



Speech By  
**Trevor Watts**


**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

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**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Toowoomba Second Range Crossing**

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (11.57 am): I rise on a matter of public interest relating to the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing. As people in this House would know, the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing has been a passion of mine for a long time before I got into politics. It has actually been a passion of people named Watts for over 150 years as the first member for Toowoomba, John Watts, stood in this place and said that we need a better range crossing. Over the years, different governments have done things about the range crossing. In 1964, the Nicklin government upgraded the current range crossing to four lanes. That was a 25-year plan to relieve pressure on the road. We then fast forward to 1989 when in Toowoomba pressure was mounting for an upgrade of the facility. Unfortunately, in 1989 we had a Labor government under then premier Wayne Goss, who, unlike former premier Nicklin, was not interested in Western Queensland or starting a discussion about a second range crossing, so the range crossing became more dangerous, more difficult to cross and clogged with traffic. Increasingly, the road through Toowoomba saw more and more B-double traffic as the wealth of Western Queensland was carried to the port down our main street.

Then we come to former premier Peter Beattie, who talked about what he was going to do for Queensland. People were agitating for a second range crossing. In fact, during Beattie's time in office the federal member, Ian Macfarlane, organised funds to purchase the land. The land was bought but, without support from the Queensland government, the project was unable to progress. It did not progress whilst Peter Beattie was in power. His minister for Western Queensland, Kerry Shine, was unable to gain any interest in the Toowoomba second range crossing project, much to his frustration. Kerry Shine was often quoted in the papers about different ideas and concepts for generating interest in the project, but there was no interest from the Labor government.

Anna Bligh also showed no interest in the project. As we all know, the member for Clayfield, the former treasurer, came to Toowoomba and made the announcement that \$321 million would be available from state government funds to go with the federal government's 80 per cent funding and the road project would get underway. There was a plan, the plan was published and there was a time line for the plan.

I congratulate the current roads minister, Minister Bailey, on the fact that he is the first Labor minister to show any interest or make any significant announcement about the second range crossing. Unfortunately, it was an announcement about a delay until August, but it was an announcement. The people of Toowoomba appreciate the announcement because at least they know that there is something happening and the 1,800 jobs that will be generated from this project will still come to Toowoomba. People know that the project will happen. I thank the minister for making that statement. It was about a delay, but at least we know the project is still happening.

There are couple of other issues that I would seek advice on from the minister. There is a lot of talk in Toowoomba about a cutting. There is a lot of nervousness among the people north of my electorate with regard to how they will get to Toowoomba if a cutting is put in place and what provisions there will be for those people to travel down that road.

One particular problem relates to the travel arrangements of children from that area who travel to school on a school bus. They have to travel to town because there was no high school at Highfields. That is something that we fixed. Students in years 9, 10, 11 and 12 obviously still have to travel to town. A 10- or 15-minute diversion would mean that about 1,000 children a day would miss the start of school or we would have to rearrange the entire bus timetable to allow them to get to school on time. That is not to mention the impact on the tens of thousands of people travelling the New England Highway to get to Toowoomba.

It is a very important project. It is something that Ian Macfarlane has passionately pursued and that I have passionately pursued. With the help of Warren Truss and members of the former LNP government, this is a project that is finally being undertaken for the people of Western Queensland. Again, I thank the minister for showing some interest. I hope his interest in the future is not announcing further delays, but I appreciate the update.