

Question on Notice

No. 494

Asked on Thursday, 5 June 2014

MR HOBBS asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (MR EMERSON) —

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise how road safety on railway crossings is being improved in regional Queensland?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Warrego for the question.

The Queensland Government is committed to maintaining and improving level crossing safety across Queensland to keep both road and rail users safe.

In October 2012 the *Queensland Level Crossing Safety Strategy 2012-2021* (the Strategy) was launched. The Strategy is a 10-year commitment to further improve safety outcomes for all level crossing users across Queensland's 1400 public level crossings. With approximately 9000 kilometres of rail network across Queensland, a significant number of these level crossings are in regional areas. Level crossing safety is very much a joint responsibility between rail infrastructure owners, local and state governments, peak bodies and enforcement agencies.

The first year of the Strategy saw the Queensland Government and industry working collaboratively to make a range of positive improvements. These included:

- the removal of 137 public level crossings and the closure of a branch line
- fatalities at public level crossings reduced from three to zero - also down from the five year average of five fatalities per year
- hospitalisations caused by incidents at public level crossings reduced from three to one
- the number of collisions and reported near misses reduced from 564 to 461
- targeting those road users misusing level crossings by introducing two new level crossing offences and higher penalties across the board
- Queensland Rail actively pursuing motorists for the cost of repairing level crossing equipment, recovering more than \$297,000 for property damage
- a grade separation was completed on the Aurizon network which removed the Somerset and Malchi Road level crossings in Gracemere.

During 2012-2013, Aurizon installed high load laser detectors at two level crossings in regional Queensland on the Blackwater system. These crossings had sustained a significant number of heavy vehicle collisions with level crossing infrastructure, but have had no further incidents since the installation of the detectors. Aurizon also installed queuing detection technology at a high risk crossing in Blackwater to improve the safety of the crossing.

To complement the Strategy, the Department of Transport and Main Roads, in collaboration with Queensland Rail, are undertaking a \$2.1 million trial of three new and innovative rail level crossing safety technologies to evaluate whether they have a positive effect on driver behaviour at level crossings. The technologies being trialled are:

- a radio break-in system where a transmitter sends a signal to car radios to alert the driver of their proximity to a train
- a dedicated short range communication Intelligent Transportation System that allows vehicles, trains and infrastructure to “talk” to one another in real-time
- an innovative solar powered lighting and signage system to warn motorists of approaching trains by activating flashing lights at crossings that previously only had passive protection.

These technologies are all being trialled at regional level crossings. One of the trial sites for Railnet’s signage system is in Thallon, in your electorate of Warrego. The live trial at the Thallon level crossing commenced in June 2014.

The Queensland Government also provides funding for the ongoing delivery of safety improvements at public level crossings on the state supported rail network through the *Rail Transport Service Contract*. Over the next three financial years this work will include upgrading level crossings at Malu, Warrah and Dalby to boom gates and flashing light protection.

Rail Safety Week is a rail industry initiative that sees rail operators, peak bodies and governments come together to promote rail safety messages for one week every year. Rail Safety Week is now in its ninth year and will run from 11-17 August 2014. This year Rail Safety Week will focus on raising awareness about level crossing safety in rural and regional Queensland. The Department of Transport and Main Roads is working with the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Rail, Aurizon and other stakeholders to organise radio advertisements, social media content and local events to promote these important messages in regional areas.