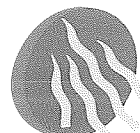




Hon Craig Wallace MP
Member for Thuringowa



**Queensland
Government**

Minister for Main Roads

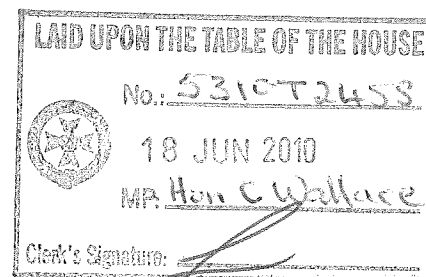
Our ref: MC49581

Your ref: Petitions

17 JUN 2010

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


Dear Mr Laurie



I refer to a petition number 1444-10 lodged with the Legislative Assembly by Mr Andrew Cripps MP, Member for Hinchinbrook, on 20 May 2010, about the proposed realignment of the Bruce Highway near Ingham, North Queensland.

Rationale for a realignment of the Bruce Highway

In October 2008, the Department of Transport and Main Roads commenced a three-year, \$5m federally-funded planning study aimed at reducing the duration of flooding closures on the Bruce Highway between the southern approach into Ingham and the foothills of the Cardwell Range.

The department thoroughly investigated the option of upgrading the existing Bruce Highway through Ingham, but this was not viable due to the potential impacts that would result from raising the highway to meet the desired flood immunity standard. These impacts included increasing flooding of nearby properties upstream, resuming on-street parking and parts of Rotary Park for construction purposes, as well as restricting direct access to business premises. In addition, options to upgrade the highway through the town did not address safety issues associated with the current mix of local traffic, through traffic and pedestrians, or the need to improve traffic flow for current and future traffic volumes.

In June 2009, the department publicly released two "zones of interest", which have since been refined into three alignment options. In selecting the alignments, the team took a wide range of factors into account, including engineering, hydrological, geotechnical and environmental studies, as well as extensive community engagement and cultural heritage analysis.

Since the alignment options were released in February 2010, a new round of stakeholder briefings and consultation has been taking place, and all of the feedback will be incorporated into the decision-making process for the final alignment. The department's community engagement consultants have been briefing a wide range of impacted stakeholders, including landowners, local politicians, sporting clubs and the Tyto Wetlands Steering Committee.

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Potential economic impact on Ingham

The department recently released an Economic Impact Assessment Report, commissioned to provide a better understanding of the potential economic impacts of realigning the Bruce Highway out of the centre of Ingham. This independent report used information gathered by extensive surveys and interviews with the Ingham business community. The report identified the key economic impacts during and after construction, as well as opportunities that would become available as a result of the highway realignment. It also provided a summary of findings from studies of other towns that had experienced the development of a bypass.

While the report indicates that this project could result in some adverse economic impacts for Ingham, it also asserts that these impacts can be effectively mitigated and are far outweighed by the potential for positive effects. The report estimates that the construction phase could generate between 400-600 full-time jobs, and around \$29m to \$41m each year in additional wages. Much of this could be captured by local residents working on the construction project, which will require a mix of skills, ranging from highly technical engineering skills through to basic unskilled labour.

The report also identifies a number of key strategies to manage employment and accommodation during the construction period, including the establishment of a register of key skills in the local community to inform contractors of local labour availability and capabilities; targeted training of locals to enhance their employability for the project; the development of registers and capability statements for the local business community to increase the involvement of local businesses; and the development of a central accommodation register to coordinate accommodation needs in the area.

Potential negative impact on farms and sporting venues

The three potential alignments all follow property boundaries as much as possible, and every effort has been made to minimise impacts on farms, where possible. The department has consulted frequently with potentially-impacted farmers and their feedback has been incorporated throughout the decision-making process. The final alignment will improve safety for cane farmers, who will be able to avoid crossing the highway while performing haul-out movements.

Local sporting clubs, such as the cricket, soccer, pony, rugby league and gun clubs, continue to play a full role in the consultation process. The final choice of alignment will cause more impact to some sporting clubs than others. However, the department is working closely with Hinchinbrook Shire Council to facilitate the relocation of any club that is required to move.

Please be assured that the department is committed to effective and appropriate community engagement, and will continue to seek feedback with a view to producing the best possible re-alignment option for Ingham.

I trust that this information has been of assistance. If you require further information, please call Mr David Atkinson, Regional Director (Townsville), on 4720 7243. Mr Atkinson will be pleased to assist.

Yours sincerely



Craig Wallace MP
Minister for Main Roads