

Question on Notice

No. 535

Asked on 15 March 2007

MR O'BRIEN asked the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads (MR LUCAS) –

QUESTION:

- (1) What upgrading will occur on the Peninsula Developmental Road this year?
- (2) Is there any contribution from the Australian Government to upgrades on the Peninsula Road this year?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Cook for the question.

The state government recognises the importance of the 528km Peninsula Developmental Road, which extends from Lakeland to the Comalco lease boundary, 26km east of Weipa, and the role it plays in the economic development of the Cape York Peninsula area.

Main Roads advises that almost \$21.6m in state funding is being spent in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to continue projects to extend bitumen on the Peninsula Developmental Road to upgrade floodways and carry out gravel resheeting.

Construction is expected to start after the wet season on a suite of state-funded projects.

These include:

- sealing 3.45km near the Telecom Tower, between Coen and Weipa, including the upgrade of two floodways, with construction expected to start in April, weather permitting
- sealing 5.3km between Mein and the Cape York turn-off, north of Coen, with construction expected to start in August, weather permitting
- sealing 4.5km between Batavia turn-off and Sudley, north of Coen, with construction expected to start in August
- gravel re-sheeting work at various locations between Laura and Weipa.

I am advised that by the end of 2007, the length of the sealed road will have increased to 106.2km, largely through state government funded projects.

Apart from Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements (NDRA) funding to repair damage caused by Cyclone Monica in 2006 and Cyclone Ingrid in 2005, 75% of which is funded by the federal government, there is no funding contribution by the federal government for upgrading projects on the Peninsula Developmental Road this year.

In fact, the federal government has spent around \$10m on the Peninsula Developmental Road in the five-year period from June 2001 to June 2006, compared with a \$41.1m investment by the state government in upgrading and maintaining the road for the same period. The federal government contribution includes \$5m under the Roads of National Importance (RoNI) funding program, which it abandoned in 2004 after funding only two projects. In addition, \$10m of flood damage repairs was carried out following Cyclone Monica last year, 75% of which was funded by the federal government.

Main Roads recently helped Cook Shire Council prepare a \$20m funding submission to the federal government, under the Strategic Regional Roads Program, to seal a 20km section between Lakeland and Laura. Sealing of this section is the most cost effective use of funding and, once completed, will leave only 10km of unsealed road between Lakeland and Laura.

The state government set aside \$10m to match the federal government funding. However, despite these efforts, the federal government refused the project. The state government remains committed to providing the funding towards this project, for which planning work has been completed. However, due to a lack of matching federal funding, the sealing work will only cover 15km, not the proposed 30km. State funding is included in the 2006-07 to 2010-11 Roads Implementation Program, with the work to be carried out during 2008-09 to 2010-11.

Main Roads is currently updating the "Peninsula Developmental Road Overview Investment Strategy" for presentation to the federal Department of Transport and Regional Services in the coming months. The review aims to address several issues, including the scope of work required to reduce the time of closure after a rainfall event and to upgrade the road to a sealed standard.

The state government is committed to progressively upgrading the Peninsula Developmental Road. However, this task is beyond state government resources, given funding demands for other strategic routes in North Queensland, without the support and matching commitment from the federal government.

I will continue to lobby the federal government to provide matching funding to continue the upgrading of the road, so that progress can be made more quickly.