

## **Question on Notice**

**No. 1104**

**Asked on 28 September 2004**

MISS SIMPSON asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) -

QUESTION:

With reference to the upgrade of the Cooktown Development Road, for each section of the upgrade –

- (1) What is the total expenditure to date?
- (2) What are the reasons for any revisions in the estimated original or final cost?
- (3) What are the projected completion dates for all parts of the project?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Maroochydore for the question.

At a Community Cabinet meeting in Cooktown in April 1996, the Borbidge Government made a commitment to complete the bitumen sealing of the road between Cairns and Cooktown by the end of 2005.

Main Roads was subsequently given two months to develop a plan for the drainage, partial realignment and provision of a low-cost seal on approximately 66km of the Cooktown Developmental Road between Lakeland and Cooktown, as well as make provision for construction of the major Byerstown Range deviation on the Peninsula Developmental Road between Mt Molloy and Lakeland.

In the time available, it was simply not possible to carry out any detailed studies into alignment options and hydraulics and, on the basis of generic costs per kilometre for the anticipated types of work, a very preliminary estimate of \$61m for the section between Lakeland to Cooktown was determined.

Extra funding of \$50m over the first five years was ultimately approved by Cabinet in October 1996 to supplement Main Roads' forward program of works to enable this commitment to be delivered in the designated timeframe.

On assuming Government in 1998, the Beattie Government has ensured that successive Roads Implementation Programs (RIP) have provided sufficient funds to deliver this major undertaking by December 2005.

The 7km Byerstown Range project was completed at a cost of \$16m in 2001. To date, 32km of the major upgrade of the Cooktown Developmental Road component has been completed at a cost of \$58m – with the final cost currently estimated at \$102m.

Although this reflects a significant cost increase over the initial preliminary estimate, when completed, this new road will be constructed to a far higher design standard than was initially proposed, resulting in:

- improved durability and reduced whole-of-life costs
- a safer speed environment
- increased transport efficiency
- improved community access
- improved environmental outcomes, and
- flow-on benefits to the regional economy.

In the main, the increased project costs can largely be attributed to significant additional earthworks which have been required to meet the higher national design standards and increased environmental protection measures, particularly in relation to erosion, sediment control and water quality and construction of five new bridges and significant numbers of additional culverts, which were not originally allowed for on the Kings Plain floodplain, to improve flood immunity.

There are four projects remaining to be completed:

- Little Annan to Scrubby Creek – estimated completion December 2004.
- Scrubby Creek to Sackley's Hill – estimated completion July 2005.
- Sackley's Hill to East Normanby River – estimated completion December 2005.
- East Normanby River to West Normanby River, including bridges at West Normanby River, East Normanby River and Whitehouse Gully – estimated completion December 2005.