

Cunninghams Gap Reconstruction Project



McIlwain Civil Engineering was the appointed contractor by the Department of Transport and Main Roads to deliver the Cunningham Gap Reconstruction Project. The project restored a two-kilometre section of the Cunningham Highway that had sustained extensive bushfire damage.

A vital freight and transport link connecting South East Queensland and the state's west, the highway is critical to regional communities, businesses and supply chains. The works involved a staged approach that maintained access through the range throughout construction while minimising disruption to traffic.

The recovery project was jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland Governments through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

Project Details

Client: Department of Transport and Main Roads

Location: Cunningham Highway, Tregony, QLD

Sector: Natural disaster recovery, slope stabilisation and transport infrastructure

Duration: December 2022 to July 2026

Key Components

- Installed upslope rockfall and slope protection systems including 20,000m² drape mesh
- Constructed seven retaining walls, four soil nail walls and 1.1km rockfall protection fencing

- Additional works at the Crest carpark and West Gap Creek picnic area carpark
- Installed soil nails in fractured rock and downslope retaining structures
- Completed complex staging within a narrow corridor.

The project was completed in July 2026, with significant reconstruction works in road safety and efficiency, including emergency stopping bays and a rockfall protection fence that features 118 six-metre-high poles faced with a proprietary mesh retaining system.

Innovative methodologies were employed during the project with five tower cranes erected to advance retaining wall construction and facilitate the transfer of building material and concrete across the site where access was particularly constrained.

Situated on a critical national freight corridor, the project required construction methodologies that minimised disruption to road users. The use of tower cranes enabled retaining wall works to be undertaken with reduced reliance



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- Smoke alarms throughout
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- Van user manual
- Heavy duty front drop leg
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- Wheel nut indicators
- Wheel chocks x 4
- Spare Wheels
- Security windows with roll-down blinds
- Wheel brace, jack, drop down leg & spare wheel winders
- Fold out steps and pop out safety rails
- 12v external spot lights

Technical Specification

- ATM: 4500kgs, maximum weight with all tanks full
- Towball weight: 360kgs
- Connection type: 70mm pintel hook
- Towball connection height: 580mm
- Width: 2490mm
- Total travel height: 3650mm
- Interior height: 2300mm
- Van wind rating: Region B terrain category 3



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on heavy machinery within the roadway, supporting safer operations and maintaining traffic movements.

The ability to lift and position materials behind safety barriers increased productivity by enabling concurrent work activities and more efficient construction sequencing.

It also reduced the need for plant movements adjacent to live traffic, shortening construction timeframes, minimising traffic disruptions, and improving safety for both workers and road users.

Further to this, multiple electronic boom gates, managed from a central traffic control centre, were used to manage site vehicle access in and out of work areas with minimal disruptions to traffic.

Environmental management remained a priority throughout reconstruction, with careful planning and controls in place to minimise impacts on the surrounding environment.

Sustainability outcomes included the recycling of close to 1,600 tonnes of asphalt and around 9,000 tonnes of concrete.

Benefits

- Restoration of damaged infrastructure
- Contribution to local economy
- Contribution to regional jobs and growth

Motorists, freight operators, and local communities will benefit from a smoother traffic flow along this critical freight corridor, with the steepest section at the crest reduced to create a more gradual ascent for heavy vehicles.



Key Features

- Installed rockfall protection drape mesh
- Installed over one kilometre of roadside rockfall protection fencing
- Reduced the steep road grade at the top of the crest to provide a smoother ascent at the final bend of the highway with fewer breakdowns
- Constructed two emergency stopping bays near the Crest carpark
- Constructed seven retaining walls on the downslope section of the road
- Constructed four soil nail walls on either side of the road at the crest
- Installed Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) and



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- Installed wide centre line treatments to increase separation of opposing traffic
- Installed guardrails
- Completed works at the West Gap Creek picnic area
- Completed pavement works
- Completed slope scaling and stabilisation activities
- Completed drainage works
- Completed soil nailing and micropiling
- Replaced existing chain wire fencing
- Completed landscaping

Location of Cunninghams Gap

Cunninghams Gap is situated in Main Range National Park, between the peaks of Mount Cordeaux and Mount Mitchell in the iconic Gondwana Rainforests World Heritage Area. It is located near Tregony in the Southern Downs region immediately beside the boundary to Tarome in the Scenic Rim Regional Council area.

The area is a popular location for tourists and locals, with many scenic walking trails located within the National Park.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project was to repair and restore a critical section of the Cunningham Highway at Cunninghams Gap, which suffered significant bushfire damage. The completed reconstruction works supported all road users, kept freight moving, restored safety, and sustained regional communities that depended on this vital transport link.

The highway serves a significant role in providing access for people and freight to and from Brisbane and the Port of Brisbane from the west. Around 6,000 vehicles use this section of the highway each day and keeping them moving safely throughout construction was a priority.

The project was delivered in July 2026.

Support for Local Jobs and Businesses

The project provided opportunities for regional jobs and supported local businesses during construction.

Subcontractors and Suppliers

- Abletech Underground Group
- Alex Fraser Group
- ATP Consulting Engineers

- Auspat Land Survey
- BG&E Pty Limited
- Bothar Boring & Tunnelling (Australia)
- Brezac Constructions
- BW Landscape Construction
- CDA Eastland Trade Supplies
- Cirtex Industries
- Connect Services
- Construction Testing & Quality Services
- Cowie Environmental Services
- Crane Hotline
- Cranes and Construction
- CSTC
- Ellis Profiling
- Fleet Crew
- FSG Geotechnics & Foundations
- Global Synthetics
- Gunsyn Plant Hire
- Hutchison Quarries
- Hy-Tec Industries
- Ingal EPS
- Kerb & Co
- Luca plant hire
- Mustard Seed Services
- Precast Civil Industries (Civilmart)
- Precise Concrete Cutting & Drilling
- Profast
- Protech Personnel
- Quik-Scaff
- Sight Master Australia
- SureFit Services
- Tradeline Site Solutions
- Trailworx Australia
- United Fasteners
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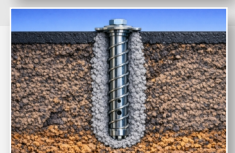
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