

Question on Notice

No. 468

Asked on 18 April 2024

MR R KATTER ASKED MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS AND MINISTER FOR DIGITAL SERVICES (HON B MELLISH)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister explain to Gulf of Carpentaria communities when they will no longer have to ration food during annual flooding events, by the government delivering the Running Creek, Barkly, Nicholson, and Gregory bridges?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Traeger for the question.

The Miles Government is delivering its eighth record transport and roads infrastructure program in a row, as detailed in the *Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program 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, \$421 million is committed across the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) North West District, estimated to support an average of 420 direct jobs over the life of the program.

North West Queensland was most impacted when a tropical low dumped more than 500 millimetres of rainfall over two days in early March 2023 in the Nicholson, Gregory and Leichhardt River catchments. The tropical low produced weekly totals of 300 to 600 millimetres over the Gulf Country—about 2.5 to five times the March average for these areas—which led to record flood levels in the Gulf of Carpentaria. With water catchments already saturated, the wet weather extended into 2024 and caused major flooding in the Gulf, closing road access to Burketown and Doomadgee.

The excessive wet season significantly impacted all of the state-controlled road network across the north west. TMR continues to assess the damage and is currently delivering numerous emergency repair works across the network, including the 499.41-kilometre-long Wills Developmental Road.

I am advised that TMR will undertake three projects valued at \$24 million through the 2022–23 Betterment Program to improve the resilience of key state transport routes, that service Gulf communities affected by flooding in early 2023. The works, on the Burke Developmental Road and Wills Developmental Road (between Camooweal and Gregory Downs), will involve strengthening pavements and sealing approximately 30 kilometres of unsealed sections. When completed, these upgrades will reduce the flooding impacts for the local communities. Following Queensland Reconstruction Authority approval of scope, works are planned to be delivered by 30 June 2025 in line with 2022–23 disaster event repairs.

Further funding to upgrade the crossings will be considered during future program reviews and against competing statewide priorities. It should be noted however Nicholson and Gregory floodways are located on a Burke Shire Council Road (Doomadgee East Road).