

Question on Notice

No. 523

Asked on Thursday, 3 May 2018

MR N DAMETTO ASKED MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS (HON M BAILEY)

QUESTION:

With reference to recent major flooding, which cut off main roads to the electorate of Hinchinbrook for days causing trucks carrying vital supplies to be delayed by the Department of Transport and Main Roads due to just 100mm of water on the roads—

Will the Minister act to review the ‘if it’s flooded, forget it’ blanket policy and apply some common sense to road closures during these events?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Hinchinbrook for the question.

The 2011 Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry found that almost a quarter of the deaths in Queensland during the 2010–11 floods occurred while people were trying to drive through floodwaters on roads or causeways.

The Queensland Government’s ‘If it’s flooded, forget it’ campaign was developed in response to these shocking statistics. The campaign sends a strong message to motorists about the dangers of driving through floodwaters, and I am advised that it has been effective.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) has worked in an advisory role with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services on this campaign, and performs a key role in implementing and managing road closures during flood events. The safety of road users is always our top priority.

Departmental officers must thoroughly inspect road pavement and structures before reopening roads to ensure the safety of motorists and to prevent further damage to the road. They must also take into consideration the range of water depths across the whole section of road, despite public perceptions that water levels are low enough to safely permit traffic flow.

There are many other important factors taken into consideration by TMR when assessing flooding impacts and implementing road closures, including conditions on the surrounding road network, incoming weather forecasts, the time of day, advice from other agencies including the Queensland Police Service, and reports from officers on the ground recording changing flood levels.

Put simply, water levels do not necessarily tell the full story about the condition and safety of a road. The message, ‘If it’s flooded, forget it’ is the commonsense approach to educating motorists and preventing deaths on our roads during flood events. The Palaszczuk Government strongly supports this campaign.

I urge the Member for Hinchinbrook to comply with the highest safety standards to help prevent further tragedies from avoidable road deaths caused by driving into flood waters and to advocate strongly its central message, ‘If it’s flooded, forget it’.