

PROJECT UPDATE
APRIL 2026



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Tanami Road Upgrade Great Northern Highway to WA Border



Stage 1 Complete

After 3 years of steady and determined effort, the Tanami Team led by Project Manager Neville Walters, completed the sealing of the first 40 kilometres from Great Northern Highway to Ruby Downs homestead in late 2025. This section winds its way through some of the most challenging terrain in Jaru country, with steep rocky hills and many creeks crossed, requiring large cuts and fills with over 80 culverts, to construct a road that motorists can safely travel on at 110km/hr.

The last section (sealed in November) between 33-34 SLK, involved blasting and excavation of over 50,000 m³ of rock from 2 large cuttings.

The completed works will be welcomed by road users who ranked this section as the roughest and worst part of the road. Final works are planned for completion on this section in 2026.



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Western Australia.*

Construction of Stage 2 has started – Ruby Plains Section, SLK 41-73

In July 2025, construction work started on the next 32 kilometre section south of Ruby Plains homestead. Works undertaken in 2025 included clearing and topsoil stripping of 12 kilometres of road, removal of cattle grids and starting to raise the road level. A new gravel pit has been established and gravel stockpiled in preparation for this year's works. Two new turkey nests were also constructed, in addition to the construction of side-tracks ready ahead of the works on Stage 2 recommencing

Planned works - 2026

Construction works for Stage 2 recommenced in April, with the aim of completing the sealing of this section before the end of the year. Stage 2 is located on flat plains, which will require a high road embankment to be constructed and a considerable number of culverts to be installed to manage the flooding. The road design is currently being finalised for Stage 3 (SLK 73 – 114), and if all goes well, earthworks are planned to commence on Stage 3 later this year.

Traditional Owners visit site



Last year, nearly 40 traditional owners visited the Stage 1 worksite to celebrate NAIDOC and host a smoking ceremony. Jaru and Tjurabalan community members and the Shire of Halls Creek attended the event in front of about 110 members of the project team.

Aboriginal workers were invited to step forward to show the visiting guests the high Aboriginal participation on the Project, about half of the workforce. Following the event, guests were invited for lunch and a tour of the worksite.

Jaru and Tjurabalan Chairpersons both praised Main Roads for constantly achieving these results for their members and community. Jaru Deputy Chairperson, Mark Gordon, thanked Main Roads for a "beautiful road...and a great NAIDOC event".





Pastoralist provides comment

Main Roads caught up with Merv Wortley, Ruby Plains Station Manager to hear his thoughts on the project and what it will deliver for the community.

Living and working along the Tanami for 40 years, Merv said it had been a long wait for it to be sealed. He reflected on the challenges of operating trucks on the rough bush track that was once *“just about a car width near the border”*.

He expects the sealing will bring benefits for his business and the wider region, including cost savings, improved freight access, and economic opportunity.

Merv said he also expected to see an increase in traffic and visitors once the bitumen was complete.

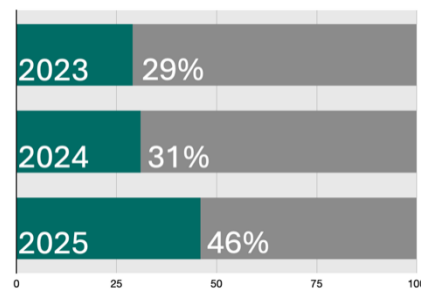
Aboriginal participation

The Aboriginal participation rate on the project continues to grow. The table below shows the Aboriginal employment and contract spend to-date.



While the number of Aboriginal workers on site continues to grow, so has the amount of work completed by Aboriginal owned businesses.

The table shows the percentage of works completed by Aboriginal businesses in the first three years to end of November 2025 based on the total cost of works completed each year.



Payments to Aboriginal Contractors

Growing local capabilities

Binboonoo Pty Ltd recently worked under the guidance of the Tanami culvert crew supervisor to install culverts on an access road into Yiyili community. The works were completed to a high standard and reflect how training and experience gained through the Tanami Road Upgrade is translating into capability on Country. Community leaders and members have expressed a strong sense of pride and ownership, with local people delivering local solutions.



Proud Yiyili residents with community in background, L-R: Jason Cox, worker; Paul Cox business owner, and Terrence Dawson Snr, father of worker

Stakeholder engagement

Main Roads regularly meets with the Shire of Halls Creek, and the Jaru and Tjurabalan Boards to provide project updates and the opportunity for their input into development and delivery.

Consultations with Ruby Plains Station Manager, Merv Wortley are ongoing. Merv was recently invited to input into the clearing scope, inspect the newly cleared road alignment and relocation of the workers' camp.

To inform road alignment and design, the development team consulted with the Billiluna community about Sturt Creek flood levels, verifying the satellite image data.



For further information

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Aboriginal heritage

Working together, Jaru and Tjurabalan Traditional Owners surveyed a section of crown land within Carranya station. These cultural heritage surveys were undertaken in late 2025 to confirm the road design from 114 to 152 SLK.

Main Roads will continue to work with the Tjurabalan Traditional Owners on selecting and agreeing to the road alignment on the next sections to the east, including Sturt Creek crossing.