

Question on Notice

No. 844

Asked on Tuesday, 5 June 2007

MR FOLEY asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (MR LUCAS)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the Tilt Train—

1. What mileage, of the approximate 720km between Rockhampton and Townsville, is available for the train to travel at speeds of 160km/h and what are the speed limits that apply to the balance?
2. What length of track has been upgraded to allow speeds of at least 100km/h on the Cairns to Townsville section?

ANSWER:

I have been advised that;

Approximately 15km of track between Rockhampton and Townsville is speed-boarded for 160km/h operation, with an additional 85km of track operating at speeds in excess of 100km/h. The remainder of the track is limited to 100km/h or less for reasons such as the alignment of the track.

The maximum operating speed for all trains on Queensland Rail's (QR's) Townsville to Cairns corridor is 80km/h. The exception to this operating speed is a section of track, approximately 27km from Townsville to Purono, which is currently boarded for a maximum speed of 100km/h.

In 1998 QR scoped the Townsville to Cairns Track Renewal Project, at a cost of approximately \$67m. The primary objective of the renewal project was to upgrade the track from Townsville to Cairns to enable intermodal competitiveness on the corridor and allow safe passage of freight traffic at the current operating speed of 80km/h. This upgrade focused on improving infrastructure performance through formation strengthening, additional drainage, renewed ballast profile, enhanced flood protection and improved operational safety through the replacement of cane railway diamonds.

Details of Queensland and Commonwealth Government expenditure on the North Coast Line since 1999 are outlined in Attachment A.

ATTACHMENT A

EXPENDITURE ON THE NORTH COAST LINE SINCE 1999

Since 1999 the Queensland Government has spent a total of \$369m on renewing the NCL, with approximately \$281m of this commercially funded by Queensland Rail (QR) and the remainder funded under the Transport Services Contract (Rail Infrastructure) (TSC(RI)) (1999-2006).

In addition, the Government, through the TSC(RI) (1999-2006) has funded numerous other works on the NCL, including:

Townsville New Station & Direct North Connection - \$11.745m

Townsville - Stuart Resignalling - \$7.58m

Macquarie Creek Bridge Upgrade - \$2.95m

Construction of Byellee Angle - \$3.39m

From 1999-2006, \$318m was also spent on corridor maintenance (including overheads) of the NCL.

The North Coast Line (NCL) has been identified by the Commonwealth Government in its AusLink White Paper as a key rail corridor and a number of requests for funding assistance under the provisions of AusLink have been made since 2004 for works on the NCL. Specifically, in October 2005 AusLink funding was sought for three deviation projects, Woondum deviation, Owanyilla/Mary River/Mungar realignment and Glanmire deviation. The AusLink Brisbane-Cairns corridor study identified these projects as impacting adversely on aspects of rail competitiveness such as transit times. However, the Commonwealth advised that funding was not available and as a result funding has not been provided. The former Commonwealth Minister for Transport and Regional Services, Mr Warren Truss, has advised that these projects remain under Commonwealth consideration should funding become available.

This is consistent with the Commonwealth's general approach which has seen Queensland receive less than 1% of the Commonwealth rail funding allocation despite having 20% of the Australian rail network.