Question on Notice

No. 924

Asked on 26 May 2006

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

QUESTION:

With reference to claims made that a Nerang family were forced to sell their home, without proper compensation, when it was 'repossessed' by the Department of Main Roads to make way for the upgrade of the Nerang South (Nielsens Road) interchange – What happened, exactly, in relation to this property including the funding arrangements for the upgrade project?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Mudgeeraba for the question and acknowledge her strong advocacy for the much needed upgrade of the Pacific Motorway, including the interchanges.

In regard to the funding arrangements, I can advise that after first raising the issue of 50/50 state/federal funding for the Pacific Motorway upgrade with the Federal Roads Minister Senator Ian Campbell in May 2004, I repeatedly advised my federal counterparts that the upgrade of the Pacific Motorway is critical to the region as it is the main transportation link between Brisbane, the Gold Coast and onto Sydney.

The Federal Government has recognised the strategic national importance of the Pacific Motorway and identified it as part of the Australian National Land Transport Network under AusLink, but still has failed to match the state funding for the $1.5 billion upgrade required over the next eight to ten years between Stewart Road, Mudgeeraba and Mount Gravatt Capalaba Road.

As it was clearly unacceptable to delay planning for the upgrade and interchange improvements any longer, in July 2005, the state government allocated $392m over five years, towards our plan to fix the Pacific Motorway between Brisbane and Tugun. Construction work is subject to a matching contribution from the federal government which to date has not been forthcoming.

Mr Costello trumpeted in his Federal Budget speech that his government was delivering a further $160m in extra funding to NSW for the Pacific Highway. This is in addition to the current ten-year $160m a year matching federal funding commitment to the Pacific Highway in NSW. But once again, Canberra's coffers held nothing for Gold Coast roads – it has now been over three years since Canberra announced any funding for major road projects on the Gold Coast, committing $120m capped funding for the Tugun Bypass. The four local federal and four state sitting coalition members need to ask themselves why roads north of the border are ignored by their federal counterparts.

As a result of the work being undertaken now, if federal funding was forthcoming, Main Roads would be in a position to carry out the much needed early works such as the Nerang South (Nielsens Road) interchange, closely followed by the Mudgeeraba Robina and Reedy Creek interchange works and the widening of the Nerang to Tugun section to link up with the Tugun Bypass, which is on track for completion in late 2008.

I urge the Gold Coast Liberal and National Party politicians to put party politics aside and stand up for the real interests of their constituents to improve the safety and travel times for Gold Coast motorists who use the M1. Liberal MPs on the Gold Coast on safe margins have one more federal budget to secure funding for the Pacific Motorway before the next federal election. Until then, Gold Coast motorists can rightly ask what these elected federal representatives have achieved for them.

While refusing to stand up for Queensland's fair share of federal tax dollars for the motorway, the local coalition members and candidates have used the planned upgrade and the resumptions that are needed to get the work done, as a political football. In their efforts to deflect attention from their own ineffectiveness in securing a federal contribution for the Pacific Motorway upgrade, they are badly letting down the interests of their constituents.

The department advises that during the early design phase for improvements to the Nerang South (Nielsens Road) interchange, a number of properties were identified as being required. Affected property owners were consulted, with three properties being acquired by agreement in late 2003, based on the department's hardship policy. The state government has long standing and well established processes for property acquisition.

I am advised more detailed planning took place last year, Main Roads recommenced consultation with property owners and started the acquisition process so land could be proclaimed prior to road construction.

In regard to the property in question, I am advised Main Roads first met with the property owners in 2003 and has negotiated with them in regard to the resumption process and alternative arrangements. As part of the property resumption process, Main Roads' officers engage independent property valuers to carry out market-value assessments and also allow for owners to engage their own valuer at Main Roads' cost.

As with the Honourable Member for Mudgeeraba, I have no intention of using people who are affected by road upgrades to score cheap political points. This is already a very unsettling time for any homeowner. While I apologise to anyone who is affected by resumptions, I would be apologising to a lot more people who are affected by the state of Pacific Motorway between Nerang and Tugun if the state government did not proceed now with the planning, ahead of a funding commitment by the Federal Government.

I am advised that in mid-May, Main Roads entered into a contract of sale with the owners, and that at all times, the department has displayed professionalism and integrity when dealing with these particular property owners as with any other resumption matter.