



## Minister for Transport and Main Roads

Our ref: PET40900  
Your ref: A677306

20 May 2021

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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 3474-21, lodged with the Legislative Assembly by Mr Shane Knuth MP, Member for Hill on 20 April 2021 and petition 3536-21, lodged with the Legislative Assembly on 11 May 2021 about a safe road between Cairns and the Tablelands.

I am pleased to advise that the Palaszczuk Government is progressing a significant program of planning and construction projects to improve safety on the Kennedy Highway and plan for long-term connectivity between Cairns and the northern Tablelands.

In late 2020, the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) implemented changed traffic conditions, including a lane closure, on the Barron River bridge near Kuranda. Although the bridge is safe, TMR expects the changed traffic conditions will remain in place until approximately October 2021, while investigations, testing and repairs are carried out.

TMR is closely monitoring traffic flow on the bridge and has measured the average delay for road users is approximately two minutes. The single-lane operation does not prohibit travel between Cairns and the Tablelands for vehicles legally permitted to use this section of Kennedy Highway.

In March 2021, the Palaszczuk Government announced a \$2.1 million investigation into long-term solutions for the Barron River crossing near Kuranda. This project will commence in mid-2021 and will look at replacing or rehabilitating the ageing bridge. Construction of any solutions identified through this planning remains unfunded.

TMR is also finalising a \$1.6 million planning study to investigate capacity, safety and efficiency improvements of transport routes between Cairns and the Northern Tablelands, including the Bridle Track. The purpose of the project is to review previous planning and determine the most appropriate focus for further planning activities. Once the project is finalised, TMR will have a better understanding of the best way to improve access between Cairns and the Northern Tablelands.

In late 2021, TMR will commence a \$30 million project to upgrade Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) on the Kuranda Range section of the Kennedy Highway, known locally as 'Kuranda Range Road'. The type of treatments under consideration include Variable Message Signs, Variable Speed Limits, radar technology (to determine travel times and traffic levels) and Closed-Circuit Television. Once installed, ITS treatments will improve TMR's situational awareness on Kuranda Range Road, enhance its ability to respond to incidents, and allow for proactive management to reduce the risk and severity of crashes. The project is funded by the Australian and Queensland governments on an 80:20 basis

under the Australian Government's Regional Economic Enabling Fund in response to economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

TMR is currently progressing two significant programs of safety upgrades on key Tablelands access routes, funded by the Queensland Government's Targeted Road Safety Program:

- a \$45 million program of safety upgrades on Kennedy Highway between Kuranda and Mareeba
- an \$18 million program of safety upgrades on Gillies Range Road between Gordonvale and Atherton.

These works include various upgrades at priority locations, including wide centre line treatments, installation of guardrail and intersection upgrades.

I have asked TMR to ensure the Member for Hill is kept up to date as this extensive program of planning and upgrades continues. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Bailey', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right and then curves downwards.

**MARK BAILEY MP**  
**Minister for Transport and Main Roads**