



THE AUDIT OFFICE
OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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Media Release

Call for motor tollway review

The Auditor-General, Mr Peter Achterstraat, today called for a review of the handback provisions of all tollway partnership agreements following an audit into the scheduled handback of the M4 in early 2010.

The toll will be removed from the M4 on handback. This will increase the number of vehicles using the M4 in peak periods.

“More motorists will want to use the M4 than can fit on it. The extra demand is predicted to increase travel time in the morning peak by over 25%. Five hundred extra vehicles an hour will want to use the road. If you add natural growth, this will increase to 2,000 extra cars”, detailed Mr Achterstraat.

“The M4 project deed did not spell out an appropriate inspection and testing program to determine repairs required to bring the road up to a satisfactory condition at handback”, Mr Achterstraat said.

“The deed did not require that road condition and maintenance be kept up to date with industry standards and best practice. Critically, it did not establish a simple method to cover the cost of any repairs that the operator didn’t make”, Mr Achterstraat explained.

Despite the deed’s shortcomings the M4 should not require costly repairs when handed back. This can be attributed to a combination of good management and good will, but this can’t be relied upon in all tollway partnerships.

These were some of the findings that were released today by the NSW Audit Office in a report into the ‘*Handback of the M4 Tollway*’. The audit focuses on the M4 handback. It looks at whether the road will be in good condition when the State gets it back, and whether it will cope with the extra traffic after the toll is removed.

Mr Achterstraat had three main recommendations.

“I recommend that all future tollway partnership agreements spell out how to determine the repairs needed to bring roads up to a satisfactory condition at handback”, he outlined. “And for existing agreements I am recommending that the RTA review them all and start negotiating any necessary changes by June next year”, Mr Achterstraat added.

“I am also recommending that the RTA complete planned M4 roadworks on time - certainly no later than 31 March 2010. Most importantly they must communicate to road users the impact of removing the toll on their travel time”, Mr Achterstraat stated.

Mr Achterstraat summarised the report by stating

“Removing the toll will increase congestion. Motorists deserve to know what impact this will have on them. If their daily drive to work is changed they need to know by how much.”

Further Information

For further information or to arrange interviews please contact:

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The M4 PPP

