




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOWOOMBA NORTH

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ADJOURNMENT

Toowoomba, Roads

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (7.12 pm): I rise to talk about a petition that is running to get a road from Highfields, one of the fastest-growing areas in regional Queensland, into the city of Toowoomba. The current road we have is the New England Highway and it is coming under increasing pressure. As it comes into town, it turns into Ruthven Street. There are many junctions that have been upgraded over the years. Jellicoe Street, where my office is, and North Street have both been upgraded to try to deal with the increasing traffic coming through. Put simply, Ruthven Street is approaching a point where it will not cope well. People are waiting for five or six changes of traffic lights in the morning. I encourage the people of Highfields who are trying to go north-south and get into the CBD to sign the petition. I also encourage people in the other suburbs, such as Mount Lofty, East Toowoomba, Rockville and Harlaxton, to sign the petition so they can travel east-west because that traffic intersects and causes a great problem.

I am not saying that we should necessarily build and open the road next week. What I am saying is that we need to gazette a path. Everybody knows that land release is critical for the growth of Queensland, and in and around Highfields there is more and more land being released. If we do not identify the corridor, gazette this road and put a decent long-term plan in place to make sure we know what the trigger points are on the existing New England Highway and build a north-south corridor that comes from Cabarlah through to Westbrook and eventually goes through Finnie and hooks back up with the New England Highway, then we are creating a real problem with traffic congestion into the future in the north-south direction for the whole city of Toowoomba.

I encourage people to look at the petition. I encourage the minister to reference the petition. I know the department are doing work in this area and I thank them for that. There are lots of people who are concerned about where this corridor might go and what we might have to do. I think we all need to sit down with calm heads and work out where we want to put this road and what the trigger points are for this road and get it gazetted and ready to be built and funded when the business case stacks up.

It is a really sensible, long-term approach. I have been listening to the people of the community and they are telling me that they need this solution going forward. One of the schools on the highway has been told to put a set of traffic lights in so their students can drive out safely across a four-lane highway, just after they have passed their licence. It is \$20 million. One of the ways to help that is to alleviate some of the pressure on this north-south corridor. I encourage everybody in Toowoomba to sign this petition. I encourage the minister to take a good look at this option. Let us get it gazetted, let us get it funded and let us get it built.