

Question on Notice

No. 1593

Asked on Wednesday 29 October 2008

MR HOPPER ASKED THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT, TRADE, EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (MR MICKEL) —

QUESTION:

With reference to the collision between a school bus and coal train on 5 June 2008, in which six year old Ben Kruger tragically lost his life—

Will he give consideration to the installation of flashing lights at the Pirrinuan-Apunyal Road level crossing as a memorial to Ben Kruger so that his family's devastating loss will have made a real difference to rail safety?

ANSWER:

Firstly, I wish to publicly express my condolences to the family of Ben Kruger who was tragically killed when the school bus he was travelling in collided with a loaded coal train at Baining near Dalby in June this year.

I am advised immediately following the incident, Queensland Transport as the Rail Safety Regulator conducted an independent investigation to determine the causal factors of this tragedy. The investigation was chaired by an independent investigator from Victoria and the report was publicly released on 16 October 2008.

In June 2008, during the independent investigation, the Pirrinuan-Apunyal Road crossing was re-assessed using the Australian Level Crossing Assessment Model. Queensland, as do all other Australian jurisdictions, conducts its rail level crossing safety assessments using this model. The model identifies the risks at level crossings and determines the most appropriate controls to mitigate those risks. The re-assessment determined that the protection installed at Pirrinuan-Apunyal Road level crossing aligns with the requirements for this type of crossing.

Ben's death was a tragic occurrence, and sadly regardless of what protection is available at level crossings nationally, fatalities continue to occur at interfaces between road and rail. The independent investigation findings and the level crossing re-assessment, utilising the nationally accepted assessment model, did not indicate that additional protection such as flashing lights are required at this crossing.

The State government is committed to improving safety at level crossings and has committed long term funding for safety assessments and improvements for more than 1300 level crossings on the non-commercial rail network (which covers the entire network except the dedicated coal and mineral lines). This program commenced in 1999 and has been extended to 2013. \$20 million has been incurred to date with a further \$11 million committed to the initiative.