



Warren Pitt MP
Member for Mulgrave

Our ref: MC32098

Your ref: 879-07; 880-07



**Queensland
Government**

**Minister for Main Roads and
Local Government**

15 NOV 2007

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Cnr Alice and George Streets
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to Petition Nos 879-07 and 880-07 to the Honourable Paul Lucas MP, formerly Minister for Transport and Main Roads. The petitions have been lodged with the Legislative Assembly by Mr Tim Nicholls MP, Member for Clayfield, on 21 August 2007, about Hinkler Drive, the Nielsens Road interchange and the proposed closure of Exit 75 as part of the Pacific Motorway (M1) upgrade from Nerang to Tugun.

In 2005, the Queensland Government committed \$455m over five years to progress planning and design of the Pacific Motorway upgrade between the Gateway and Logan Motorways and between Nerang and Tugun. Since then the state government has been lobbying the federal government for a matching contribution through AusLink to work towards delivery of the motorway upgrade.

On 31 August 2007, the federal government finally bowed to the pressure to match the state government's contribution for upgrading the M1 and related key interchanges, such as the Nerang South (Nielsens Road) interchange. The Department of Main Roads has now called tenders for the Nielsens Road interchange upgrade, which is the first step for the 22km motorway project. Construction will start before the end of the year and will involve replacement of both roundabouts at the current interchange with traffic lights and widening of the bridge over the motorway to provide two through lanes and two right-turn lanes in each direction. The length of the bridge will also accommodate up to eight motorway lanes underneath it. Traffic modelling for Hinkler Drive indicates that there is currently no need to provide a free left-hand turning lane out of this intersection.

Simultaneously, preliminary planning for the Nerang to Varsity Lakes section is progressing. This section includes an upgrade of the Mudgeeraba interchange, with a detailed design expected in late 2007, allowing for tenders to be called in early 2008.

With regard to the proposed removal of Exit 75, I am advised the department carefully considered this matter, but traffic modelling demonstrated there are serious safety issues involving the retention of the interchange once the M1 is widened to an eight lane configuration. This is due to the steep grade confronting northbound heavy vehicles, and a serious traffic weaving issue for southbound vehicles.

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In addition, the spacing of the interchanges between Nerang and Tugun is not suited to an eight lane motorway designed for a posted regulatory speed of 100km/h. Wherever possible, Main Roads is seeking to achieve the desired minimum distance of four kilometres. Rationalisation of interchanges and ramps will be undertaken to the south of Exit 77 to achieve this aim, wherever possible.

This requirement is set down in the Road Planning and Design Manual, Chapter 16, clause 16.3.3 (Qld Dept of Main Roads, 2005:16-7).

It states "the minimum spacing of interchanges on 4 lane motorways (i.e. 2 lanes in each direction) is about 2km in urban areas and between 5km and 8km in rural areas. The minimum spacing in urban areas must be increased to 3km for 6 lane roads and 4km for 8 lane roads. The desirable spacing is greater than these values."

After consulting with local businesses and mindful of their concerns, Main Roads reviewed its original concept design to try and incorporate an off-ramp (southbound) to the City Link Industrial Estate and Eastlake Street. An options analysis was conducted on three possible routes, and an option that combines the off-ramp at Exit 77 and the off-ramp at Exit 75 into one, which intersects with the eastern service road (Eastlake Street), about 600 metres north of the Worongary interchange, has been selected as the safest and most appropriate option.

At the concept design stage, Main Roads had also considered leaving the overpass in place. However, this could potentially lead to heavy vehicles crossing the motorway, travelling north along Hinkler Drive to access the northbound motorway by way of the Nerang (South) interchange. This, in itself, would be a further safety concern as there are many uncontrolled driveways along the northern section of Hinkler Drive and a steep hill that would make the service road undesirable for use by heavy vehicles. It was therefore considered unsafe to leave the overpass and northbound on-ramp in place as heavy vehicles would not be able to maintain enough speed to enter the motorway and maintain this speed when travelling up the hill.

In relation to the noise concerns, I can advise Main Roads has engaged consultants to monitor several sites along the motorway to determine current road traffic noise levels, and undertake noise modelling to predict future road traffic noise levels. Where road traffic noise levels exceed the criterion levels contained in the department's current *Road Traffic Noise Code of Practice*, Main Roads will, where possible, provide road traffic noise attenuation for affected residents, as a component of each project stage of construction.

I am pleased to advise that in view of the recent federal funding commitment, Main Roads is now in a position to work towards establishing construction start times and project schedules for this vital upgrade.

Yours sincerely

Warren Pitt MP
Minister for Main Roads