

## QUESTION ON NOTICE

NO. 1056

Asked on 2 September 2004

MR KNUTH asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) -

### QUESTION:

**With reference to the curfew currently in place from 6pm to 6am on the Flinders Highway from Julia Creek to Hughenden, despite the completion of all the appropriate road signage required to meet the safety requirements for Type 2 road trains**

**When will he relieve the frustration of truck drivers, the Flinders Shire and the Richmond Shire and lift the curfew?**

### ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Charters Towers for the question.

Road improvements have now reached a stage where the state government is confident that road safety issues have been addressed through extensive widening works and is prepared to provide 24-hour "as of right" access for Type 2 road trains as soon as the necessary administrative arrangements can be put in place.

This will take a week and the Member for Charters Towers would be aware that I have just announced the lifting of this curfew from **11 October 2004**.

This is great news for the transport industry and for North Queensland as a whole. The Flinders Highway is North Queensland's major east-west road freight route. Lifting of restrictions will help make our industries more competitive, both nationally and internationally, by cutting transport costs, and will significantly benefit the region's overall economy.

The reason the night-time curfew was introduced in 1998 was to maintain safety for all road users, including Type 2 road trains, due to the road's width. The main concern was to eliminate narrow sections, those where the highway is less than 7 metres wide, on the Flinders Highway between Hughenden and Julia Creek.

The state government has made a significant investment in improving safety on the Flinders Highway, by funding widening works, and continues to do so. Some \$12m is being spent in 2004-05 alone.

On the Hughenden to Julia Creek section of the highway, work was completed recently on widening a section near Chatfield Creek and earlier in the year on widening a section near Horse Creek. Only a total length of 1km of narrow road now remains, at the Nonda and Boundary Creek floodways, both about halfway between Julia Creek and Richmond. Work is currently underway to widen these floodways and should be completed by Christmas 2004, weather permitting.

In the meantime, "Narrow Floodway" signs, to which the Member for Charters Towers refers, have been erected to warn drivers of the need for care on these sections. Roadworks warning signage is also in place, including reduced speed limits of 60km/hr on the approaches to and through the roadworks, which include sidetracks.

Drivers will be therefore be alerted to the road's narrow width on these short sections – one floodway is 350-metres long and the other 650-metres long – and the need to slow down and drive carefully on these sections.

The curfew was put in place on the Hughenden to Julia Creek section in 1998 when the remainder of the Flinders Highway between Townsville and Cloncurry was opened to Type 2 road train access. At that time, the Hughenden to Julia Creek section included many more narrow sections compared to the rest of the Flinders Highway. A concerted investment by the state government in widening works means that this is no longer the case.

The state government will continue to widen the Flinders Highway, to further improve safety and travelling conditions for all road users.