

Question on Notice

No. 592

Asked on 18 April 2007

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the Federal Government's continuing noise about cost blowouts on road projects and lack of co-operation from the states on funding-

- (1) What projects are the Queensland and the Federal Governments jointly funding?
- (2) What projects has Canberra refused to commit to?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Pumicestone for the question.

It is well recognised that Queensland has the worst national highway network in Australia. The lack of federal funding for the national network in Queensland has been recognised by the *Courier-Mail* in its report *The Roads Solution* and by the RACQ, Queensland's peak motoring organisation. The RACQ has said that:

"Queensland's national highways have been so grossly neglected under successive administrations that a special case exists for massive catch-up expenditure by the Commonwealth"

and

"much more needs to be invested to bring National Network highways in this state up to a safe, acceptable standard."

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) has similarly argued that:

"only the Australian Government has been slow to meet the identified need for additional funding for transport infrastructure in Queensland"

and

"The LGAQ...encourages the Federal Government to increase its efforts in tackling south-east Queensland's major transport infrastructure issues and the parlous state of the national highway in this State."

The Australian Road Assessment Program (AusRAP) undertook an independent assessment of the national network in each state and territory on behalf of the Australian peak motoring organisations. It concluded that:

- Queensland has the longest length of deficient national highway in Australia.
- 60% of the national network in Queensland received only 2 or 3 stars, compared to 53% Australia-wide (2 or 3 stars means major deficiencies in the road).
- Only 40% of the national network in Queensland is rated 4 star compared to 47% Australia-wide.
- 87% of the 1,728km of the Bruce Highway received only a 2 or 3 star rating.

- Queensland was the only state where no sections of the national network were given a 'best' rating.

Building on this work, the South East Queensland Council of Mayors released a report *The Drive for Better Roads in South East Queensland*. The report states:

- Victoria is receiving 22.1% of AusLink National Network funding but has only 13.5% of the national vehicle kilometers of travel on the National Highway System (NHS). In contrast, Queensland is receiving 24.1% of AusLink National Network funding with 28.8% of vehicle kilometers of travel on the NHS.
- If AusLink funding was distributed on the basis of the travel task on the NHS then Queensland would be receiving an additional \$350m over the five year AusLink program.
- Queensland motorists face the greatest risk of accident on the National Network of any state.

The federal government is solely responsible for funding the national highway system and is solely responsible for its poor state. However, there are other road links that were previously referred to as Roads of National Importance, which should be funded on a 50/50 basis by the state and federal governments. In relation to the Honourable Member's specific question, there are currently three projects that are jointly funded:

- Tugun Bypass: total cost of this vital 7km link will be \$543m, \$423m of which will be provided by the state with a fixed contribution of \$120m from the federal government.
- Townsville Ring Road (Stages 2 and 3): total cost is \$119.3m, including \$39.8m in state funding.
- Planning for the Port of Brisbane Motorway: total cost is \$3m, with \$1.2m from the federal government and \$1.8m from the state.

In relation to the second part of your question regarding projects for which the Australian Government has refused to commit funding, there are numerous funding proposals which have been submitted to Canberra without success. A list of key projects and the date of rejection by Canberra follows:

Project	Requested funding	Date of rejection
Pacific Motorway (Gateway Motorway to Tugun)	\$750m (50% of \$1.5bn)	On 10 January 2007, Minister Vaile advised Minister Lucas that funding was not available under the current program.
Brisbane Urban Corridor – noise amelioration	\$10.0m	On 15 January 2007, DoTaRS advised that funding was not available under the current program.
Brisbane Urban Corridor – pavement strengthening in the metropolitan area	\$30.5m	On 15 January 2007, DoTaRS advised that funding was not available under the current program.
Cunningham Highway (Yamanto Interchange)	\$60m	On 24 April 2007, Minister Lloyd advised Minister Lucas that funding was not available under the current program.
Bruce Highway (Farrellys	\$3.2m	On 15 January 2007, DoTaRS advised

