



Hon. Paul Lucas MP



**Queensland
Government**

Our ref: MC17946

Your ref: 588-05

**Minister for
Transport and Main Roads**

15 DEC 2005

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Neil

Re: Petition No 588-05

**Proposed upgrade of the Kennedy Highway, between Smithfield and Kuranda
(locally known as the Kuranda Range Road)**

I refer to the petition number 588-05 lodged with the Legislative Assembly on 23 November 2005 by Ms Rosa Lee Long MP, Member for Tablelands, regarding the proposed upgrade of the Kennedy Highway, between Smithfield and Kuranda, which is locally known as the Kuranda Range Road.

In September 2001, Cabinet endorsed the preferred, long-term option for the Kuranda Range corridor to be progressively upgraded to four-lane capacity over a 10 to 15 year period using a road surface route. Since that time, the Department of Main Roads has carried out the extensive planning required for this option.

Regarding the petition's call for the upgrade to be "fast tracked as a matter of urgency", the state government is already progressing the upgrade as quickly as possible, due to legislative obligations. The project has triggered federal environmental legislation – the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1998* (EPBC) – and also requires approvals under the *Wet Tropics Management Plan*.

The Department of Main Roads has developed a preliminary design for the upgraded road which minimises environmental and visual impacts, as much as possible, and in many cases provides substantial benefits.

In September 2004, Main Roads submitted the project to the federal Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH) and Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) for environmental approvals. Without these approvals, detailed design and construction cannot go ahead. Further funding for the project is also dependent on these approvals.

85 George Street Brisbane
GPO Box 2644 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3237 1111
Facsimile +61 7 3224 4242
Email transport@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Between November 2004 and January 2005, Main Roads held a statutory public notification period to allow the community an opportunity to make submissions to assist these agencies in deciding whether or not to grant environmental approvals for the proposed upgrade, on the basis of the preliminary design developed for this option. This resulted in 679 submissions which had to be reviewed before being sent to DEH and WTMA in May 2005 for consideration.

WTMA has reviewed all work and submissions and has supported Main Roads conclusion that the proposed project is the most prudent and feasible alternative.

A permit for construction and investigation work that is needed for the detailed design cannot be issued until parts of the World Heritage Area have been rezoned. On 7 December 2005, the WTMA announced that it would proceed with the necessary rezoning, which includes a 40 day consultation period, for which WTMA is responsible. Subject to final approval of the rezoning by the WTMA Ministerial Council, a permit will be issued for the detailed design investigation work and construction.

Approvals under the EPBC are being sought in parallel to the WTMA approvals, through the federal Department of the Environment and Heritage.

The main reason the road is being upgraded is to cater for an increased population on the northern Tablelands, as part of the strategy of the Far North Queensland Regional Plan for managing continuing strong population growth in the greater Cairns area. The upgrade will be carried out in time to cater for this increased development.

Yours sincerely

PAUL LUCAS MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads