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MEDIA RELEASE

Last calls for Bruce boost

Road safety and the economic boost the projects would provide have been cited as reasons to fast track Bruce Highway upgrades between Home Hill and Bowen by member for Burdekin, Dale Last.

Mr Last has written to Transport Minister Mark Bailey urging the state government to take advantage of the federal funding on offer to improve safety on the highway and to provide economic stimulus for the region.

“What is disappointing is that 100% of the funding for some of these projects is currently available from the federal government but, again, we have seen the current Queensland government put regional projects on the back burner,” Mr Last said.

“The need has been identified and the money is sitting there to install overtaking lanes and do other improvements so I can’t see why we can’t just get on with it.”

“People get frustrated that the Queensland government demands more funding from the federal government for projects in the regions but, when the money is on offer, they do nothing. Meanwhile, the current government will gladly fund 100% of a multi-billion dollar project in Brisbane in order for drivers down there to save a few minutes.”

Mr Last said that, in addition to making the highway safer and stimulating the economy, there were long-term benefits associated with the projects.

“It’s very easy to talk about developing industries and maximising the potential of the North,” he said. “But, the reality is, we need the infrastructure to support development of those industries.”

“The recently announced export hub is meant to be about helping all of the North to develop but if we don’t have transport infrastructure then our area is effectively squeezed out.”

“In an electorate the size of the Burdekin it’s not hard to find roads that need attention and there will always be budget constraints but, when the cost is covered by the federal government, you would think you would think shovels would be in the ground as soon as possible.”

The Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program (QTRIP) covers four years of projected works throughout the State and Mr Last said he would continue to fight for the projects he identified to be fast-tracked.

“We are talking about the installation of four overtaking lanes between Bowen and Home Hill and the widening of another stretch of road between the two towns,” Mr Last said.

“The effect that work would have on travel times and on safety is huge but at this stage it’s all about the planning and little else.”

“Whenever I talk about roads, someone mentions the lack of overtaking lanes between Bowen and Home Hill. The people realise we need it, the QTRIP report says its warranted but the state government says wait.”

“Here we are with money on the table and not much happening. It’s effectively the state government looking a gift horse in the mouth and it’s the people of North Queensland who pay the price.”

“It’s not the first time I’ve asked for a project to be fast-tracked and I’ll keep fighting to get work underway as soon as possible.”

“If you look at the Haughton Flood Plain project, that’s a \$500 Million project that we got brought forward by demonstrating the need.”

“I’ll be pushing the State Government to take the same approach to this project because there are so many benefits and so much opportunity that is going to waste.”

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