Lane) – intersection upgrade and associated 4 laning		funding was not available under the current program.
Bruce Highway (Cardwell Range North)	\$88m	The proposal was submitted on 3 April 2007 but there has been no response to date.
Bruce Highway (Burdekin road safety audit, safety improvements)	\$7.5m	On 12 April 2005, DoTaRS advised these works were to compete with other priorities for available funds under the current program. However, the available funds are allocated to other projects.
Flinders Highway (Townsville Port Access Road)	\$95m (50% of \$190m)	On 15 January 2007, the federal Department of Transport and Regional Services (DoTaRS) advised that this section of highway does not currently form part of the declared AusLink Network and is not considered eligible for funding. The project was resubmitted on 19 March 2007.
Beaudesert Road – Acacia Ridge open level crossing	\$54.9m	Minister Vaile advised on 1 March 2007 that additional funds were unavailable but the initial offer of \$25m remained.
Planning projects		
Brisbane Urban Corridor – Gateway Arterial North	\$6.0m	On 15 January 2007, DoTaRS advised that funding was not available under the current program.
Western Brisbane Transport Network Investigation	\$8.6m	On 2 April 2007, Minister Lloyd advised that the Australian Government would not provide financial support.
Warrego Highway (Toowoomba bypass)	\$13.0m (\$10m approved)	On 11 April 2007, DoTaRS advised that no additional funding beyond the current approval of \$10m was available.
Warrego Highway (Roma to Mitchell)	\$0.7m	On 1 March 2007, DoTaRS advised that funding was not available under the current program.
Bruce Highway – Realignment of southern approach to Gin Gin – planning	\$1.2m	On 15 January 2007, DoTaRS advised that funding was not available under the current program.

The Honourable Member will be particularly interested in submissions for federal funds for the Sunshine Coast area currently under consideration but for which the Australian Government has not yet approved funding. These include:

- an additional \$3.3m to complete planning of the Bruce Highway upgrade between Cooroy and Curra, including the Gympie bypass
- an additional \$28.2m to upgrade the existing Bruce Highway to a four-lane standard through Gympie

- \$5.5m to address urgent pavement rehabilitation needs on the Bruce Highway north of Maroochydore Road
- \$142.8m to upgrade the Uhlmann Road – Caboolture section of the Bruce Highway to six lanes.

Considering the overwhelming consensus about the poor condition of Queensland's AusLink Network, it was expected that the federal government would announce additional funding for improvements in its 2007-08 budget.

However, the recent federal budget revealed the cruel hoax that has been perpetrated on the people of Queensland. Apart from the \$2.3bn Goodna Bypass that no one wants, the federal government has not allocated any money in their budget for major new road projects until 2009-10.

That means that even if the federal government agrees to fund one of the urgent projects listed above, the money won't be made available until the last year of the term of the next federal government – two years away.

This delay totally ignores the extraordinary population growth that Queensland, and south east Queensland in particular, is experiencing and the neglect of the national network in this state.

This is particularly disappointing given that Queenslanders will inject an estimated \$2.88bn in federal fuel tax into Canberra's coffers next year alone. Only \$560m will be returned to the state in roads funding – less than 20 cents in the dollar. The Beattie Government will spend almost as much (an estimated \$520m) providing Queensland motorists with an 8 cent per litre fuel subsidy.

The Queensland Government will collect \$846m in vehicle registration in 2006-07 but spend \$1.5bn on roads. If Queensland can return 1.8 times the registration revenue it collects to roads, why can't Canberra return a fair share of its massive fuel tax take?

Queenslanders have every right to ask why their federal coalition members of Parliament have been missing in action on this issue. This neglect is a direct result of their failure to advocate for their communities to receive the road funding they deserve.

The requests listed above, totalling \$1.3bn, are for new urgent projects, identified since the AusLink Bilateral Agreement was signed in November 2005 and additional funds for existing approved projects. This does not include a raft of other projects on the Bruce Highway, Pacific Motorway, Gore Highway and other parts of the AusLink Network that will be submitted for funding under AusLink 2. As an example, it has already been identified that between \$2bn and \$3bn is required to bring the Bruce Highway from Sarina to Cairns up to scratch.

As such, the total bill that Queensland will deliver to the federal government under AusLink 2 will be in the many, many billions of dollars – and that will be just to bring the AusLink Network up to the standard taken for granted in other parts of Australia. It will be up to the federal government – and federal coalition members – to deliver the road funding that Queensland needs and deserves.