

## Question on Notice

No. 245

Asked on 17 March 2022

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

### QUESTION:

With reference to the planned upgrade to the Bruce Highway at the Gairloch washaway which seeks to lift and realign this section of the highway to increase road safety and reduce wait times due to flood water road closures—

Will the Minister update Hinchinbrook residents and road users on the progress of this important road project and when the project is planned to commence?

### ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Hinchinbrook for the question.

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to providing a more reliable national highway link between Brisbane and Cairns – reducing impacts on isolated communities, essential services and industries impacted by flooding closures.

I am pleased to confirm that the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) has commenced planning and business case development for the Bruce Highway (Ingham to Innisfail), Gairloch safety improvements project. Current planning will identify the most suitable treatment option to improve safety and reduce the time of highway closures due to flooding at the Gairloch floodway, located around 5-kilometres north of Ingham.

TMR commenced geotechnical investigations, surveying, environmental assessments, and stakeholder engagement in late 2021. These will inform an options analysis and business case for the Gairloch safety improvements. The business case will be completed in mid-2023. Based on the business case, the Queensland Government will then work closely with the Australian Government to progress to design and construction of the recommended safety improvements. Timeframes for these activities will be determined.

The Gairloch safety improvements project is an interim measure and will complement the Queensland Government's long-term plans to address flooding closures and improve road safety between Ingham and Cardwell.

Under the record road investment outlined in the *Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program 2021–22 to 2024–25*, the Queensland and Australian governments will also invest \$48 million in the Bruce Highway Ingham to Cardwell Range Deviation (plan and preserve corridor) project, to revisit previous planning for a more flood resilient highway.

As part of the Ingham to Cardwell Range Deviation project, TMR will be engaging with regional and local stakeholders and communities in Far North and North Queensland from mid-2022.

The Palaszczuk Government is delivering its sixth record transport and roads infrastructure program in a row, outlining \$27.5 billion in investment over the next four years and estimated to support an average of 24,000 direct jobs over the life of the program. Of this, \$1.18 billion is committed across the TMR's Northern District, which is estimated to support an average of 1020 direct jobs over the life of the program.

The QTRIP 2021–22 to 2024–25 includes continued delivery of the \$13 billion, 15-year jointly funded Bruce Highway Upgrade Program. In the Hinchinbrook electorate, this includes the \$107.65 million Townsville Northern Access Intersection Upgrade (currently underway) and the recently completed \$29.17 million Bruce Highway—(Townsville-Ingham) Hechts Road to Easter Creek Safety Upgrade Project.

Queensland's world-leading pandemic response has made it the place to be and, to support the State's population boom, significant road upgrades are being delivered as part of *Queensland's COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan*. These upgrades provide immediate economic benefits, support more jobs, and deliver ongoing benefits of vital infrastructure for years to come.