



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

Hansard Tuesday, 10 November 2009

KENNEDY HIGHWAY UPGRADE

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (10.10 pm): On 4 August this year I tabled a petition calling on the minister to urgently upgrade the Kennedy Highway from the Evelyn Road-Kennedy Highway junction to the intersection of Kennedy Highway and Tumoulin Road so it could be designated a permanent B-double route. There were more than 1,100 signatories to the petition, such is the depth of concern of road users and the community. The minister's response to the petition was nothing short of pathetic. While it acknowledged that safe and efficient freight transport operations are vital to support primary producers in the Ravenshoe area, it offered little in the way of fixing the serious problem.

A key factor here is to ensure that produce transported by B-doubles is fresh. This requires the fastest transport times to the market to ensure that freshness and potential sale price are not compromised. Another key factor is a safe highway, and B-doubles are designated to the Kennedy Highway to ensure that the township of Ravenshoe is free from B-doubles and prime movers. This is all common sense.

Currently a permit system is utilised, but this is not suitable as permits do not provide certainty. If a local producer does not have a permit, their produce is double handled, increasing the time to access the market and affecting the freshness of the produce. One load is sitting by the side of the road awaiting transport. The trucks have to do two trips to take a double load to the markets, increasing the volume of traffic on this section, causing damage to the existing road structure and increasing the risk of accidents for all road users. During this time the fruit and vegetables are on the back of the truck while many times in that area it is raining.

Add to this the constraints due to fatigue management requirements and the impact on the transport of fresh produce is compounded. Any delays in the transport of produce could result in the loss of the entire produce. According to the minister, investigations to determine the cost and scope of works involved to upgrade the intersection have been carried out. However, the minister failed to find any funding to upgrade the intersection, despite his assurances that the safety of all road users is the department's No. 1 priority.

While the government accepts the necessity for safe and efficient freight transport and maintains that the safety of all road users is paramount, it is not willing to provide a solution to the problem that is the scourge of all primary producers, local residents and road users utilising this intersection. By upgrading the intersection and adjacent road sections, the road will be safe for all road users and provide a suitable and permanent B-double route away from the centre of town that is safer for all residents and satisfactory for farmers and truck drivers.

Unless funds are allocated to improving and upgrading this road, all industries will suffer. This region produces millions in gross revenue yet has an access road that is described as a billygoat track. I call on the minister for the benefit of all to take a trip north, provide a few crumbs and fix the problem once and for all.