



Speech by

Hon. STEVE BREDHAUER

MEMBER FOR COOK

Hansard 25 May 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Federal Road Funding

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (9.54 a.m.), by leave: I rise on this occasion to provide the Queensland Parliament with an overview of the outcome of the 1999 Federal Budget for Queensland's roads. The total Federal road funding in 1999-2000, including national highways, roads of national importance and black spots, remains at \$1.6 billion nationally, which has remained unchanged for the past three years. Queensland's share totals \$328.85m, which is \$18.33m less than in 1998-99 and \$18.65m less than in the 1996-97 Federal roads allocation. This result reflects the ongoing impact of the Federal Government's decision in 1996-97 to reduce national highway funding by \$622m over four years.

Queensland's national highway 1998-99 Federal forward estimate was \$144.3m. However, the 1999-2000 allocation is \$157m, which is a net increase of \$12.7m. The current forward estimates show indicative net increases of \$45.3m in 2000-01 and \$15m in 2001-02. Had this Government not secured the national highway increase for 1999-2000, the overall cut in Federal road funding for Queensland would have been over \$31m.

Despite Treasurer Peter Costello's claim, an extra \$195m has not been provided for national highways. The reality is that this extra \$195m is over four years and relates to both national highways and roads of national importance across Australia. The few projects to be funded have already been announced by John Howard and his Government, both in the lead-up to the Federal election and in the months following, so there were no surprises and no indication that the Federal Government recognises the importance of the national highway system to the nation's economic, export or regional growth, and in terms of improved safety and reasonable standards of access for all Australians.

The funding announced in the Federal Budget has enabled the following project commitments to be made by Federal Minister John Anderson—

\$35m over two years starting in 1999-2000 for Stage 1 of the Pine Rivers to Caboolture six-laning project, \$10m of which has been reallocated from existing national highway program funds to enable safe merging of traffic to four lanes just north of Dohles Rocks Road. However, it should be noted that the total project cost is \$200m and a Federal Government commitment to the remaining \$165m is yet to be given;

\$10m over the next three years for the Portsmouth Road duplication. However, the bulk of these funds—\$7m for this urgently needed project in Cairns—will not be provided until 2001-02;

an additional \$5m to complete the \$15m Marburg duplication project that was announced in 1998-99;

only \$5m in total for the widening and rehabilitation works on the Brisbane-Darwin corridor between Toowoomba and Cloncurry in 1999-2000; and

a mere \$18m for flood repairs spread over the next three financial years, after a year in which Queensland has had record flooding.

Funds of \$4m have been accelerated on a payback arrangement from the existing 2000-01 national highway allocation to 1999-2000 to—

meet the construction timetable for the \$32m upgrade of the Barkly Highway between Cloncurry and Mount Isa; and

enable a start on the \$14.2m reconstruction to two-lane standard of 22 kilometres of single-lane sections on the Mount Isa-Camooweal link of the Barkly Highway, including the upgrading of the Inca Creek bridge and approaches.

The Budget announcement provided no funding to meet a number of other State priorities. The people of Ipswich have been shocked to learn that no funds have been provided in this Budget for the Ipswich Motorway. Equally disappointed are communities expecting Federal funding for the duplication of the Gatton bypass and a commitment to works on the Cunningham Highway, including the Ebenezer Creek bridge and the priority grade-separated interchanges at Amberley and Eight Mile, all of which have been overlooked.

Unfortunately, the Budget also confirmed previous advice that tied maintenance funding for Queensland would be reduced by \$5.19m to \$52.19m in the coming year. This level of funding is grossly insufficient to meet the maintenance demands of Queensland's fragile and ageing national highway network.

Although \$20m has been allocated in the Federal Budget for upgrading deficient bridges on the national highway system to accommodate the Federal Government's proposal to introduce increased mass limits, State allocations are yet to be resolved. The Federal Government is being advised that Queensland will not agree to the increase in mass limits proposal until funding is known and certain conditions met.

Clearly, significant additional Federal funding is required to address the backlog of deficiencies on the existing national highway system and to meet the demands of rapid population growth and industry expansion in Queensland. A draft National Highway Investment Strategy, which has been developed after extensive consultation with key Federal and State Government agencies, industry, local government and other stakeholders, has identified a need for \$3.3 billion over the next 10 years to provide a reasonable national highway system in Queensland. Our national road system is not providing the essential support for business and industry to grow and prosper, or meeting community expectations in terms of providing a reasonable standard of service to the road user.

Queensland's Federal coalition members of Parliament no longer have anywhere to hide. They have been told the facts and need to demand a fairer result for Queensland's roads. They need to make sure that the \$622m funding reduction for national highways, which was instigated in 1996-97, is reinstated in 2000-01 and that further action is taken in future years to redress the horrendous impacts of this funding reduction on the nation's road network.
