



Minister for Transport and Main Roads Minister for Digital Services

Our ref: PET 51755
Your ref: A1193571

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Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petition 3971-23, lodged with the Legislative Assembly by Mr Dale Last MP, Member for Burdekin on 30 November 2023, regarding the state of various roads in the Bowen Basin.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) is committed to creating a transport system that bolsters economic activity and recognises the role played by the Bowen Basin in Queensland's development.

Understanding the importance of community feedback in prioritising road funding, TMR has been actively engaged in managing the state-controlled road network, particularly in the Bowen Basin, where increased haulage due to mining activities has led to higher levels of deterioration.

To mitigate the impact of heavy vehicle traffic on these roads, TMR has established agreements with several mining operators. Contributions from these operators are allocated into maintenance and rectification activities for priority sections of the affected roads, complementing TMR's routine maintenance efforts.

Outlined below are specific measures and plans for key roads identified in the petition.

Peak Downs Highway

Recognising its role in supporting mining, freight industries, and local communities, the Queensland Government has prioritised the Peak Downs Highway. In recent years, TMR has delivered targeted pavement strengthening, road safety improvements and the replacement of four timber bridges.

Significant investment in upgrading the Eton Range section has been followed by the recently completed widening and strengthening of the 14.4-kilometre section between Wuthung Road and Caval Ridge.

Future upgrades planned in the current *Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program (QTRIP) 2023–24 to 2026–27* include a \$12 million project to construct overtaking lanes between Millennium Coal Mine and Carborough Coal Mine.

Further upgrades to sections west of Nebo, including additional overtaking lanes and upgrades to 30 Mile Creek and North Creek bridges, are in the planning stage.

While funding allocation is pending for these projects, ongoing maintenance programs—encompassing asphalt resurfacing, pavement rehabilitation and intersection improvements—remain a priority. Additionally, the \$187.4 million Walkerston Bypass project, jointly funded with the Australian Government and currently in construction, will provide a new two-lane rural highway to connect the Peak Downs Highway west of Walkerston to the Mackay Ring Road south of Mackay. The route will become the designated heavy vehicle route and provide a more efficient link for the mining industry between Mackay and the Bowen Basin, with an expected completion by mid- to late-2024.

Saraji Road

Saraji Road falls under Isaac Regional Council (IRC) ownership. However, the Queensland Government provides significant funding for targeted investment through programs such as the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS).

TIDS funding is provided as an annual allocation to 17 Regional Roads and Transport Groups (RRTGs) formed under the Roads and Transport Alliance. RRTGs are comprised of local government and TMR representatives, which work collaboratively to make local transport infrastructure investment decisions based on regional priorities.

To this end, QTRIP 2023–24 to 2026–27 outlines \$18 million (jointly funded with the Australian Government) to replace the Phillips Creek bridge on Saraji road, and a further \$780,000 (jointly funded with the local government) to rehabilitate sections of pavement along the road.

The IRC will oversee these projects in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

Bowen Developmental Road

In 2021, approximately 25 kilometres of Bowen Developmental Road between Rockingham Creek and Mount Coolon, and Deception Creek and Bulgonunna Creek was sealed as part of a \$43.75 million investment (QTRIP 2020–21 to 2023–24) delivered via two separate projects.

Planning for the progressive sealing of the remaining unsealed sections—about 61 kilometres—has been identified as a priority. While there is currently no funding allocated for a future planning project at this time, TMR will continue to seek funding opportunities to fully seal Bowen Developmental Road.

In the interim, TMR's maintenance contractor undertakes fortnightly inspections and ongoing routine maintenance. Formation grading on the unsealed sections is also undertaken on a recurring basis. Work of this nature was completed on a 16-kilometre section between Collinsville and Mount Coolon in early 2023. Further heavy formation grading of about 46 kilometres of unsealed road near Mount Coolon is also scheduled to be undertaken in February 2024.

Suttor Developmental Road

While there are no upgrades to Suttor Developmental Road currently programmed in QTRIP 2023–24 to 2026–27, TMR will consider including the road in the planning program for a potential future upgrade.

In the interim, TMR's programmed maintenance activities, including formation grading and re-sheeting of the 87-kilometre unsealed section of the road, are ongoing. Heavy formation grading of various sections of unsealed road near Mount Coolon is expected to be completed by late January 2024, with medium formation grading of a 40-kilometre section planned to start in March 2024.

Dysart Middlemount Road

Restoration works—including pavement repairs and formation grading—along the 67-kilometre state-controlled section of Dysart–Middlemount Road are expected to start in mid-to-late 2024.

TMR is aware of rough surface issues on some sections, and has liaised with its maintenance provider to implement interim safety measures including advisory signage.

TMR will continue monitoring this road and liaising with the maintenance provider to ensure the road is maintained in a safe condition.

Clermont–Alpha Road, May Downs Road and Kilcummin–Diamond Downs Road

Key upgrades recently delivered on these roads include:

- pave and seal of sections of Clermont–Alpha Road between the Alpha Bypass Road and Pioneer Road, completed in late 2022
- pave and seal of a five-kilometre section of May Downs Road from Carfax Road to Pomegranate Creek bridge, completed in early 2023
- planning for the progressive paving and sealing of the remaining 50-kilometre unsealed section of May Downs Road, completed in early 2023.

Restoration works—including pavement repairs and formation grading—on the full length of Clermont–Alpha Road and planning projects for the progressive pave and seal of Clermont–Alpha Road and Kilcummin–Diamond Downs Road are also expected to start in mid-2024.

These three roads form part of the Queensland Beef Corridor (QBC) initiative, which proposes to upgrade key rural roads that service the beef agriculture industry. This involves sealing more than 450-kilometres of unsealed road network including the unsealed sections of these roads.

In October 2022, the Australian Government confirmed its \$400 million funding commitment to the QBC initiative. However, since that time, the Australian Government commissioned an Independent Strategic Review of all projects funded under the Infrastructure Investment Program to consider the merits of projects continuing.

The findings of the review were released on 16 November 2023, and TMR is now working closely with the Australian Government on the outcomes of the review to understand the impacts and implications for Queensland projects. While TMR reviews and assesses the Australian Government's initial recommendations, road safety remains a top priority for the Queensland Government.

Recognising the significance of the of the state-controlled road network in the Bowen Basin, the Queensland Government is committed to continual improvements. However, future upgrades and maintenance investment are subject to statewide priorities to ensure road network safety, serviceability and resilience against natural events.

This government is delivering its eighth record transport and roads infrastructure program in a row, as detailed in the QTRIP 2023–24 to 2026–27, which outlines \$32.1 billion in investment over the next four years and is estimated to support an average of 25,200 direct jobs over the life of the program. Of this, \$769 million is committed across TMR's Mackay/Whitsunday District (which includes the local government areas of Mackay, Whitsunday and Isaac Regional Councils), estimated to support an average of 700 direct jobs over the life of the program.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

BART MELLISH MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads
Minister for Digital Services