



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Main Committee

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Petition: Warrego Highway

SPEECH

Wednesday, 19 August 2009

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Wednesday, 19 August 2009</p> <p>Page 104</p> <p>Questioner</p> <p>Speaker Scott, Bruce, MP</p>	<p>Source House</p> <p>Proof Yes</p> <p>Responder</p> <p>Question No.</p>
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Mr BRUCE SCOTT (Maranoa) (9.48 am)—I present a petition on the condition of the Warrego Highway to put on the record for evermore the urgent message from 5,362 petitioners who are calling on the federal government to immediately provide funds for the upgrade of the Warrego Highway, which runs from Charleville in the west of my electorate to Ipswich, just half an hour west of Brisbane.

The petition read as follows—

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

- the inadequate condition of the Warrego Highway, which is a vital link in the Brisbane-Darwin Corridor and major transport route for the primary, tourist, agricultural and resource industries;
- the significant increase in activity on the Highway, due to the development of the Surat Coal Basin and increased presence of resource companies in Western Queensland;
- the impact the Highway's worsening condition has on the safety of motorists and efficiency of industry.

We therefore ask the House to:

- recognise the strategic importance of the Highway to Queensland's primary, tourist, resource and agricultural industries;
- acknowledge the hazards of increased traffic and constant surface damage to locals and tourists;
- address the situation immediately by providing immediate funding for an upgrade of the Highway to ensure an appropriate standard is met for travellers, tourists and transport providers.

from 5,362 citizens

Petition received.

Mr BRUCE SCOTT—In the past few years, the Warrego Highway has seen unprecedented levels of heavy vehicle traffic as a result of the discovery and the rapid development of the Surat coal basin's resources. Added to this is the slow but painful demise of Queensland Rail, which has pushed even more large trucks onto the highway. In 2007, recognising that the ever-increasing volume of traffic on the Warrego Highway was becoming a safety issue for motorists, I announced a Liberal-National coalition election commitment of some \$128 million for the upgrade of the highway between Dalby and Mitchell. Some \$50 million of this was dedicated to the upgrade of the Roma to Mitchell corridor to allow type 2 road trains to access the Roma cattle yards, the largest cattle selling centre in the southern hemisphere.

The Rudd government responded with a commitment of some \$55 million and, whilst this is certainly welcome, I am extremely disappointed to report that not a cent of this money has been spent. It has now been almost two years since the Rudd government was elected and none of the committed money has gone to construction works and none of it has begun, anywhere, on this highway. I have spoken with the Queensland Minister for Main Roads, Craig Wallace, and have expressed the urgency of an upgrade. I am obviously willing to commit a bipartisan support to this and I know that the 5,362 people who signed the Warrego Highway petition certainly support the fast-tracking of this important work.

Of course the Warrego Highway can only sustain so much traffic, and rail must carry its fair share of the freight task in the transport of grain, coal and livestock. So today, in calling for the federal government to fast-

track these works on the Warrego Highway, I also urge the Blich government to refocus their sights on restoring the once great Queensland rail network.

My time here, unfortunately, is very limited. However, I would like to take this opportunity to thank not only the thousands of people who signed the petition but also the many Maranoa small businesses, councils, service stations, truck stops—which put this petition on display—and the many individuals who passed it around to friends and family to harbour support for this vital upgrade of the Warrego Highway. Their support has been invaluable and I thank them. This petition sends a very clear message to this government and Craig Wallace, the minister in Queensland, to get on with the job of the upgrade of the Warrego Highway.