

## **Question on Notice**

**No. 885**

**Asked on 23 May 2006**

MS LEE LONG asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (MR LUCAS) -

QUESTION:

With reference to the Herberton – Irvinebank main roads –

What has been the total amount of maintenance funding paid to the Mareeba Shire Council in (a) 2000-01, (b) 2001-02, (c) 2002-03, (d) 2003-04, (e) 2004-05 and (f) 2005-06?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Tablelands for the question.

The road between Herberton and Irvinebank forms part of the declared Herberton-Petford Road. At least a quarter of the Herberton-Petford Road is sealed, with the remainder a formed gravel road.

Queensland has a vast State-controlled Road Network of almost 34 000km, the longest of any state in Australia. While progress is being made in reducing the length of the unsealed network across the state, it is a very challenging task. In 1980, 39% of the network was unsealed. It is quite an achievement that now only 18% is unsealed.

Some \$22m was spent in 2004-05 on extending the bitumen seal on state-controlled roads in North Queensland. Decisions on funding priorities are made based on the role roads play in the overall network: whether they provide a mainly local benefit, a wider regional benefit or have a state-wide strategic role, particularly a role in providing an interstate freight and passenger route.

Most unsealed roads generally carry much lower traffic volumes and their benefits are often restricted to a local area. The state government has responsibility for the largest road network of any state in Australia and must carefully prioritise funding to address the many challenges across this network.

The state-controlled network includes a high proportion of single-lane sealed roads which have a higher priority for funding to carry out widening works. These roads carry higher traffic volumes and play a wider regional or state strategic role. They also have safety issues associated with their higher traffic volumes and mix of traffic types. These range from a high proportion of heavy vehicles servicing the mining and grazing industries, to tourist traffic unfamiliar with such road conditions and local traffic.

Sealing the Herberton to Irvinebank section is only being considered in the much longer term. Sealing further westwards, between Irvinebank and Petford, is not being considered. It will be maintained as a formed gravel road.

In the short to medium term, the Department of Main Roads strategy for gravel roads, (such as this road) is to maintain them as well as possible, taking into account existing traffic volumes, and carry out minor priority upgrading projects to target areas that can deliver the greatest benefits for local communities, when funds become available.

Main Roads has formed a partnership with the Local Government Association of Queensland, called the Roads Alliance, to share management and decision making about funding allocations for some roads.

Under this initiative, some state and local government funding has been earmarked for local roads, which serve a wider purpose and benefit a large number of people, when compared to other similar local roads on the network. The roads may be part of the state-controlled or local government road network. These roads are known as Local Roads of Regional Significance (LRRS). Regional Road Groups, comprised of representatives from relevant local governments and Main Roads, manage these roads and decide on future upgrading projects and the maintenance strategy for this network.

The Herberton to Petford Road has been classified as an LRRS and is now managed by the Far North Queensland Regional Road Group (FNQRRG). State government funding of \$100 000 has been approved in 2005-06 under this arrangement for minor works on the road. This work, which is additional to routine maintenance funding provided by the state government, included grading, gravel resheeting and signage, and was carried out on the section of road between Watsonville and Irvinebank in late October 2005.

Like many North Queensland Roads, this road was damaged by Cyclone Monica and works are expected to be completed by the end of July to restore this link. Main Roads will monitor future maintenance works on this road to ensure that works undertaken are compliant with Main Roads standards. Overall performance by councils and contractors in undertaking Main Roads work is subject to regular performance review by Main Roads' inspectors and engineers. If a safety issue were found to exist, this would be raised with council as a matter of priority.

Total funding of \$1.1m has been provided for Herberton-Petford Road over the period 2000-01 to 2005-06 for maintenance works, with a further \$479,000 provided for construction and rehabilitation.

A total of \$45.7m in funding has been provided for state-controlled roadworks undertaken throughout Mareeba Shire over the same period. This comprises \$26.1m for maintenance works and \$18.6m for construction and rehabilitation.