



Hon. Paul Lucas MP



Queensland
Government

Our ref: MC28568

Your ref: 790-07

18 APR 2007

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

Minister for
Transport and Main Roads

Dear Mr Laurie

**Re: Petition No 790-07 - request to complete the seal on the Forsayth Road,
Georgetown to Forsayth**

I refer to a petition lodged with the Legislative Assembly by Mr Shane Knuth MP, Member for Charters Towers, requesting that the Forsayth Road (Georgetown to Forsayth) be fully sealed.

Forsayth Road is a state-controlled road, some 40km in length. The Department of Main Roads is responsible for maintenance and upgrading. I am advised that the road is now sealed for half its length.

I understand residents wish to have the Forsayth Road, between Georgetown and Forsayth, fully sealed. However, there are many other rural and remote communities in a similar situation, which also see the sealing or widening of their roads as a priority and are advocating funding for immediate upgrades.

The state government has a vast road network of almost 34 000km, the longest state-controlled network of any state in Australia. The state government is making progress in reducing the length of the unsealed network across the state; however, it is gradual. In 1980, 39% of network was unsealed. It is quite an achievement that now only 18% is unsealed and shows that regional development, safety and social issues outside of urban areas are considered.

Main Roads considers factors such as demands on roads from industry and other road users, safety and what will provide the greatest overall benefit to the community when allocating funding for road projects.

Main Roads has formed a partnership with the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), to share management and decision making about funding allocations for some roads.

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Under this initiative, funding has been earmarked for a set of higher order local roads which serve a wider purpose and benefit a larger number of people, when compared to other local roads on the network. These roads are known as Local Roads of Regional Significance (LRRS). Regional Roads Groups (RRG's), comprised of representatives from local governments and Main Roads, manage these roads. RRG's decide on the allocation of federal, state or local government funding that becomes available for future upgrading projects on the LRRS network and on the maintenance strategy for this network.

The Forsayth Road has been classified as a LRRS and is now managed by the Far North Queensland Regional Roads Group. I am advised that this group recently decided to use a federal grant of \$1.9m towards extending the seal on the road. A project to seal a 2.8km section was completed late last year, with another 4.4km programmed to be carried out in 2008.

In regard to maintenance, I am advised that the strategy for this and similar low volume, unsealed roads across the state is to provide sufficient funds to maintain the road at an acceptable level, as far as is practicable, for the existing traffic volumes. Etheridge Shire Council maintains the road, under contract to Main Roads.

In line with this strategy, this road is graded two to three times a year. To maximise the benefits to the community, the road is graded shortly before the annual "Forsayth Turnout" in August and the "Mud Rally", which was held in March. This helps in improving the condition of the road to cater for increased volumes of tourist traffic for these events and for the peak mid-year tourism period in Far North Queensland, as well as improving travelling conditions for local residents. Another light grade is carried out before the wet season and, if required due to a more severe wet season, an accessibility grade after the wet season is also carried out.

I am further advised that, the state government also provided additional maintenance funding to remove rock bars on the section known locally as "Dairy Maid" corner. This work was completed late last year and addressed a priority issue raised by local residents.

Main Roads has advised that work to repair damage caused by Cyclones Larry and Monica is also programmed for later this year. This work, funded through the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements (NDRA) scheme, will include grading and repairs to scours and the road surface and is likely to help address concerns raised in the petition.

Yours sincerely

PAUL LUCAS MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads