

South Australian Outback Roads Consultative Forum

Communiqué 01 - May 2024

The inaugural meeting of the **South Australian Outback Roads Consultative Forum** was held on 22 May 2024 at the boardroom of the Outback Communities Authority in Port Augusta. This forum is designed to bring together key stakeholders from regional and remote communities, including primary producers, industry and community groups and government agencies, to discuss the management and maintenance of the outback roads network, and identify opportunities for improvement.

Communication

A communiqué covering key details and outcomes will be distributed to outback communities and stakeholders after each meeting. In addition, the Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT) will support the forum by developing a website showing the Department's maintenance grading program and capital works schedule for outback roads, and allowing the public to provide feedback.

Presentation

An informative presentation was provided by **Mick Lorenz**, Director Road Maintenance at DIT. Mick's presentation displayed a map of unsealed roads in Outback SA, showing road classifications which inform the current levels of service. Future meetings will involve discussion of current road classifications and alternative ways of considering levels of service. Funding for road maintenance was a particular concern, with the Authority to investigate partnering with Regional Development Australia Far North to explore an economic benefits and risks analysis.

Issues

Forum members identified a range of issues to be addressed:

The **maintenance of outback roads** was the predominant topic of discussion.

- Urgent action is required for unsealed roads that are damaged by heavy rains and often render communities inaccessible, including at Andamooka and on the Birdsville Track between Mungeranie and Clifton Hills.

- Road conditions are poor on Gammon Ranges Road between Nipapanha and Arkaroola and on Parachilna Gorge Road between Angorichina and Blinman, with reports of regular punctures and difficulties for buses and 2WD vehicles.
- Parents of children in the outback are also concerned about the impact of poor road conditions on childrens' educational opportunities, with a letter of concern having been sent to the Minister for Transport.
- DIT indicated they were aware of most of these issues and have scheduled maintenance works on a priority basis.
- The impact of heavy vehicles associated with mining activity was also identified as a problem for Public Access Routes (PARs). PARs are the responsibility of the Department of Environment and Water (DEW) who will be made aware of this issue.

Another common issue arose around **speed limits around outback towns**. William Creek, Marree, Oodnadatta and Nundroo all called for speed reductions, especially around school zones, because of the high levels of heavy vehicles and caravans. Forum members also discussed the possibility of installing hinged speed limit signs in communities for managing traffic during peak tourist periods and community events. Better traffic management is also required at the turnoff to Nilpena Ediacara National Park from The Outback Highway.

Finally, **signage** was identified as a key issue to be addressed. Signage needs to be sturdy and well installed to prevent theft and tampering. The other key emerging issue is that GPS and online maps are often incorrect and send people in wrong directions; more signage, especially on the Arkaroola Road, could help prevent tourists becoming lost and needing to seek help. Forum members discussed the need to capture data on tourists becoming lost due to incorrect GPS or online map directions, to inform future signage and policy.

Get in Touch

Meetings for the South Australian Outback Roads Consultative Forum will be held quarterly. To raise issues for the Forum's consideration and/or subscribe to the communiqué please email oca@sa.gov.au.

To Report Road Issues

Road issues are to be reported to the Department for Infrastructure and Transport by email to DIT.North@sa.gov.au.