



Minister for Transport and Main Roads

Our ref: PET 38095

Your ref: A589432

9 September 2020

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
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Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petition 3371-20 lodged with the Legislative Assembly on 11 August 2020 requesting the immediate alteration of the overtaking lanes and speed limit on the Kennedy Highway near Kuranda.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) is aware of a campaign to reduce the speed limit on Kennedy Highway, near the top of the Kuranda Range. In the interest of consistency and safety, TMR sets speed limits in accordance with Australia-wide technical guidelines. TMR has reviewed the speed limit at this location and I am advised there is currently no technical justification for changing it. Arbitrarily lowering speed limits where technical guidelines are not met generally results in poor compliance, inconsistent driver behaviour and reduced safety for all road users.

The section of the Kennedy Highway between Kuranda and Mareeba ranks highly among state-controlled roads in Queensland for serious crashes. According to the most recent crash data available to TMR, there have been 26 serious, head-on crashes along this section—including three fatalities—in the last five years. Head-on crashes are commonly related to unsafe overtaking behaviours, which is why it is important for TMR to provide strategically located overtaking opportunities for road users. In the same five-year period, there has been no recorded accidents on the overtaking lanes.

The overtaking lanes on this section of the road are the first overtaking opportunity at the top of Kuranda Range Road. If TMR changed the intent of the lanes by making the left lane an optional turn-out lane, drivers may get stuck behind slow vehicles that choose not to pull into the left lane. This would increase the risk of drivers attempting unsafe manoeuvres further down the road. In the interest of safety, TMR currently has no intent to change the configuration of the overtaking lane at this location.

TMR takes the issue of road safety in known cassowary habitats very seriously and works closely with the Cassowary Recovery Team (CRT), which includes representatives from Kuranda, to reduce the risk of cassowary road strikes. In consultation with the CRT, TMR has invested \$100,000 in developing a Cassowary Conservation Management Plan (CCMP). When completed later this year, the plan will provide a wholistic approach toward addressing driver behaviour and the implementation of consistent road maintenance and treatments across all known cassowary areas.

I am pleased to advise that I personally met with cassowary advocacy groups in Mission Beach on 24 June 2020 to discuss initiatives to address cassowary road strikes on state-controlled roads. Feedback from this meeting will be incorporated into the CCMP.

TMR is also working with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation on a \$65,000 study to collect data about cassowary and driver interactions using roadside monitoring cameras. This data will also be used to inform the CCMP.

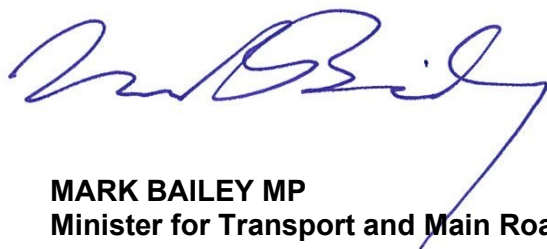
In addition, TMR is currently finalising a cassowary media campaign aimed at encouraging drivers to slow down in known cassowary areas. The campaign is expected to include radio, newspaper and billboard advertising to raise driver awareness and reduce the risk of vehicle strikes.

On 22 June 2020, the Australian and Queensland governments announced a \$415 million jointly funded injection—Economic Stimulus package—to deliver shovel-ready road upgrade projects and smaller works across the state-controlled road network over the next two years. This initiative, which is estimated to support 670 direct jobs over the life of the program, includes \$30 million for Intelligent Transport Systems on the Kuranda Range.

While the scope of works is still being finalised, TMR is looking at cutting edge road management technology including variable speed limit signs, travel time signs, electronic message signs and roadside data systems. This technology will complement the existing variable message signs, automatic number plate recognition and Bluetooth systems on the range. It will enable TMR to detect incidents, better manage the road and display messages to road users on Kennedy Highway warning drivers to be aware if a road hazard, such as a cassowary, is reported.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Bailey', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

MARK BAILEY MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads