

Question on Notice

No. 292

Asked on 7 March 2006

MR ROWELL asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (MR LUCAS)—

QUESTION:

Will he provide information regarding accidents on the Cardwell Range over the last five years and, specifically, can the date and cause of each accident be provided in relation to the following: (a) fatal accidents where life was lost, (b) non-fatal accidents where hospitalisation was required and (c) accidents where the vehicle's occupants did not require medical attention?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for his question. I acknowledge his concern about this matter following the tragic death of one of his constituents on this section of the highway.

In regard to the upgrade of the Cardwell Range, \$1m federal funding is committed for the planning study which began in early 2006. Federal government cash flows were for the study to be completed over 2005-06 and 2006-07. The Department of Main Roads advises that the study will be completed well within that timeframe.

The study is to look at what is possible, given the constraints in this area – difficult terrain, high rainfall and environmental and cultural heritage values. There are complex issues involved, including geotechnical, structural, hydraulic and environmental considerations. There are also legislative constraints and a more innovative approach than for southern side (which was completed in 1987) will be needed. Federal environmental legislation – *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999* – will need to be considered, with the road route partially located in a national park. A portion of the new aligned road may also fall within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Planning will finish in early 2007 and will provide a concept estimate of the cost of the upgrade. The state government will then formally seek federal funding to proceed with detailed design and calling of tenders for construction. I can also advise the honourable member that the state government does not determine federal funding priorities on the national highway in Queensland - this is a federal responsibility. The most the state government can do is to try to influence federal funding priorities. I thank the honourable member for his efforts in highlighting the need for additional federal funding and I would urge you and your constituents to assist the state government in our efforts to secure this funding to upgrade the Cardwell Range.

Putting aside the federal election commitment funding for Tully, the federal government had provided only \$210m for the 1,650km of the Bruce Highway between Caboolture and Cairns. With multi-million dollar projects needed along the highway, this is completely inadequate. While some funding is still being prioritised for the later years of the program the Federal Government is not providing sufficient funding to meet existing deficiencies and emerging demands along the corridor.

The level of funding provided under AusLink falls short by some \$500m for the remaining years of AusLink1 (2006-07 to 2008-09) in addressing basic safety and transport outcomes that are paramount to the state's road users and industry.

As well, the federal government is also set to collect about \$13.83 billion in 2005-06 through fuel excise, yet returns only 16% or \$2.2 billion of this to roads throughout Australia.

Unfortunately the Bruce Highway corridor continues to experience significant road trauma with nearly 12% of the State's road fatalities in the last five years occurring on the Bruce Highway. This terrible statistic is confirmed by the Australian Automobile Associations annual report card on the federally-funded AusLink national network – titled AusRAP, which was released last year. This report highlights the fact that Queensland has the most dangerous sections on the federally-funded national road network. The Bruce Highway was the worst corridor in this analysis.

During 2000 to 2004, there were 16 road traffic crashes reported along the Bruce Highway on the Cardwell range. Of the 16 crashes, there were no fatal crashes, five (or 31%) hospitalisation crashes, two (or 13%) medical treatment crashes, no minor injury crashes and nine (or 56%) property damage only crashes.

During 2000 to 2004:

- There was one (or 6%) alcohol related crash resulting in property damage.
- There were three (or 19%) fatigue related crashes. Of these three fatigue related crashes, there was one hospitalisation crash and two property damage only crashes.
- There was one (or 6%) speed related crash. This crash was a property damage only crash.
- There were two crashes (or 13%) with the contributing factor of Inexperience. Of these two Inexperience type crashes, there was one hospitalisation crash and one property damage only crash.
- There was one crash (or 6%) with the contributing factor of Age (lack of perception). This crash was a hospitalisation crash.
- There were six crashes (or 38%) with the contributing factor of Rain/Wet Road. Of these six Rain/Wet Road crashes, there was one hospitalisation crash, one medical treatment crash and four property damage only crashes.
- There were two crashes (or 13%) with the contributing factor of Inattention. Both crashes were property damage only crashes.
- There was one crash (or 6%) with the contributing factor of Roadworks. This crash was a hospitalisation crash.
- There were two crashes (or 13%) with the contributing factor of Mechanical Vehicle Defect. Of these Mechanical Vehicle Defect crashes, one was a hospitalisation crash and one was a property damage only crash.
- More than one contributing factor could be attributed to a crash and therefore the percentages above will not total 100%.

However the department advises that figures for 2005 cannot be provided as all the crash contributing circumstances have not been finalised. This is due to time it takes for crashes to be reported to Police and for Police to complete investigations, finalise reports, and collect additional information from other sources eg coroner, pathologist, and government medical laboratory. However, fatal crash data are partially entered daily and hospitalisation crashes can take up to 3 months to finalise.

I am also advised that due to the sensitive nature of this information, crash dates have not been provided.