



Speech by

Hon. Paul Lucas

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

Hansard Thursday, 22 February 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Riverside Expressway Ramps

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (9.58 am): I am pleased to announce that speed restrictions on two key ramps of the Riverside Expressway are about to be lifted.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, can I ask you to stop for a moment. This morning, about three mobile phones have rung. I know you are all keen to get home tonight, so can I ask everyone to turn off their phones please.

Mr LUCAS: I am pleased to announce that speed restrictions on two key ramps of the Riverside Expressway are about to be lifted. From next Monday, speed limits on the Ann and Alice Street ramps will return to 60 kilometres per hour, while the Elizabeth and Alice Street structures will reopen to heavy vehicles. Load restrictions on the Ann Street ramp were lifted before Christmas. I reassure the House that at all times Main Roads has acted with safety as its number one priority.

I have repeatedly stressed to Main Roads that safety was the primary concern and at each stage its actions must be prudent and cautious and keep the welfare of the travelling public at the fore. The Riverside Expressway was closed by Main Roads on 17 October last year to allow a team of expert engineers to thoroughly investigate a hairline crack on the Ann Street ramp which, along with the Alice Street ramp, had also developed rotation issues.

Since then there have been many inspections, an exhaustive program of load testing and the installation of specialist instrumentation to accurately assess the structural integrity of the Riverside Expressway. Main Roads advises that, although the Ann and Alice Street ramps continue to rotate slightly in response to temperature variations between the bottom and top surfaces of the girders, they are safe and show no signs of deterioration. Main Roads engineers assure me that the Riverside Expressway can return to normal operation as it is structurally sound.

Expert modelling and testing undertaken by Main Roads have been independently assessed and verified by Professor Peter Dux from the University of Queensland. Engineers are working on longer-term solutions and expect to provide details by the end of April. Monitoring equipment will remain in place for the time being.

The member for Gregory asked a question on this yesterday. This will deal with most of those issues. Earlier there was a concern heavy vehicles may have accelerated wear and tear of the fingerplates at the joint where rotation was causing bearing separation. Inspections show the fingerplates are still performing well after 35 years. It is a simple maintenance task to replace the plates if necessary but the expectation is that it will not be needed for many years.

The lifting of speed and load restrictions will require a temporary six-hour closure of the Alice and Ann Street ramps from 10 pm this Sunday. Road workers will apply new line markings to channel traffic and minimise any ongoing wear and tear of the fingerplates. Over the spans there will be a single lane.

I want to assure the House that safety remains our first priority. I thank motorists for their patience and pay tribute to the professionalism and expertise of the Main Roads engineering team. I table the December and February reports. There is a slight deletion of two telephone numbers for privacy reasons.

Tabled paper: Copies of reports on engineering evaluations of the Ann and Alice Street ramps of the Riverside Expressway dated 21 December 2006 and 19 February 2007.