



Speech by

Hon. Paul Lucas

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

Hansard Tuesday, 5 October 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Townsville Port Access Road

Hon. P.T. LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (9.55 a.m.): On 21 September, the federal MP for Herbert, Peter Lindsay, withdrew federal coalition support from the Townsville port access road—a vital project for both Townsville and the nation. Mr Lindsay said there was no federal money left for the port access road after the federal Transport Minister, John Anderson, said the coalition would fund the ring-road instead.

Both the Townsville ring-road and port access road are important priorities for the Queensland government. Townsville is one of Queensland's fastest growing ports. It also is a major Australian port with strong exports in cattle, minerals and sugar. Currently, there is no direct heavy vehicle connection between the Townsville port and the Townsville state development area—or to southern and western Queensland—except through the residential area of Stuart, Oonoonba and South Townsville. The port access road addresses this shortcoming.

In December 2003, subject to matching federal funding, the Queensland government committed \$8 million to construct stage 1 of the port access road, linking the Flinders Highway and Bruce Highway via the Stuart bypass. It also committed to planning, corridor acquisition and detailed design of stage 2, a new eastern access extension from the Bruce Highway to the Townsville port.

Peter Lindsay said federal funding for the port access road would be favourably considered if the Queensland government committed 50 per cent of the costs for the entire project—stages 1 and 2. In the *Townsville Bulletin* on 21 January, Mr Lindsay said federal money would be 'on the table tomorrow'. On 26 August 2004, Queensland sent a funding application to the federal government for 50 per cent for stages 1 and 2—that is, 50 per cent of \$115.2 million, or \$57.6 million.

If it wins government, the federal opposition has committed to match the \$8 million state government funds for the Stuart bypass. There has been other bad news for the port access road. The federal government recently said it does not consider the road to be part of the AusLink network, despite the road being an extension of the Flinders Highway to the Townsville port.

The Beattie government and Main Roads have always considered the port access road to be part of AusLink, and I am amazed the coalition is now trying to change the ground rules. We are not giving up on the port access road and we are not letting the federal government off the hook when it comes to funding it. This is not only an important industry development issue but also an important quality of life issue for the people of Townsville. Immediately after the federal election I will be contacting the new federal government to push for support for this project.