




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR MILLER

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bruce Highway

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.02 am): The Bruce Highway is Queensland's backbone. It is the road that millions of Queenslanders depend on. It connects growing regional centres and carries tourists over 1,700 kilometres between Cairns and Brisbane. It is longer than California by 450 kilometres, it is longer than the nation of Japan and nearly double the length of the United Kingdom. As Queensland's major economic artery, it moves freight between our ports and our regional communities from paddocks and pits to export markets, supporting hundreds of thousands of Queensland jobs.

You do not have to go back many years to find news stories reporting on the terrible state of the highway and the lives lost on it. The same articles often lamented the political infighting that stymied progress on appropriate funding for it. Since the election of the Palaszczuk Labor government in 2015, we have fought hard to make the Bruce Highway safer and less congested. The centrepiece of that effort is the \$12.6 billion Bruce Highway Upgrade Program with the federal government.

That program, delivered with federal government support, is supporting record investments in the Bruce Highway today. Upgrades worth billions of dollars are underway or about to start around Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Gympie, Fraser Coast and the Sunshine Coast, where there is a record roads commitment. These projects will make the highway safer, move freight quicker and support thousands of Queensland jobs. Bruce Highway upgrades are a core part of the \$23 billion, 21,500 job pipeline of roads and transport investments we are delivering to support Queensland's economic recovery.

The Palaszczuk Labor government is building a better Bruce, and this week we will honour another commitment to it. We said we would establish the Bruce Highway Trust to take the political fighting out of funding—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members! Members to my left, the minister is not being provocative.

Mr BAILEY: A moot point, Mr Speaker. We have committed our share towards locking in \$1 billion in joint funding for upgrades every year. This Friday the Bruce Highway Trust will hold its first meeting. I am pleased to say there has been bipartisan support, apparently, for the trust. It is chaired by—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the minister on his feet.

Mr BAILEY: At least one side genuinely supports the Bruce Highway.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I do not need the commentary to go along with it.

Mr BAILEY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is chaired by Mr Peter Garske, previous deputy chair of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and former CEO of the Queensland Trucking Association. He will be supported by deputy chair Barbara Madden, who has been nominated by the Leader of the Opposition and brings considerable experience to the role. The federal government will be represented by federal infrastructure departmental secretary, Simon Atkinson. The RACQ, Queensland Farmers' Federation, Local Government Association of Queensland, Transport Workers' Union, Queensland Trucking Association and the Queensland Tourism Industry Council are all members of the trust. The meeting will mark an historic turning point for the future of the Bruce Highway. The council will develop a new 15-year vision for the Bruce Highway and identify investment priorities that can be considered by state and federal roads ministers.

As we continue to implement our plan to unite and recover from COVID-19 for Queensland's economic recovery and look for ways to support new jobs, a new vision for the Bruce Highway will give Queenslanders the certainty they need in uncertain times.