

Question on Notice

No. 290

Asked on 22 March 2011

MR WENDT asked the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State (MR LUCAS) –

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise how much damage was caused to the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail during the January 2011 flood and what recovery work is being undertaken to restore the trail back to its previous condition?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Ipswich West for his question.

Following floods, community recovery is the highest priority, with efforts directed to restoring normal community functioning as quickly as possible. Community recovery includes the restoration of community assets such as land for public recreation and active trails.

Sadly, every town along the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT) corridor, from Yarraman to Wulkuraka, has been directly affected by the recent floods with extensive stretches of landscape drastically altered.

I recently announced the 15km extension to the BVRT from Blackbutt to Yarraman. This will make it the longest rail trail in the country, bringing it to a total length of 161km.

This new section was launched at a working bee on 11 March 2011 at Yarraman. The working bee cleared the flood-ravaged grounds of the old Yarraman station and Yarraman Weir Walk, which will become the new trail head of the BVRT.

On 18 February 2011, the 30km Moore to Blackbutt section was reopened with the assistance of the South Burnett Regional Council, the BVRT Ambassadors and the local community. Their volunteer efforts helped our team to clear flood debris and to achieve revegetation of the creek banks adjacent to the trail.

Recent disaster reconstruction and recovery efforts in Australia and overseas, have focused on actively helping people rebuild their homes and supporting their communities to rebuild vital facilities and infrastructure.

The 2009 Victorian bushfire recovery plan recognised the importance of rebuilding and creating new community assets in devastated areas. The rebuilding included sports and recreation facilities, parks and gardens, walking and cycling trails, tourism marketing campaigns, infrastructure projects and new facilities in National Parks. I note that the Australian Government provided \$13.2 million to develop a new 134km rail trail, the Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail, into one of the impacted areas. I am examining how the lessons in Victoria might be applied here.

All the Local Governments along the trail, including Ipswich City Council, Somerset Regional Council, South Burnett Regional Council and Toowoomba Regional Council have flood damage to sections of the trail.

Some work involves the repairing of fencing and sections that were washed away. Other work will involve major structures like the Redbank Creek Bridge at Esk, which will cost about \$400 000 to replace and the historic Emu Creek Bridge near Harlin, which was decimated and is beyond repair.

Estimated damage to the BVRT is extensive, with the bill for major reconstruction and repair of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail almost \$2 million.

It will be several months before we are able to repair the more seriously damaged sections of the rail trail, but it is vital these sections are reopened as soon as possible. The reopening of the trail itself will help economic recovery as tourism recovers and outdoor recreation activities resume.

The task to repair and restore the BVRT does not lie entirely with the Department of Local Government and Planning.

As Chair of the BVRT Steering Committee I would like to thank you for your work, as well as our local Council partners and members of the local community and the ongoing commitment to this project.

We will continue to support and assist our partners to find the funds required to repair and reopen the BVRT.