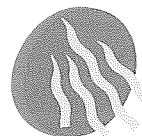




Hon Craig Wallace MP
Member for Thuringowa



Queensland
Government

Our ref: MC47531

Minister for Main Roads

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to a petition number 1368-10 lodged with the Legislative Assembly by Mr Curtis Pitt MP, Member for Mulgrave, on 9 February 2010 about the Cairns Bruce Highway Upgrade and Cairns Transit Network options.

The Cairns Bruce Highway Upgrade project is a planning study considering potential upgrades to the Bruce Highway from Wrights Creek, south of Edmonton, to Draper Street, near the Cairns city centre. This \$5m study is part of the \$38m Urban Congestion and Planning Package which is jointly funded by the federal and state governments.

The outcomes of the planning study will be used to determine the scope of works for the upcoming \$150m federally funded upgrade of priority sections of the highway between Sheehy Road and Ray Jones Drive. The planning study will also result in the development of a master plan for future upgrade needs between Wrights Creek and Draper Street over the next 30 years.

The Cairns Bruce Highway Upgrade project is also working together with the Cairns Transit Network project, a state government initiative to provide high quality public transport in Cairns. By undertaking joint planning and consultation for the Bruce Highway Upgrade, with the Cairns Transit Network project, the state government is working to identify long-term solutions to keep Cairns moving forward by providing alternative travel options for the city's rapidly growing population.

The petition refers "to the destruction of over 380 family homes and businesses". In November 2009, the Department of Transport and Main Roads sent letters to people who may be affected under one or more of the current options or plans for the two projects. These were not acquisition letters. Not all owners who received a letter will be impacted by the final design and the majority of potentially impacted properties would not be required until the medium to long-term. Recipients were asked to contact the department to arrange an appointment to discuss any concerns and to provide their feedback. Many one-on-one meetings have subsequently taken place and these property owners will be kept informed as the projects progress.

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The petition suggests that use be made of the undeveloped land behind Wrights Creek east of the existing highway and/or advantage be taken of East Trinity Inlet to link the southern corridor.

A major study was carried out between 1999 and 2001, the Southern Cairns Integrated Land Use and Transport Study (SCILUTS). The study was jointly conducted and endorsed by the department and Cairns City Council. Extensive and ongoing consultation with the community spanned several years.

SCILUTS examined four transport corridor options: the existing highway; a western option through Mount Sheridan and Woree, an option east of White Rock fringing Trinity Inlet and a far eastern option via the Pine Creek-Yarrabah Road and crossing Trinity Inlet.

An initial Impact Assessment conducted by the Working Group and Community Reference Group ruled out the western and Trinity Inlet options, largely because they both failed to deliver improved transport efficiency and were inconsistent with the regional plan's desired outcomes, including environmental values.

A full Impact Assessment was undertaken to consider upgrading the existing highway and constructing a new eastern alignment.

One of the major findings and concerns for the proposed eastern alignment was that it would need to be constructed in its entirety before a single vehicle could use it. It would not be possible to stage small packages of works, as it would be for the existing Bruce Highway and during that construction time it would not provide any relief for existing short and medium-term traffic issues of the current highway alignment.

Environmental impacts were also a major concern. Capturing and treating the run-off and containing spills from the road before they enter into the Trinity Inlet waterway and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park would be extremely difficult.

The study also showed that a second corridor fringing Trinity Inlet would provide limited benefit to the people living north of Wrights Creek who make up more than two thirds of total traffic. Cairns residents living in suburbs such as Edmonton, Bentley Park, Mount Sheridan and White Rock would not have direct access to the second corridor.

This would mean the existing corridor would still need to be upgraded. If access points were to be provided from the existing highway corridor to a second corridor, this would create a whole new set of potential property impacts as well as increased costs.

A second corridor option would also fail to support the agreed desired regional outcomes in the *Far North Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031*, or the Towards Q2 objectives of $\frac{1}{3}$ reduction in car usage.

The option to upgrade the existing Bruce Highway was recommended over a proposed eastern alignment on the basis of cost, its ability to be staged and the presence of significantly less social and environmental impacts. SCILUTS also addressed the need to move more trips to public transport and set a 10% mode share target for 2016 with the aim of being capable of attracting 20% of peak hour trips on public transport by 2036.

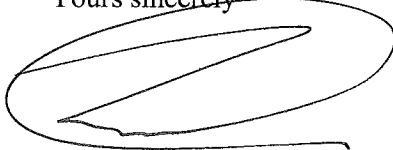
The current draft options confirm that a single corridor with increased public transport use is the best solution for Cairns. All three options for the upgrading of the current Bruce Highway include the protection of corridors for the proposed Cairns Transit Network.

This sustainable public transport system will connect the major communities in Cairns and provide comparable capacity to nine traffic lanes in one direction while delivering on both the Towards Q2 and SCILUTS targets.

The department appreciates the time taken by members of the community to provide feedback on the draft options. The selection of the preferred project design will only be decided after the feedback from the community consultation is considered and further technical investigations are finalised. This is expected to occur in mid-2010.

More information and updates on either project can be obtained by visiting the website <http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au> and searching for "Cairns Transit Network" or "Cairns Bruce Highway Upgrade."

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Craig Wallace', enclosed within a large, hand-drawn oval shape.

Craig Wallace MP
Minister for Main Roads