




Speech By
Hon. Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Budget, Toowoomba Second Range Crossing

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (2.13 pm): For two decades Commonwealth and state governments have promised the Toowoomba second range crossing but never delivered it. Thanks to the resolve of this government, with the rightful assistance of the Commonwealth, that long wait is almost over. This can-do government is working with our federal counterparts to get on with the job of delivering this vital piece of infrastructure for Toowoomba and the Darling Downs.

I am delighted to inform the House that the invitation for expressions of interest for the Toowoomba second range crossing is now open to the market. With this milestone achieved, we are well on our way to construction starting in the near future. The state will commence an interactive tender process before the end of the year and announce a successful proponent in mid-2015. We are seeking innovative proposals that will drive value for money to deliver a world-class asset for Toowoomba and the Darling Downs.

By delivering the Toowoomba second range crossing, both the Commonwealth and Queensland governments are delivering a safer, more efficient road network to support growth and boost economic activity in the region. The benefits of the Toowoomba second range crossing are significant for the region and the state, and I know many of the locals agree from speaking to them at the Strong Choices summit we held in Toowoomba on 30 April.

Mr Johnson: The whole state, Treasurer; the whole state.

Mr NICHOLLS: The whole state; I take that interjection from the member for Gregory. The second range crossing will reduce travel time by up to 40 minutes and bypass up to 18 sets of traffic lights. It will also improve freight efficiency. The current range crossing has gradients of up to 10 per cent, as anyone who has travelled it recently will know. These steep gradients, combined with tight horizontal bends, make the existing range a slow and arduous journey for heavy commercial vehicles.

The Toowoomba second range crossing is a key component in the state's export supply chain. Around 50 per cent of the goods exported from the Port of Brisbane are sourced from west of Toowoomba, and predominantly enter South-East Queensland via the Toowoomba range. Not only will a journey on the Toowoomba second range crossing be faster; it will also improve driver safety in Toowoomba's city streets. They are currently congested by 2,500 heavy vehicles each day. Accidents on the existing range crossing have doubled in the past four years. The Toowoomba second range crossing will address the bottleneck created by frequent closures caused by incidents on the existing range crossing. In 2012, there were more than 100 breakdowns, more than 30 crashes and up to 40 hazardous incidents.

To address these issues and make the second range crossing a reality, the Commonwealth government has committed to fund 80 per cent of the project and has budgeted almost \$1.3 billion to support this commitment. The remaining 20 per cent, \$321 million, will be funded by the state

government, which was confirmed in my budget speech yesterday. This funding arrangement has been confirmed in the MOU between both governments. We have made this funding available because we can see the benefits of investing in regional infrastructure. The project will deliver 1,800 full-time equivalent jobs over a three-year construction period, a \$2.4 billion increase in economic activity in the region over the coming 30 years and ongoing work for operations and maintenance teams.

Over the coming years, the people of Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley and west will witness the construction of the second range crossing—a testament to the tenacity and determination of the Commonwealth and the Queensland governments to commit to regional communities and to build the infrastructure needed in the 21st century. This can-do government is delivering for Queensland, as we have a strong plan for a brighter future.