

## Question on Notice

No. 1543

Asked on 28 November 2023

**MR R KATTER** ASKED MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS AND MINISTER FOR DIGITAL SERVICES (HON M BAILEY)—

### QUESTION:

With reference to the Department of Transport and Main Road's impending technical investigations into the single-lane Warrigal Creek Bridge along the Flinders Highway and noting the high number of road trains carrying cattle and mining freight that must use this highway—

Will the Minister advise if there are any plans to either (a) upgrade the bridge to dual-lane or (b) proactively assist primary industries carriers to utilise the Great Northern (Rail) Line as opposed to the highway to transport their critical goods?

**ANSWER: [MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS AND MINISTER FOR DIGITAL SERVICES (HON B MELLISH)]**

I thank the Member for Traeger for the question.

On 18 December 2023, I was appointed as Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services and, as such, I am now the responsible Minister to answer this Question.

- (a) Regarding upgrades to the Warrigal Creek Bridge, the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) is currently undertaking technical assessments to evaluate the bridge's condition. These assessments will determine the best approach for its rehabilitation or potential upgrades. The outcomes of these investigations are expected to be completed in 2024, and TMR will then provide further updates on any planned rehabilitation or upgrade works for the bridge.
- (b) The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring freight access services are available to support and grow local economies—particularly in regional and rural areas—and it continues to work with companies in the north-west to retain and increase as much freight business on rail as possible.

On 1 July 2019, Queensland Rail reduced intermodal access prices on the Mount Isa line—historically known as the Great Northern line—by approximately 5.3 per cent. This arrangement was introduced to promote vigorous competition between road and rail transport for the movement of intermodal freight, and supports Queensland Rail's overarching objective of getting freight off road and onto rail. Since that time, access charges on the Mount Isa Line have only increased in line with inflation (Consumer Price Index).

The access charges that apply to the Queensland Rail network, including the Mount Isa line, are regulated by the Queensland Competition Authority (QCA)—an independent statutory body. QCA aims to balance the business interests of Queensland Rail and the interests of rail access holders. To further support driving the shift of freight from road to rail, as part of its 2019–20 Budget, the Queensland Government announced it would contribute \$80 million over four years to reduce rail access charges on the Mount Isa line.

Queensland Rail is also committed to improving rail infrastructure along the Mount Isa line, with approximately \$141.6 million in capital upgrades, and \$242 million in maintenance work to be invested over five years from 2023–24.

Further, TMR—through Regional Transport Plans and the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program (QTRIP)—will provide certainty to industry around future rail freight planning that encourages investment and attracts new entrants into the rail freight service market, boosting competition.

The Queensland Government is delivering its eighth record transport and roads infrastructure program in a row, as detailed in the QTRIP 2023–24 to 2026–27, which outlines \$32.1 billion in investment over the next four years and is estimated to support an average of 25,200 direct jobs over the life of the program. Of this, \$994 million is committed across TMR's Northern District, estimated to support an average of 860 direct jobs over the life of the program.