

Question on Notice

No. 777

Asked on Tuesday, 24 May 2011

MR MALONE asked the Minister for Main Roads, Fisheries and Marine Infrastructure (MR WALLACE) -

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise what measures have been taken to identify conditions on the Bruce Highway between Rockhampton and Mackay, and the Peak Downs Highway between Mackay and Moranbah, that have the potential to cause serious accidents and of those advise (a) what projects have been undertaken, (b) what projects have been identified but not undertaken and (c) what funding has been allocated to each of these projects?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Mirani for the question.

Unfortunately we are playing catch-up on the Bruce Highway after the 12 years of the Howard Government when an average of only \$100 million a year was spent on this federally funded highway. I am pleased to say that the Gillard Government has now increased that spending to \$480 million a year – or nearly five times what the Howard Government gave. This is not ancient history, it is why the Bruce is in the state it is now in.

We need much more funding from the Gillard Government because the Howard Government ignored North Queensland so completely. The Member for Mirani was a State MP through all the Howard years and he should say what he did to get funding for the Bruce during that time.

The Bligh Government is committed to improving safety for motorists travelling on the Bruce Highway and Peak Downs Highway.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads is scheduled to commence construction on a new overtaking lane and the extension of an existing lane between Sarina and Mackay in late 2011 at a cost of \$4 million. These projects were identified as part of the Building Australia Program's safety initiative and will improve safety on this stretch of the Bruce Highway.

In addition to this, the department has also secured a further \$4.3 million for two more overtaking lanes between Sarina and Mackay. Everyone knows what it is like to sit behind a caravan or a large truck without being able to overtake. These new lanes will provide places for motorists to safely overtake without having to take unnecessary risks.

The department is also working shoulder-to-shoulder with the Gillard Government to address fatigue management on this critical section of the Bruce Highway. The department will be constructing a new heavy vehicle rest area at Waverley Creek with enough parking for 14 B-double vehicles, at a cost of just under \$2.5 million. The existing rest area facilities will also be upgraded with rehabilitation of the road surface, construction of parking areas, upgrading the toilets and installing lighting.

In addition to this, the department is rehabilitating and sealing 26km of road shoulders on three sections of the Bruce Highway between Granite Creek and Freshwater Creek, as well as upgrading the access to the rest stop area at a cost of approximately \$16 million.

The department has also commenced work on a \$10 million project to upgrade the main street of Sarina. Works include the installation of traffic signals at Railway Square intersection as well as widening works between Central Street and Plane Creek Bridge, which will improve visibility and promote safer driving conditions along this stretch of the highway. There have been three fatalities in this area during the past decade and every death on our roads is one too many.

The department also commenced work on a \$10 million planning study for a future Mackay Ring Road. This is a vital piece of infrastructure which will offer enormous safety benefits, not least by removing the majority of heavy vehicles from Nebo Road.

In addition to this, approximately \$34.4 million has been committed for flood restoration works on this section of the Bruce Highway as part of the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA).

In relation to the Peak Downs Highway, the department is improving safety on this crucial link to the Bowen Basin mining area through a number of Safer Roads Sooner projects, including the installation of traffic signals at the Horse and Jockey Road intersection on the western approach to Mackay at a cost of just over \$2 million and intersection improvements on the main street of Walkerston at a cost of \$2.5 million.

A \$2 million planning study investigating improvements to the Eton Range is currently underway, while the department is also planning for the replacement of four narrow timber bridges on the Peak Downs Highway as part of a \$1.2 million study.

The Gillard Government has committed \$120 million towards safety improvements on the Peak Downs Highway, which will include improvements to the Eton Range alignment, while approximately \$18.6 million has been secured for flood damage repair works between Mackay and the Moranbah Access Road as part of NDRRA.

The Bligh Government also has a further proposal to undertake widening works on a 4.3km section of the road between Fiery Creek and Boundary Road 11km east of Nebo, at a cost of approximately \$7 million.