



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

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TOOWOOMBA AND DARLING DOWNS DEVELOPMENT

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (11.07 p.m.): Toowoomba and the Darling Downs are on the threshold of some of the most sustained growth and economic development and some of the most exciting potential that we have seen in years if five important proposals for the area can become a reality. These five proposals have come together, and as we enter into the year 2000 each of the proposals is important in the overall scheme of development and each will enhance or rely upon the other for its ultimate success. The five proposals together have the capacity to be bigger than the Snowy Mountains scheme and to give some real sustainability and some real vision to development in that part of south-western Queensland.

The first proposal is the second range crossing—something that has been needed for many, many years. It is proposed to start construction by the year 2010, but that needs to be brought forward by a minimum of five years. There is currently \$24m allocated in the existing budgets until the year 2002 for the acquisition of land in the corridor. But by that year, the Warrego Highway up the range to Toowoomba will be carrying 26,000 vehicles per day—many of them major semitrailers and B-doubles—and that road will be at full capacity. It is essential that the Federal Government brings forward the proposal for the second range crossing, which will be the major link in the road system between Brisbane, Toowoomba and Melbourne and between Brisbane, Toowoomba and Darwin.

The second proposal is the Australian inland railway link—the first stage in the proposal by ATEC to run 4,000 kilometres of railway line from Melbourne through to Darwin. This first stage, which will run from Moree to Fisherman Islands via Toowoomba and, hopefully, via the same type of corridor that will exist for the second range crossing, can bring untold opportunities in transport and exports.

The third proposal is the recycling of renewed water from Brisbane, Ipswich and other south-east Queensland council areas that is currently discharged into the Brisbane River or Moreton Bay. Some 150,000 megalitres per year can be renewed and pumped to the Lockyer and over the range to the Darling Downs, providing about 50,000 megalitres a year to the Lockyer and 100,000 or more megalitres of sustainable, secure water supply to the downs. This will ensure something in the order of \$130m a year of extra export potential from both the Lockyer and the Darling Downs.

The fourth proposal is the establishment of a major road transport and warehousing and industrial estate to the west of Toowoomba. There are currently two proposals: one by the Eastern Downs Regional Organisation of Councils; and one by a private firm, which would be based on some 3,000 acres and provide not only a warehousing and transport hub but also other industrial opportunities, such as, for example, the relocation of the saleyards from Toowoomba.

The final proposal—another important one—is for the proposed joint sale of the old post office, the old courthouse and the old police station. There are various proposals, ranging up to \$35m and \$40m, for inner city redevelopment, maintaining the historical beauty of these buildings, and at the same time putting in place conference and convention centres, hotel accommodation and inner city living. These are the sorts of things that would enhance even further the wonderful livability of Toowoomba. It will enhance the entertainment and eating area that has been developed in Margaret Street.

In recent decades we have seen huge developments in certain regions of Queensland. In central Queensland we have seen the development of coalmines and export ports. We have seen the

development of Gladstone. We have had the tourism development in Cairns and regional development in Townsville. Now is the time for an exciting development to occur in Toowoomba and the Darling Downs—just outside the south-eastern corner of Queensland.

This is a chance of a lifetime for major growth in Toowoomba and the downs. It is an opportunity to develop an export and transport hub for eastern Australia, backed up by a secure irrigation supply. Australia's most beautiful and livable city will be further enhanced by well-planned inner city development. These projects must happen, and they must happen quickly.

I call on the Minister for State Development, the Minister for Transport, the Federal Government, the Federal Minister for Transport, and others to ensure that this once in a lifetime chance is not missed. I know they will have the support of all local members from Toowoomba and the Darling Downs. Not only is this a chance for Toowoomba; it is also a chance for Queensland and Australia. It will enable us to put ourselves on the map with a major eastern Australian transport, economic and export hub that will be the envy of the rest of the world. It is a chance not to be missed.
