

Question on Notice

No. 1570

Asked on Tuesday 15 October 2019

MR S KNUTH ASKED MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS (HON M BAILEY)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the 12.5km stretch of the Kuranda Range Road which plays a major role for freight, industry and commuter traffic, yet has serious deficiencies that limit its capacity, efficiency and safety and given that agriculture production on the tablelands is expected to boom in the coming years—

Will the Minister commit to supporting the call from the region to provide funding towards upgrading the Kuranda Range Road?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Hill for the question.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) has completed extensive investigations into options for a major upgrade of the Kuranda Range Road. These investigations, which included assessments of a tunnel solution and potential alternative routes, have consistently found that a major upgrade of the Kuranda Range Road is not feasible due to high cost, significant environmental impacts and inability to stage the solution.

The Kuranda Range Road traverses through World Heritage-listed rainforest and is a highly sensitive and topographically-challenging environment. It contains rare species of plants and animals, including the endangered Southern Cassowary. TMR is conscious that any major upgrade of the Kuranda Range Road would also have a significant impact on the surrounding sensitive environment, which is protected under legislation.

TMR is currently undertaking a \$1.25 million planning study to look at improving capacity and efficiency of transport routes between Cairns and the Northern Tablelands. The purpose of the project is to review previous planning and determine the most appropriate focus for further planning activities. Although the Kuranda Range Road will be considered as part of this study, the scope of the project is much broader and will also look at Palmerston Highway, Gillies Range Road, Mossman–Mount Molloy Road and other potential alternatives. When the project is complete in May 2020, TMR will have a better understanding of the need for improved access between Cairns and the Northern Tablelands, and the most suitable way to progress further planning towards a solution.

I have written to the Australian Government requesting a funding contribution towards additional Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) to be installed at points along the Kuranda Range Road. These ITS solutions include technology, such as integrated variable speed limit signs, flexible lane control, ramp signalling, travel time signs, electronic message signs and roadside data systems, to reduce the risk of rear-end and severe vehicle crashes. The proposed ITS treatments will further improve TMR's ability to detect and respond to incidents on Kuranda Range Road and safety for road users.