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A message from our Regional Director, Bruce Gould

WELCOME to the May 2008 edition of *Main Roads Local Links* – the Main Roads Cairns Office’s newsletter for the Far North region.

As we all embrace the dry season with its blue skies and reprieve from the humidity, at Main Roads we’re assessing and responding to the recent wet season’s impacts and preparing for the next.

Each year we’re improving our state controlled road network’s flood immunity – and this year is no exception with a number of projects kick starting between Townsville and Cairns, thanks to a \$348 million AusLink funded Accelerated Bruce Highway Upgrade Package.

One major project motorists travelling on the Bruce Highway will soon notice is the construction of a new bridge over the Mulgrave River south of Gordonvale. The project involves the construction of a 475m bridge, as

well as roadway approach works and the relocation of the existing cane railway line.

On behalf of Main Roads and all Far North road users I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the businesses, organisations and individuals, who help us during the wet season to provide timely and accurate information about road and traffic conditions.

During the wet season they are our locally based ‘eyes and ears’ providing us with invaluable daily updates. On page eight we include a special thanks to these people and organisations.

Without their efforts we couldn’t answer the thousands of queries we receive each wet season via our 13 19 40 number or keep our website www.131940.qld.gov.au updated.



Bruce Gould

Bruce Gould (centre row third from left) pictured with members of the Peninsula Development Construction Alliance. Location - Bamaga

Greater flood immunity thanks to AusLink funding

AS Far North residents and motorists travelling through the area well know, with the wet season comes flooding and often major disruption.

Thanks to the Federal Government's \$348 million AusLink funded Accelerated Bruce Highway Upgrade Package between Townsville and Cairns the coming wet seasons should hopefully see fewer journeys stalled as motorists wait for flood waters to recede.

Our roads will have greater flood immunity as a result of projects like the new bridge over the Mulgrave River, works south of Tully and near Ingham and the upgrade of Warner Road intersection.

Queensland Main Roads Minister Warren Pitt said the introduction of the AusLink Program has allowed both federal and state governments to cooperate on a coordinated round of works designed to make the Bruce Highway safer and more flood immune.

"It is no use fixing the problem at one location if the highway is cut regularly elsewhere. The ability of the highway to better serve the community in times of flood will help sustain the local economy all year round and limit disruption," Minister Pitt said.

New Mulgrave Bridge

CONSTRUCTION of a new \$50 million bridge over the Mulgrave River on the Bruce Highway at Gordonvale will begin late May.

The project includes the construction of a 475m bridge, as well as roadway approach works and the relocation of the existing cane railway line.

The new bridge will stand five metres higher than the present one, located on a better road alignment about 30 metres upstream from the existing highway.

It is expected to be completed by Christmas 2009.



The existing Mulgrave Bridge goes under during the 2008

Warner Road Intersection Upgrade

A \$2.9 million AusLink funded upgrade of Warner Road intersection will begin in May 2008.

A T-section with the Bruce Highway and locally known as "Yarrabah Road" – the Warner Road intersection will be raised by 250 mm and culverts installed to improve flood immunity.

Traffic signals, islands and turning lanes will also be installed to increase safety for all vehicles travelling through the intersection.

Safer Roads



Kuranda Range Road - safety measures

OVER the past six months the Cairns District Office has been implementing a number of short-term safety measures on the Kuranda Range Road. It's early days, but already the measures are delivering promising results and a safer road.

Developed in response to a comprehensive safety audit of the Kuranda Range Road, most of these short term safety measures will be implemented by August 2008 as part of the Queensland Government's – *Safer Roads Sooner* program.

The audit examined the speed environment, geometry of the road, surface conditions, guardrails, line-marking and signage.

Over the next three years \$2.84 million in funding will see a range of measures implemented – some already in action include:

Reducing the speed limit

The speed limit was officially reduced from 80km/h to 60km/h in both directions between Streets Creek and the bottom of the range road at Smithfield on 15 December 2007.

The new speed limit seems to be working well and since its introduction there have been no major traffic incidents reported on the road (as at 28 April 2008).

New guardrails, warning signs and guideposts

The installation of one kilometre of guardrail was completed in April 2008.

In early April 2008, work finished on the installation of the new warning signs and additional curve warning and directional signs, and the replacement of all worn or damaged guide posts. Work on some identified shoulder drop-offs has also been completed.

In May work will commence on the asphalt surfacing of two pull-off bays for commercial bus operators at Saddle Mountain and Black Mountain Road. Signage for the pull-off bays is already in place. Safety improvement works will also start at the Henry Ross Lookout. Some resurfacing work will also be carried out to improve skid resistance.

A further \$1 million of the *Safer Roads Sooner* funding will be spent over the next two years on the provision of either a heavy vehicle safety ramp or intelligent transport systems for the road.

Curve works

The audit identified curves on the range road that require widening. Work has started on the detailed design proposal which will be finalised in negotiation with the relevant environmental agencies including WTMA, with a view to commencing construction later this year. Some \$1.1 million of the *Safer Roads Sooner* funding will be spent on these works.

SMS 4 a safer road

A NEW SMS service is helping Main Roads create a safer driving environment on the Kuranda Range Road.

On 2 January 2008 Main Roads began trialling a SMS messaging system for the more than 7,000 road users on the Kuranda Range Road.

The service involves road users registering to receive SMSs alerting them to any hazards on the road.

An SMS is sent out when there are closures of 30 minutes or more on the range.

So far more than 270 road users have registered for the service.

Using SMS messaging to alert travellers to roads closures is a first for Queensland.

The success of the service so far has led Main Roads to extend the trial until the end of June 2008.

Variable message signs have also been placed at the top and bottom of the range road and are also proving an effective communication tool.



“Using SMS messaging to alert travellers to roads closures is a first for Queensland.”

More overtaking lanes between Tully and Cairns

MORE overtaking lanes between Tully and Cairns will improve road safety for Far North motorists.

The \$23 million AusLink funded overtaking loans will begin construction during 2008 and 2009 and include:

- **Victory Creek to Jogo Road** (3.2km) - construction due to start June 2008
- **Giddens Creek to Babinda** (1.4km) - detailed design underway and construction expected to start late August 2008
- **Digger Creek to Bells Creek** - business case underway, construction expected after May 2009

Wet Season Calls Flood In

NOT only were the roads flooding from 4 to 6 March thanks to a deluge of rain, but the calls also 'flooded' into our traffic control centre.



The Traffic Management Centre and other Main Roads staff with Minister Warren Pitt and Regional Director Bruce Gould. From left to right: Rod Taylor, Krissy Croatto, Nick Smith, Warren Pitt, Les Ford and Bruce Gould

Flooding over these three days affected all our major roads on our state-controlled network, with the Gillies Highway temporarily closed.

Residents on Cairns' Northern Beaches were flooded in. Motorists trying to get in and out of Cairns on the Bruce Highway south of Gordonvale were cut off at the Mulgrave River, with the Mulgrave Bridge under.

Over these very wet three days our traffic control centre answered more than 5,000 calls from road users calling through on our 13 19 40 number, seeking information about road conditions.

Since the 13 19 40 number has been up and running (from July 2007) we have been actively promoting the number.

For the cost of a local call road users can find out the traffic and road conditions for their journey. They can also log on to www.131940.qld.gov.au and access frequently updated road and traffic reports.

Mulgrave Road facelift delivers Cairns' first

MULGRAVE Road's \$16 million upgrade is well underway. If you're one of the 40,000 motorists that use this road every day, you will soon notice some new changes to one of Cairns' busiest roads.

For the first time in Cairns there will be a dedicated bus priority lane with its own designated light. The lane will be installed next to the inbound traffic lanes near Balaclava State School and will allow public buses to queue in a separate traffic lane.

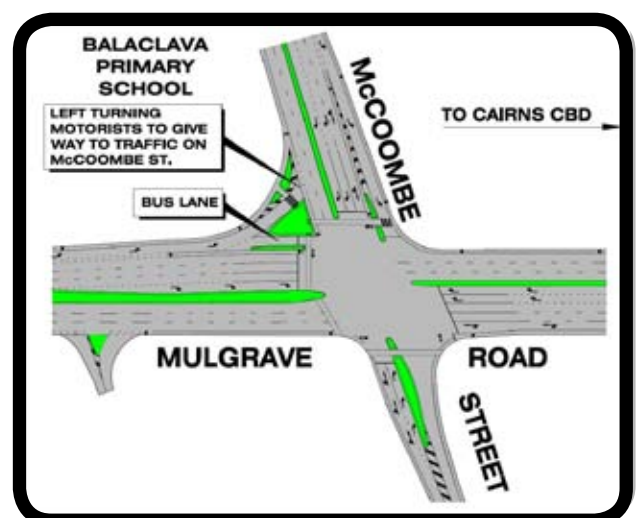
The lane will be controlled by a separate blue "B" traffic light and will be triggered by the bus. The "B" light will come on before the green light to give the buses priority.

Other changes include:

- An extra right turn lane from Mulgrave Road into McCoombe Street North
- An extra right turn lane from McCoombe Street north into Mulgrave Road South
- A high entry turn from Mulgrave Road into McCoombe Street North which means motorists will have to give

way to traffic right turning from Mulgrave Road into McCoombe Street North.

Other Mulgrave Road projects are on the horizon including widening the Aumuller Street intersection and constructing longer turning lanes and works between Lyons Street and Moody Creek (planning is currently underway).



I SURVIVED THE DRIVE TO THE CAPE BY DRIVING TO THE CONDITIONS!



photo courtesy of Tourism Queensland

THIS dry season, thanks to a new Main Roads awareness campaign, Far North motorists on the Peninsula Developmental Road (PDR) will become familiar with this message -

“I SURVIVED THE DRIVE TO THE CAPE... BY DRIVING TO THE CONDITIONS!”

On the PDR, between May and November the road is at its busiest. Tourists hit the dirt in search of four wheel driving and camping adventures and flood waters abate, allowing remote Cape York communities to return to their roads again.

Unfortunately, each year motorists on the PDR put themselves and others in danger by not driving to the road and weather conditions.

To help keep the PDR safer, Main Roads has developed an awareness campaign that will be rolled out this dry season.

The campaign will involve “Drive to the Conditions” packs being distributed along the PDR. The packs will contain useful information about the PDR and driving tips to help motorists understand the unique challenges of the road.

Main Roads Cairns Office’s Regional Director Bruce Gould said the campaign was important considering over the last five years (April 2003 to April 2008) there were more than 68 reported crashes, including eight fatalities, on the road.

“That’s a considerable figure, and on top of this number are all the other accidents and incidents that don’t get

reported,” Mr Gould said.

“The Peninsula Developmental Road can be a challenging road to drive, especially after the wet season gets a hold of it.

“The road also has isolated stretches and it’s important for visitors unfamiliar with the conditions and environment to prepare before they start their trip,” he said.

Mr Gould said 25.2 kilometres of the PDR are in the process of being upgraded to improve safety and travel times.

Recent upgrade projects on the road totalling some \$10.65 million have included:

- 3.45km of bitumen seal, including two floodways, on the section known as Telecom Tower (48km north of Coen), completed in August 2007
- 4.3km of bitumen seal from Mein to the Cape York turnoff, completed in December 2007
- 4.5km of seal from Batavia turnoff to Sudley, (started October last year - due to resume in May 2008 after work stopped for the wet season)

An upcoming \$21 million project - is the widening and sealing of the road from Lily Creek to Crocodile Gap.

This project is jointly funded by the Queensland and Federal Governments, with Cook Shire Council obtaining \$10 million of the funding via the AusLink program. The State Government is contributing the remaining \$11 million.

Kuranda Range Road Heavy Vehicle Workshop

“The information gathered from the workshop will be collated and reviewed and used to shape Kuranda Range Road’s future.”

The Kuranda Range Road

CALLING all heavy vehicle operators who drive the Kuranda Range Road...

Heavy vehicles account for 10.4 per cent of the average annual daily traffic on the road.

As part of Main Roads ongoing initiative to improve safety on the Kuranda Range Road, the department held a workshop on 16 April in Cairns with local trucking and passenger transport companies who use the range road.

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss a recent safety audit’s recommendation to limit cyclists and heavy vehicle operators to non-peak traffic times, and to seek input from the representatives of the companies about how to manage risk and improve safety on the range road.

With 14 representatives attending, the workshop provided Main Roads with valuable feedback and information.

This included strong support for the planned curve widening works, the extension of some pull-off areas, and the establishment of a proposed heavy vehicle pull-over area at the top of the range so drivers can check their loads and brakes before beginning the descent.

The workshop also provided Main Roads with the opportunity to talk about some intelligent transport

system (ITS) devices which could be applied to the road to assist with the management of traffic on this road.

The information gained from the workshop will be collated and reviewed to help formulate a heavy vehicle strategy for the road, in further consultation with representatives from the industries.

As part of the public consultation phase, Main Roads sent out 64 surveys to relevant trucking and passenger transport companies asking for information on their use of the range road and extending an invitation to attend the April workshop.

Prior to Christmas 2007, Main Roads spoke to some cyclist groups regarding the audit’s recommendation to restrict cyclists to non-peak times.

Further talks will take place with these groups in May 2008.

Want to know more?

Contact Donna Curtis, Acting Senior Public Consultation Officer (07) 4050 5584.

Thank you!

DURING the North's Wet Season, we rely on a team of people and organisations who volunteer their time and resources to help us provide up-to-date information about our roads.

On behalf of the Main Roads Cairns District Office — thank you for helping us deliver a reliable and crucial information service.

Thank you to:



RoadTek
(Peninsula Developmental Road and Lakeland)



Lakeland Roadhouse
Archer River Roadhouse
Laura Roadhouse
Hahn River Roadhouse
Musgrave Station
Sudley Station
Cairns Regional Council
CRC (Mossman)



Cassowary Coast Council
Tablelands Regional Council
(Mareeba, Herberton, Atherton and Eacham)



Etheridge Shire Council
Croydon Shire Council
Mareeba Police
Tully Police
Normanton Police
Mount Surprise Police
RACQ