

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Sharon Grierson, Federal Member for Newcastle**

**Joel Fitzgibbon, Federal Member for Hunter**

**Frank Terenzini, State Member for Maitland**

**Kerry Hickey, State Member for Cessnock**

**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

### **WEAKLEYS DRIVE OVERPASS OPEN TO TRAFFIC SOON**

Federal Member for Newcastle Sharon Grierson, Federal Member for Hunter Joel Fitzgibbon, NSW Member for Maitland Frank Terenzini and NSW Member for Cessnock Kerry Hickey today examined the new Weakleys Drive overbridge which is scheduled to open to traffic for the first time on Friday.

The overbridge is part of the federally funded \$51.8 million Weakleys Drive interchange project designed to reduce congestion and improve safety.

Mr Fitzgibbon said the overbridge, which is the elevation of the New England Highway over the Weakleys Drive intersection, is great news for motorists.

“This new overbridge is about improving the flow of traffic, reducing travel times and making journeys safer on the New England Highway.

“It’s four lanes wide, with two lanes in each direction, and will mean motorists on the highway don’t have to stop at traffic signals at Weakleys Drive or Anderson Drive West,” Mr Fitzgibbon said.

Ms Grierson said it was a vital piece of transport infrastructure that will be good for residents, businesses and travellers in the region.

“Keeping people and goods moving smoothly into and around the region is vital to our economic future,” Ms Grierson said.

“And with places like Thornton growing rapidly, I’m very pleased that this important transport link will now be in place to meet future needs.”

Mr Terenzini said the completion of the overbridge is a major milestone in the project.

“The project will remove a serious bottleneck for commuters who travel along the New England Highway between Maitland and Newcastle.

“It will also improve heavy vehicle access to the F3 Freeway from the New England Highway.

“The opening of the overbridge will mean other changes to traffic arrangements including the closure of the right turn at Anderson Drive.

“The right turn under the bridge from the New England Highway onto the Weakleys Drive extension will be opened,” he said.

Mr Hickey said there are still several elements of the project that will be completed after the overbridge is open to traffic.

“These include the construction of traffic islands and final asphaltting under the bridge, as well as the completion of the traffic signals, final line marking and landscaping.

“The project also includes a new road link connecting the interchange and Weakleys Drive to Glenwood Drive between Thornton and Beresfield.

“This project goes a long way in helping to meet the demands of future population growth in the area,” Mr Hickey said.

The project is expected to be finished by the end of 2008.