants are further established, this will be even more the case. It will seem as though the overpass has been there from the beginning.

We can maintain the under-bridge lighting without having to close any lanes or restrict traffic. And the coloured LED lighting system installed on the bridge balustrade can be programmed to help celebrate major events.

Because this major infrastructure project sits in a nationally significant site, we paid great care and attention to the quality of the design. We believe you will agree that the overpass complements the high-quality design that has been developed over the years throughout the National Triangle.

The quality and workmanship evident in this overpass, is a testament to the skills and integrity of all the people who worked on the project. On behalf of the National Capital Authority, I would like to thank everyone who made this project possible. There were over 250 people involved in various ways in this project, and I cannot of course thank them all.

But let me give, on behalf of the Authority, a special thank-you to the teams of people from Johnson Pilton Walker, Taylor Thompson Whitting, Steensen Varming, Warren Smith & Partners, WT Partnership, and SMEC, who worked on the design of the overpass and surrounding landscape. I think you will all agree their efforts have resulted in a beautiful example of urban design.

Thanks also to everyone involved in the construction component of this project. Woden Contractors led a team of dedicated workers to ensure that the overpass was delivered to the high standard we expected, of construction, time and cost. I will now thank the people who worked with the National Capital Authority and Woden Contractors on building the overpass.

- Able Landscape, for landscaping works
- Austec, for metalwork fabrication
- Downer EDI, for the asphaltting works
- Daryl Hart, for all the kerbing and guttering
- Ecowise, for the installation of electrical and lighting components
- Holcim, the supplier of the concrete and gravel
- Matrix, the safety consultant
- Precast Concrete Products

- R D Gossip, for the temporary traffic management planning
- Reynders Constructions, for the structural concrete

And finally, I would like to thank our own team at the National Capital Authority, both past and present, who worked tirelessly on making this project possible. I pay particular thanks to former NCA Chief Executive, Annabelle Pegrum and to former Managing Director, Graham Scott-Bohanna who provided leadership and forethought in initiating this project. Further, special thanks to Phil Waite who led the project management of this project on behalf of the NCA.

I would now like to invite the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government, the Hon. Simon Crean MP, to speak.