

Question on Notice

No. 1512

Asked on 29 November 2006

MRS MILLER asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (MR LUCAS) -

QUESTION:

On behalf of constituents in the Bundamba Electorate, will he advise the current status of upgrading the Ipswich Motorway, particularly between Dinmore and Gales?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Bundamba for the question.

The state government is very keen to have the entire Ipswich Motorway upgraded. The Ipswich Motorway is part of the AusLink National network and hence the funding of its upgrade is a federal responsibility.

The Ipswich Motorway is a vital element of the transport network and its importance to the region, the state and the country increases each year. South East Queensland and the western corridor in particular has a bright future, but only if critical infrastructure is provided to support and lead the region's development in a managed and sustainable way.

The proper outcome for Ipswich City, the western corridor and South East Queensland can only be achieved if all levels of government; local, state and commonwealth, work together with a common purpose.

I have worked hard with the federal government to have the Ipswich Motorway upgraded and I have been successful in having the federal government approve significant funding for some major upgrade projects which are progressing well. For example:

Logan Motorway – Ipswich Motorway Interchange Upgrade

The Commonwealth Government has approved \$255m to this desperately needed upgrade. Main Roads has awarded a design and construct contract to Leighton Contractors, the detailed design work is currently underway and it is anticipated that construction works will commence in February.

Wacol to Darra

The Commonwealth have committed \$320m (yet to be formally approved) for the upgrade of this section of the motorway which includes the major interchange with the Centenary highway. Main Roads have selected a contractor to enter into an alliance contract with the department and I am advised that the target cost estimate will be completed in early April. Subject to Commonwealth approval the construction works on this project could then commence soon after.

Woogaroo Creek Bridge

This bridge is required to be completed before the construction of the Logan Motorway – Ipswich Motorway Interchange can commence. I am pleased to advise that this bridge structure is now complete.

I am appreciative of the cooperation and the funding Queensland has received from the federal government on these projects. However, the Member for Bundamba's question specifically relates to the section of the Ipswich Motorway between Gales and Dinmore. This western half of the motorway is a very different story. There has been no funding approved for any projects to upgrade the existing motorway between Gales and Dinmore and there has been no co-operation from the federal ministers on this section of the motorway. The reason is simple; Mr Cameron Thompson MP, the federal Member for Blair.

The greatest cause of delays to the upgrade of the Ipswich Motorway is Mr Thompson and his insistence on a half northern bypass solution (Alternative Northern Corridor – ANC) that is not supported by the state or local government. Not only has Mr Thompson's proposal stopped the upgrade of the existing Ipswich Motorway between Gales and Dinmore, it has also caused additional work and delays to the upgrade of the Logan Motorway/Ipswich Motorway interchange.

Following the completion of a comprehensive, federally-funded planning study for the upgrade of the existing Ipswich Motorway in 2002, it became clear that, as a result of Mr Thompson's interference, federal funds would not be allocated to the upgrade of the existing Ipswich Motorway until his half northern bypass had been investigated.

I agreed that Main Roads would cooperate with the federal government to ensure that Mr Thompson's investigations were undertaken as there was clearly no other way the federal government was going to approve any funding for this section of the Ipswich Motorway.

On behalf of the federal government, Main Roads engaged consulting firm Maunsell Australia to undertake a feasibility study which was completed in April 2005. Main Roads again engaged Maunsell earlier this year to undertake a more detailed second study; this second study is now underway.

The terms of reference for both half northern bypass studies were imposed by the federal government. I agreed with the requirements in the terms of reference which ensured the consultants independence but I strongly disagreed with the Commonwealth's attempts to politicise the projects steering committee and the restrictions on public consultation. At least, following my insistence, the Commonwealth agreed to amend the terms of reference to remove political advisers from the project's steering committee.

The second study has three parts and involves the delivery of three reports by the consultant; namely:

- The technical feasibility report (done)
- The preferred corridor option report (done)
- The business case.

The technical feasibility report was delivered by Maunsell at the end of August 2006. It found that all of the options developed during the business case were technically feasible.

It is interesting to note that following the delivery of the draft technical report on 30 August 2006 the member for Blair was very quick to make a speech in federal parliament. In the federal parliament on 4 September 2006 he espoused the virtues of the Goodna bypass and said "... get out of the way because the Goodna bypass is coming through".

This is the kind of unsubstantiated statement from Mr Thompson that has raised fears and caused emotional and financial stress for many families living in the vicinity of a potential Goodna Bypass corridor. The anxiety caused to many of these families is unnecessary. The report from the consultant which recommends the preferred corridor was delivered in October and the draft business case is now also complete. There is now no reason why the Commonwealth can't make a formal statement committing to a route for the half Goodna Bypass or alternatively committing to the upgrade of the existing Ipswich Motorway.