

Question on Notice

No. 1079

Asked on 26 November 2020

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the Townsville Northern Access Intersections Upgrade project having received strong criticism from stakeholders in respect of safety and design concerns—

Will the Minister and the department review this project and consider making changes to the design that have been put forward by affected road users in order to meet community expectations?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Hinchinbrook for the question.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) is progressing the \$107.65 million Townsville Northern Access Intersections Upgrade project on the Bruce Highway, north of Townsville at Black River.

This project will deliver improved safety, efficiency and travel time reliability for the 14,000 freight and passenger vehicles that travel this section of the Bruce Highway every day. As part of the project, 5.2 kilometres of the Bruce Highway will be duplicated, including the construction of a second bridge over Black River.

There have been several fatal and serious crashes on this section of the highway recently, many involving head-on collisions, where motorists have crossed the centreline into oncoming traffic.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government does not want to see any more lives lost on this road, which is why we need to upgrade it as soon as possible. Delaying this project will risk more lives.

The entire length of the duplication will be on a separated carriageway with either a physical barrier or sufficient separation between the northbound and southbound traffic lanes, reducing the risk of these types of crashes in future. In addition, the number of intersections with direct access to the highway will be reduced, with three new service roads constructed, to further improve safety for side-street traffic entering the highway.

I understand the local community is concerned with the new turnaround, or U-turn, facility at the Black River Road and Bowden Road intersections to be constructed as part of the project. Currently, motorists wanting to turn right out of Black River Road or Bowden Road need to cross three lanes of traffic, two through lanes and one turning lane, with over 14,000 vehicles per day on the Bruce Highway approaching from both directions. This significantly limits the gaps in the Bruce Highway traffic for vehicles to safely turn right onto the highway.

The proposed arrangement will separate the north and south bound Bruce Highway traffic and allow a left-turn only out of Black River Road and Bowden Road. This means motorists entering the highway from side streets will only need to observe effectively half the traffic volume, approaching from one direction. Drivers wanting to travel right out of Black River Road or Bowden Road can now move straight across into the 235-metre turning lane opposite the intersection to

use the new turnaround facility. This facility has been designed to safely cater for all approved-use vehicles on this section of the Bruce Highway, including B-Doubles, defence vehicles and cars towing horse floats, boats and caravans.

A majority of the side-street traffic is local residents living in Townsville's northern suburbs, making their daily commute to school, work and other everyday activities, and now they can look forward to a safer and more reliable journey each day.

Safety is at the forefront of everything the Palaszczuk Government does, and while it is impossible to eliminate road crashes altogether, the Palaszczuk Government is committed to delivering safer roads for all Queenslanders.

TMR commenced engaging with the broader Black River community in mid-2020, after initially focussing on landholders directly affected by property resumption and those beside the new service roads. This consultation continued throughout late 2020, and will recommence in early 2021, ahead of construction commencing in mid-2021. TMR will continue to engage with the community throughout the duration of the project.

The recently released *Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program 2020–21 to 2023–24* represents a record investment in road and transport infrastructure for the fifth year in a row, with \$26.9 billion committed over the next four years, supporting an average of approximately 23,600 direct jobs over the life of the program. Approximately \$1.432 billion is committed across TMR's Northern District, which is estimated to support an average of approximately 1270 direct jobs over the life of the program.

As part of our COVID-19 economic recovery response, in partnership with the Australian Government, the Palaszczuk Government has announced \$1 billion in new and accelerated funding for road improvements right across Queensland. This funding injection will deliver freight efficiency benefits, improve road safety, sustain local jobs and lift the State's economy. Overall, this \$1 billion of investment in road network improvements is estimated to support approximately 1000 jobs.

This includes more than \$400 million funding in projects announced by the Palaszczuk Government for Queensland roads to supercharge the State's economy through the COVID-19 recovery. This was announced as part of Queensland's Economic Recovery Strategy: *Unite and Recover for Queensland Jobs*, to help the State recover from COVID-19 with a focus on backing Queensland jobs. Projects to receive new funding in TMR's Northern District as part of the roads stimulus package include:

- \$8.9 million to widen Hervey Range Developmental Road (Townsville–Battery) between Rupertswood Drive and Black River Road
- \$5.1 million to upgrade a major culvert on Gregory Developmental Road (Charters Towers–The Lynd) at Porphyry Road.