



Speech by

Hon. Paul Lucas

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

Hansard Thursday, 21 October 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Roads, Funding

Hon. P.T. LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.11 a.m.): One of the most important things that the Beattie government must do is ensure that Queensland gets a fair deal on roads, no matter who is in power federally. When the federal government released its AusLink road funding package in June I said that it was not a good enough deal for Queensland since we received only 18 per cent—later 19 per cent—of funds compared to a previous average of 25 per cent. As Australia's fastest growing state, we have a shortfall over the next five years of \$1.7 billion for federally funded roads. This compares with an increase this year of 14 per cent in road and transport funding over last year by the Beattie government.

While more needs to be done, I am pleased that the Commonwealth has improved its funding balance with some important road commitments during the recent election campaign. We wanted to extract the maximum benefit from the federal election campaign for the people of Queensland, regardless of which party won. I thank the Local Government Association and the RACQ for the role they played as well.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr LUCAS: Floodworks on the Bruce Highway at Tully were years away before the federal election; the honourable member is correct. The Commonwealth had only committed \$1.5 million for planning and no time had been set for construction when Labor's Martin Ferguson committed \$80 million for the project on 1 August. The Commonwealth then matched this undertaking on 15 September. Thanks to our efforts, this vital project will now go ahead regardless, and that is good news. Similarly, the \$40 million Townsville ring-road was not on the table before both parties committed to it during the campaign.

In Brisbane the member for Moreton, Gary Hardgrave, claimed that he had obtained funding for the Kessels and Mains roads intersection at Macgregor. This was despite the fact that the federal Roads Minister, Jim Lloyd, said the project would not proceed. However, when federal Labor committed \$60 million to the project on 27 September the federal coalition said that it had already pledged a similar amount. I will write to the new federal Roads Minister, when that person is chosen, to confirm the funding for this vital project.

A disappointment of the election was the federal coalition's failure to match a Labor pledge to give \$25 million for the \$50 million Acacia Ridge rail overpass. This was despite the fact that the coalition gave \$3 million for a similar overpass at Callemondah in Gladstone with no strings attached. We welcome that commitment. The Beattie government has already pledged the remaining \$25 million to fix the Acacia Ridge bottleneck.

We ensured that the debacle of the federally funded Ipswich Motorway was at the centre of the election campaign. I want to make it clear that the Beattie government believes the proposed half northern bypass is not the best solution to congestion on the Ipswich Motorway. The Ipswich Motorway must be

upgraded as well. Regardless, the federal government, led by the member for Blair, Cameron Thompson, proposed the half northern bypass as the solution without even a feasibility study having been done.

Nonetheless, the simple fact is that the Howard government won the election and its policies are entitled to be progressed when it is paying the bills. John Howard personally promised \$627 million from AusLink for the half northern bypass in the largest road commitment of the election campaign. However, the coalition has already committed \$270 million of that total to other road projects, leaving only \$357 million for the bypass. Moreover, that remaining \$357 million is also earmarked for other projects such as the Gateway Motorway upgrade and improvements to the Brisbane urban corridor.

The present federal Roads Minister, Jim Lloyd, said in a statement this week that he had agreed to draft guidelines submitted for a feasibility study for the half northern bypass. We welcome that. He also said that he wanted to meet with me as soon as possible for discussions and inspections of the Ipswich Motorway and the half northern bypass. I am also pleased to do that. I am pleased to indicate to the House that federal and state officers will be meeting tomorrow to further progress these matters at an officer level. My department, with the Commonwealth, will be interviewing three consultancy firms which have been invited to tender for the feasibility study, and the successful tenderer will be appointed by early December.

In December 2003 the Beattie government provided an extra \$1.06 billion for Queensland roads over five years over and above normal funding. This is an extraordinary 20 per cent increase. Queensland spends 2.5 times more than Victoria and one-third more than New South Wales per capita on our roads. I will continue to fight to ensure that Queensland gets the best possible deal from the federal government, regardless of its political persuasion. That said, I can assure the federal government that it will get full cooperation in regard to its identified priorities for Queensland roads.