



Hon. Paul Lucas MP

4/1/07



Queensland
Government

Our ref: MC26639

Your ref: 749-06

Minister for
Transport and Main Roads

- 2 JAN 2006

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Re: Petition 749-06 – Kirrama Range Road

I refer to a petition lodged with the Legislative Assembly by Mr Andrew Cripps MP, Member for Hinchinbrook, on 29 November 2006 about the Kirrama Range Road.

The concerns raised by the petitioners have previously been raised directly by Mr Cripps and other concerned parties.

I am advised that Kirrama Range Road is a local government road for which Cardwell Shire Council is responsible. As the road is not part of the State-controlled Road Network, the Department of Main Roads is not responsible for its upgrade or maintenance.

Council has temporarily closed the Kirrama Range Road on the grounds of safety, legal liability concerns and an inability or desire to fund any upgrade to the road. Council did not seek Main Roads assistance to clear or repair the road after Cyclone Larry. Other shires affected by the cyclone sought and received Main Roads assistance.

Council has sought a whole-of-government approach to the upgrading and maintenance of the road.

Main Roads has offered to help council carry out a feasibility assessment for the modest upgrading of the road. This would also help identify potential funding arrangements and possible contributors to any proposed work.

Council recently resolved to proceed with investigations into what is needed to bring the road up to a safe and low-maintenance standard, including the scope of the upgrade and associated costings. Council advised that it would accept assistance from Main Roads to develop a brief to commission consulting engineers to carry out the feasibility assessment.

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Council has mentioned the need for a \$20m upgrade in media coverage. However, Main Roads has advised council that it does not believe an upgrade worth \$20m would be needed to achieve improved safety that would allow the road to be re-opened and to achieve increased tourism potential outcomes, but that a more modest upgrade could do so.

The state government does provide funding to assist local councils to upgrade and maintain roads under their control through the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS). Under TIDS, the road would be eligible for funding for modest upgrading or maintenance projects. This could include improved warning signage, clearing and maintaining roadside drains, re-gravelling of some sections and inspection of bridges. More detail would not be available until an inspection following an agreement being reached between council and Main Roads.

\$178m over two years has been allocated to the state government for TIDS funding for all local governments across the state, for which Cardwell Shire has been allocated \$314 000 for 2006-07 and \$212 000 for the 2007-08 year.

It is not possible to give an accurate estimate of the cost of an upgrade until some planning work, including more detailed investigation, has been done. As the road is not Main Roads responsibility, it has not done any work of this kind. Council would need to make a project to upgrade this road a priority (compared to other projects on shire roads) in a submission for TIDS funding, should it wish to be successful in securing funding.

I am further advised that Main Roads would only consider contributing funds toward upgrading the road provided council gave a clear commitment for the ongoing maintenance of the road. As the road is under the control of Cardwell Shire Council, any decision as to whether the road remains closed is one for council to make.

Main Roads also advised council that it may wish to consider seeking funding to upgrade the road from the federal government's AusLink Strategic Regional Program. This program is designed to assist councils to develop regional land transport infrastructure supporting industry, tourism and economic development.

The issue of a state contribution toward upgrading (not a \$20m upgrade, but a much more modest upgrade) is also being considered under the whole-of-government response to those areas affected by Cyclone Larry. This is being co-ordinated by the Department of State Development – the Cyclone Recovery and Renewal Industry Strategic Directions Economic and Business Strategy.

I thank the petitioners for further clarifying the extent of concern about this matter.

Yours sincerely

PAUL LUCAS MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads