

Question on Notice

No. 528

Asked on 15 March 2007

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the Member for Bowman, Andrew Laming's disgraceful taxpayer funded four page colour liftout in The Bayside Bulletin dated 13 March 2007 -

- (1) How much has the Federal Government generated in the Redland Shire via the fuel tax since Dr Laming was elected?
- (2) How much federal funding has Dr Laming delivered for roads in the Redland Shire?
- (3) How much state funding has the Beattie Government delivered for roads in the Redland Shire?
- (4) Is he aware of any public protests or comments made by Dr Laming when the Federal Government wasted \$1.2b on a \$2.3b proposed upgrade of the Ipswich Motorway when the State Government, the State Opposition and the RACQ had stated that the preferred option was a \$1.1b upgrade?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Cleveland for the question.

The Department of Main Roads recently received correspondence from some Redland Shire residents, asking how much money is actually spent on the roads. One constituent even went so far as to say that he had received advice from Dr Andrew Laming MP, federal Member for Bowman, of a federal government offer of \$3m to upgrade Mt Cotton Road.

I wish this were true. Regretfully, the only thing Main Roads can confirm is that it has not received any suggestion of a \$3m federal government offer to upgrade Mt Cotton Road, but would invite Dr Laming to provide documentation to verify the information he provided to his constituent. Main Roads would be happy to examine this advice and welcomes an offer for greater federal funding for Queensland's roads.

Dr Laming would be well aware that the AusLink Strategic Regional Roads Program only permits funding requests from local governments – in this case, Redland Shire Council. There is no provision for states to make specific funding requests under this program.

Dr Laming also suggested that Redland Shire Council considered Mt Cotton Road as a funding priority. This is most confusing, as Redland Shire Council neither approached Main Roads nor made a submission regarding funding for Mt Cotton Road under the AusLink Strategic Regional Roads Program.

The reason why council decided not to approach Main Roads, nor made a submission regarding funding for Mt Cotton Road, is because any project on Mt Cotton Road would have competed for AusLink funding with council's own local government priority road projects. Council instead requested funding for the duplication of Rickertt Road under this program.

Let's set the scene by checking how much the federal government spends on roads in Queensland, Australia's fastest growing state.

The amount of fuel excise to be collected by the federal government in 2006-07 is expected to be \$14.65bn. Only 17.6%, which amounts to just \$2.58bn, will be returned to Australian roads. But the most surprising statistic is the amount Queensland is set to receive: only \$560m. \$560m for Queensland roads out of \$14.65bn collected in federal fuel excise.

Motorists in Redland Shire can expect to pay around \$90m in fuel tax alone, and there is little return from the federal government. Under the AusLink Roads to Recovery Program, the federal government will provide \$1.008m to Redland Shire in 2006-07. Under the AusLink Strategic Regional Roads Program, Dr Laming failed to deliver any project funding for Redland Shire – remembering that there is no provision for states to make specific funding requests.

Other federal government road funding is provided in the form of untied Financial Assistance Grants. Redland Shire will receive \$3.96m in untied grants in 2006-07 for roads and other purposes.

So, in summary, while Redland Shire residents will pay approximately \$90m in federal fuel tax this year alone, they will receive only \$4.968m in federal funding for roads. This is a return of less than 6% - that is, for every dollar paid in federal fuel tax, Redlands Shire residents only get back 6 cents for their roads.

In other words, Dr Laming's advocacy at a federal level is so unsuccessful that while across the country, Australians receive 17.6% of federal fuel tax back for roads, Redlands residents only receive a pitiful 6% of what they pay.

It should be emphasised that the current federal fuel excise is 38 cents on every litre of petrol sold.

Keeping this in mind, let's check how much state funding the Beattie government has delivered for roads in Redland Shire.

The state government is allocating \$26m in 2007-08, plus a further \$109m to 2011, in funding for local road improvements in Redland Shire. By way of comparison, the Beattie government in 2007-08 will spend five times what the federal government spent on Redland Shire roads in 2006-07.

Let's make another comparison. The Beattie government estimates that revenue from Queensland vehicle registrations in 2006-07 is expected to reach \$846m, but will spend almost double that amount, \$1.5bn, on works to maintain and improve state-controlled roads for the benefit of all Queensland road users.

The last state budget (6 June 2006) also included a number of new projects on Mt Cotton Road and \$2m in funding over three years (2006-08) under the state's 'Safer Roads Sooner' Program. This money was allocated to general road safety improvements, including the removal of roadside hazards, the installation of guardrails and improving line markings on Mt Cotton Road.

A number of Mt Cotton Road improvement projects have recently been completed, including the widening of the intersection of Mt Cotton, Duncan and Lyndon Roads and the provision of right-hand turns for the state government's Driver Training Centre and the Great Southern Garden of Remembrance. Main Roads has also provided \$2.5m to improve four intersections along Mt Cotton Road at Hillview, Seaview, Double Jump and Mount View Roads.

As I have clearly demonstrated, the Beattie government's commitment to Queensland's roads is considerable, especially when compared to federal road funding allocations for Queensland.

In terms of public protests or comments made by Dr Laming regarding the \$2.3b proposed Goodna Bypass of the Ipswich Motorway, Main Roads is not aware of any official comments made by the Member for Bowman. It can only be assumed that Dr Laming supports the federal government's decision to spend \$2.3b on a bypass rather than \$1.1bn upgrading the existing motorway – an extra \$1.2bn on an option that is not supported by the state government, state opposition, Brisbane City Council, Ipswich City Council or the RACQ.

Remember: that's \$1.2bn that cannot be spent on important road projects in the Redlands or elsewhere across Queensland.