




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR MILLER

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Toowoomba Second Range Crossing

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (9.51 am): The Toowoomba Second Range Crossing is a once-in-a-generation project that will give significant benefits for Queenslanders. As Queensland's largest inland city, Toowoomba plays a pivotal role in supporting our state's economy. This project will help to reclaim local roads for residents in Toowoomba and Withcott in the Lockyer Valley by removing heavy vehicles from their local streets.

The project will bypass Toowoomba's central business district, enabling trucks to avoid 18 sets of traffic lights. Redirecting up to 80 per cent of heavy commercial vehicles away from Toowoomba will make roads safer and reduce operating costs for freight. The six interchanges under construction will integrate the new toll road into the national and local transport network.

In partnership with the Australian government, the Palaszczuk government is delivering the 41-kilometre-long road, bypassing Toowoomba's northern side, linking the Warrego Highway at Helidon Spa in the east and the Gore Highway at Athol in the west. This is an economic supercharger that will reduce freight time and improve road safety. As reported earlier this year, a geological issue under an embankment on the range that was not picked up during initial planning will delay the project's completion until around mid-2019. Despite this, I am pleased to report to the House that all other works are well advanced.

The Toowoomba Second Range Crossing has been an impressive feat of engineering. Earthworks are more than 95 per cent completed; the bridge program, which involves 30 bridges, is 95 per cent completed; and large sections of the final road surface are now complete. The Toowoomba Second Range Crossing has also delivered many local jobs to the Garden City. Up to 1,800 direct and indirect jobs were or are being created. More than 5,000 people have worked on site during construction, with up to 600 people working on site daily at its peak. As of last month, local workforce participation on the project was more than 80 per cent in the total dollar value of contracts.

It would be remiss of me not to highlight the concerns this government has had about safety on this project. We expect all contractors to manage health and safety to the highest standards and comply with their legislative obligations. In February this year, the Minister for Industrial Relations, Grace Grace, and I met with the contractor Nexus to discuss a series of safety incidents on site that were investigated by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland. An independent audit of safety practices on site was carried out, and Nexus provided assurances that it would implement all 51 recommendations from that audit.

Work is nearly complete on the Warrego Highway's western interchange at Charlton, the Gore Highway interchange at Athol and the Warrego Highway eastern interchange at Helidon Spa. I look forward to seeing how advanced this project is next week when we head west to govern from Toowoomba.