

## **Question on Notice**

**No. 748**

**Asked on Tuesday, 15 September 2015**

**MR RUSSO** asked the Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade (HON J TRAD) —

### **QUESTION:**

Will the Minister advise the House of the work being undertaken to improve level crossing safety and how these initiatives will benefit both road and rail users?

### **ANSWER:**

I thank the Member for Sunnybank for the question.

The Queensland Government is committed to enhancing safety at rail level crossings and contributing to achieving a long-term vision of zero harm at level crossings across Queensland. Any safety incident at a level crossing has the potential to cause serious harm to individuals, road travel disruption, train passenger and freight delays and significant infrastructure repair costs.

There are approximately 1400 public and 1600 occupational level crossings on Queensland's 9000 kilometre rail network. Level crossing collisions have the potential to be catastrophic but are all ultimately avoidable. The primary factor in most collisions is road user misuse, error or distraction.

Under the Queensland Level Crossing Safety Strategy 2012-2021 rail and road stakeholders are working together on a wide range of initiatives to improve level crossing safety including promoting safe behaviour at level crossings, enhancing the visibility and audibility of trains, exploring new technology, improving level crossing infrastructure and undertaking research and development.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) has also recognised the increasing congestion around level crossings and the link this can have to driver misbehaviour. TMR is currently working with Brisbane City Council, Queensland Rail and other technical experts on a project specifically aimed at reducing delays and congestion for drivers around level crossings in the metropolitan Brisbane area.

As part of this project detailed data collection, data analysis, modelling and simulations of several priority level crossings, including the Boundary Road crossing in Coopers Plains, have been undertaken so far. This work has shown that level crossing wait times may be able to be reduced by implementing a range of treatments such as use of new technology, changing traffic management devices, signalling upgrades and better integration of the traffic and rail signals. This would result in less road congestion and reduced travel times for road users.

A detailed technical review of how to best implement the treatments that have shown congestion improvements at these level crossings, including any associated impacts on rail operations and safety, is currently being finalised. The outcomes of this report will inform the design of a trial on the network.

TMR, in conjunction with Queensland Rail, also recently completed a trial of three innovative level crossing technologies to determine whether they would improve driver behaviour at rail level crossings. The trial was seeking innovative solutions to improve safety at passive crossings (controlled by signs and road markings only).

Independent evaluations of the trials were conducted by the Cooperative Research Centre for Rail Innovation and are available on TMR's website at: <http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/Safety/Rail-safety/Rail-safety-overview.aspx>. The results indicated that Railnet's solar powered signage technology improved driver alertness and awareness at level crossings.

The Railnet system will remain in place at Thallon and Lanefield until the end of 2015 and Queensland Rail will continue reviewing the system's performance. During this period further investigations and assessment of the Railnet system will be undertaken to determine if the technology meets all of the required standards, reliability and approval processes to be used more widely on Queensland's rail network.

Rail operators assess and monitor the level of protection at level crossings on their network across the State. These assessments analyse changes in road and rail traffic volume and the adequacy of protection at each level crossing.

In March 2014, Queensland Rail introduced further measures to mitigate the impacts to customers of level crossing boom gate strikes, with new procedures allowing trains to safely continue to operate at low speeds, in some instances. If a motorist strikes a boom gate, trains will be directed to safely pass through the railway crossing at a restricted speed of 5km per hour provided all other signs and signals are operational. This change has resulted in a significant reduction in delays to passengers.