

Question on Notice

No. 54

Asked on 24 February 2021

MR L MILLAR ASKED MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS (HON M BAILEY)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise what road works will be required to deliver Labor's promised inland freight highway and what the construction timeline is for each?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Gregory for the question.

In the lead up to the 2020 State Election, the Palaszczuk Government's election commitment *A Real Bruce Plan* confirmed \$200 million towards a \$1 billion commitment—with an Australian Government contribution of \$800 million being sought—to 'build a Second Bruce' by activating an improved Inland Freight Route from Charters Towers to the New South Wales border. This \$200 million Queensland Government commitment is outlined in the *Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program 2020–21 to 2023–24* (QTRIP), irrespective of securing an Australian Government contribution towards the program.

On 10 December 2020, I wrote to the Honourable Michael McCormack MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development seeking \$800 million from the Australian Government to support a jointly funded, long-term program of works on the Inland Freight Route.

On 11 February 2021, I met with the Deputy Prime Minister to discuss the Queensland Government's transport and roads infrastructure priorities for joint-funding consideration and reinforced the need to secure an Australian Government funding commitment towards upgrading this nationally-accredited Key Freight Route—the importance of which is recognised on Infrastructure Australia's Infrastructure Priority List as a Priority Initiative.

In response to a request from the Deputy Prime Minister seeking the next tranche of infrastructure priorities for joint funding consideration in the 2021–22 Federal Budget on 2 March 2021, I wrote to the Deputy Prime Minister again seeking an \$800 million Australian Government commitment for a long-term program of works on the Inland Freight Route. In addition, I formally sought Australian Government consideration to add the Inland Freight Route (Mungindi to Charters Towers) to the National Land Transport Network, in recognition of the critical role it plays as an alternative north–south route to the Bruce Highway, particularly in extreme weather events.

The Palaszczuk Government commitment builds on existing jointly-funded \$125 million Townsville to Roma Roads of Strategic Importance (ROSI) corridor commitment which is already delivering projects on the corridor. In addition to ongoing maintenance on this link, QTRIP outlines \$54 million for planning and road network upgrades on the Inland Freight Route, between Mungindi and Charters Towers.

Works planned for delivery over the next 18 months on the Inland Freight Route, through the jointly funded ROSI Early Works, and the Australian and the Queensland governments roads stimulus packages, include:

- \$17.5 million for intersection upgrades at various locations on the Carnarvon and Gregory Highways

- \$22.8 million for widening, pavement strengthening and culvert replacements on the Carnarvon Highway.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) is undertaking planning on the inland freight corridor to identify deficiencies and required upgrades. This work will inform future funding decisions as part of the Queensland Government's \$200 million commitment and—with federal funding support—a long-term \$1 billion upgrade program. Ultimately, the required works and construction timing for upgrades under this commitment are subject to further negotiation with the Australian Government and the outcomes of the upcoming 2021 Federal Budget, where we hope to see the Australian Government commit funding.

QTRIP represents a record investment in road and transport infrastructure for the fifth year in a row, with \$26.9 billion in works committed over the next four years, supporting an average of approximately 23,600 direct jobs over the life of the program. Of this, \$328 million is committed across TMR's Central West District, which is estimated to support an average of 400 direct jobs over the life of the program.