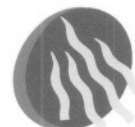




Hon. Paul Lucas MP

✓ 20/6/06



Queensland
Government

Our ref: MC21915

Minister for
Transport and Main Roads

Your ref: 592-05

19 JUN 2006

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



Dear Mr Laurie

Re: Petition No. 592-05 Bruce Highway (Cooroy to Curra) Strategic Planning Study

I refer to the petition lodged with the Legislative Assembly by Ms Cate Molloy MP, Member for Noosa, on 19 April 2006, about the Bruce Highway (Cooroy to Curra) Strategic Planning Study.

The Honourable Warren Truss MP, federal Minister for Transport and Regional Services and local federal member for Wide Bay, launched the public display of the five route options in November 2005. The study is being conducted by the Department of Main Roads with federal government participation and overview. Main Roads acknowledges that this is a sensitive issue for many people in the study area and, as with any major road planning study, encourages and welcomes feedback.

The state government believes that, because the federal government is funding the study and eventual highway upgrade, it would be a matter for federal Minister Truss to rule out any of the existing route options. However, the joint study team has been directed to look at new route options.

To better understand community concerns, I have met with Miss Elisa Roberts MP, Member for Gympie, Councillor Mick Venardos, Mayor of Cooloola Shire Council, and members of the Cooroy-Curra Consultative Committee (CCCC). Recently I and elected representatives, including Minister Truss, viewed the study area by helicopter to see the potential impacts first hand.

The study team is reviewing the nearly 2000 submissions received during the 12-week consultation period which finished on 27 January 2006 and a copy of the petition has also been forwarded to them.

You may be aware of recent comments by The Honourable Warren Truss MP, federal Minister for Transport and Regional Services questioning the future of the Cooroy-Curra bypass study.

I am firmly behind the views of the community group set up to advise on the bypass study which is urging both governments to continue the job and finish the study as soon as possible, irrespective of the proposal to build the Traveston dam.

Minister Truss is playing politics by saying the study should be put on hold when only 9km of the 65km in question may be affected by the dam. In a media release in November last year, he called for scrapping all of the proposed routes – southern, northern and western. Yet he now claims the study that produced those very same routes is compromised by the dam decision.

As well Minister Truss's claims that the federal government was looking at funding the bypass in the Budget but changed its mind when it heard about the dam, was proved to be a smokescreen when his own department was unable to back up this claim when asked about it in senate estimates.

I am advised that the Cooroy-Curra Community Committee (CCCC) believe the bypass routes already being considered could overcome any logistical issues posed by a dam on the Mary River.

Once a preferred option has been determined, it will be displayed for further community comment. Main Roads expects that the study will be completed and a final corridor adopted, by the end of 2006.

I am committed to securing federal funding for the upgrade to begin once planning is completed and a suitable route has been identified. I strongly agree with the views expressed by the community that action is needed to address the safety concerns on this section of the federally-funded national highway which is acknowledged as one of the worst sections of road in Australia. A bypass of Gympie is the only real solution.

Yours sincerely

PAUL LUCAS MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads