

## **Question on Notice**

**No. 1681**

**Asked on 11 November 2008**

MR WETTENHALL asked the Minister for Main Roads and Local Government (MR PITT)

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### **QUESTION:**

With the wet season in Far North Queensland approaching, will he advise the House of progress on works being undertaken on the Bruce Highway between Townsville and Cairns and whether such works will reduce the impact of flooding?

### **ANSWER:**

I thank the Member for Barron River for the question.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to share the good progress being made on flood immunity projects on the Bruce Highway between Townsville and Cairns.

In September 2008, traffic started driving on a new 3.04km stretch of upgraded highway between Tokalon Road and Lannercost Street, just south of Ingham. This \$30m federally-funded project is the first of a number of works currently being delivered to reduce flood closures on the Bruce Highway and improve safety and efficiency.

The \$172.4m Bruce Highway upgrade just south of Tully is progressing well ahead of its originally scheduled December 2009 completion date and the Tully Alliance team is aiming to have the road open to traffic in early 2009. This project has involved the realignment of 15.5km of flood-prone highway and 6 new bridges to improve connectivity through one of the wettest areas in Australia.

Excellent progress is being made on the construction of the new \$48m federally-funded Mulgrave River Bridge, south of Gordonvale.

Work on the 15 bridge piers is almost complete, one of the two abutments is complete and the majority of girders have been placed on the bridge piers (as of early December).

At the end of November, a 550 tonne crane arrived on site to install the bridge beams.

As a result of the progress made to date, the bridge will be open to traffic in June 2009, weather permitting, six months ahead of the original completion date.

This is great news for the local community, motorists, tourists, the freight sector and industry in the far north.

The existing Mulgrave River bridge is highly prone to flooding so it is tremendous to see construction running ahead of schedule.

The new bridge will stand five metres higher than the present one and is located on a better road alignment, about 30 metres upstream from the existing highway.

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In addition to these construction projects, a flood planning study, valued at \$5m, has been commissioned under the AusLink \$220m Bruce Highway Upgrade package to investigate options for reducing flood closures of the highway across the Herbert River Flood plains. The Department of Main Roads has now engaged expert hydrologists, designers and community engagement consultants to work with the Ingham community to determine the best road option for improving flood immunity.

It is important to note that providing a flood proof Bruce Highway through North Queensland is not feasible. The works underway are designed to deliver reduced flood closure times to an annual average of 10 hours, with no more than 48 hours closure in a Q50 event. These standards were developed in conjunction with local government and industry to achieve an acceptable outcome, within reasonable cost and become part of the National Highway Investment Strategy for the Bruce Highway. The north Queensland community will soon see the benefits of this improved route and better connectivity for motorists and industry in North Queensland.