

Question on Notice

No. 1096

Asked on 09 June 2006

MRS E CUNNINGHAM asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (MR LUCAS)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the proposed duplication of the railway line which runs into Gladstone along the Dawson Highway—

How many properties are affected and how are they affected?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for her question.

Growing demand in the international seaborne coal trade requires major expansions at Queensland's coal ports, including the potential development of a new coal terminal at Gladstone. The proposed Wiggins Island Coal Terminal north-west of Gladstone will be the second major coal export facility in Gladstone with an ultimate nominal capacity of 70 million tonnes per annum.

Current concept planning for the proposed new Wiggins Island Coal Terminal provides for a new rail connection across the Calliope River, located south of the existing rail crossings, and joining the Moura line in the Byelle area, just to the south-west of Callemondah. This new river crossing will provide a direct access for coal trains from the Moura line to Wiggins Island. There are five privately owned properties impacted by this connection, with three on the south-east side of the Calliope River and two on the north-west side. In addition, Gladstone City Council owns an area of wetlands on the south-east side, for which it is seeking legal public access to open up for public use. Negotiations between Queensland Rail (QR) and both Gladstone City Council and Calliope Shire Council in respect of this area and other floodprone land in the vicinity, are on-going. This also includes direct discussions with the landowners likely to be affected.

At this stage there is no plan to duplicate the Moura line, but operational planning by QR is still underway and the track configuration in the junction area has still to be finalized. This may include some passing loops in this area. It is envisaged that the Moura line may ultimately be progressively duplicated, but this will be dependent on the growth of gross tonnages from mines in the area, and also likely depend on building the Southern Missing Rail Link to Wandoan to open up the large Surat Basin coal deposits for export via Gladstone.

QR is currently planning to proceed with an extension of all the crossing loops on the Moura line to allow Blackwater-length coal trains to operate, and this will involve a nominal increase of 700 metres to most of the loops in the Moura system. This upgrade is expected to be completed in 2007. Where possible these loop extensions and any future track duplication would be contained within the existing rail corridor.

The Wiggins Island Coal Terminal and associated rail access is currently the subject of an Environmental Impact Study, which is expected to be available for public review and comment in October 2006. This would include consideration of the land use impacts, and the requirement for acquisition of land needed for the rail connections.

QR's preferred process for acquiring any land is to negotiate on a commercial basis with land owners impacted, and to reach agreement with these landowners on the acquisition. As a last resort, the State's powers of resumption would be used where agreement could not be reached. Any land acquisition will not proceed until planning approvals for the Wiggins Island Coal Terminal and associated rail accesses are obtained.