

Queensland Transport and Roads
Investment Program (QTRIP)

Strategic Independent Review

Prepared For:

QUEENSLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT & MAIN ROADS

Prepared By:

Rodd Staples, Staples Advisory

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Context of the Strategic Review

This strategic independent review was finalised for the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) in June 2025, providing advice to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and senior executives of TMR. The advice aims to enhance the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program (QTRIP) by examining infrastructure delivery trends, proposing improvement strategies across the lifecycle of the program, advising on streamlined governance, proposing opportunities to elevate the program and, providing guidance on a roadmap for future transparency and efficiency in delivering the department's infrastructure program.

Prior to this strategic independent review, TMR commissioned the Transport Infrastructure Review – Program Scan Insights Report. Finalised in September 2024, this initial scan was undertaken as a diagnostic piece of work to identify key strategic risks and opportunities and to map a plan to leverage opportunities across all stages of the infrastructure lifecycle. The objective of the Program Scan was to assist the department to manage emerging strategic risks impacting delivery of its infrastructure program. With nine months since the report's finalisation, it is time to review recommendations considering emerging market conditions in Queensland, alignment to government objectives and the renewed focus on delivery for the community, inclusive of our regional users.

This strategic independent review was undertaken using a structured six-step methodology designed to provide clear and targeted insights to the Minister and senior executives of TMR. The approach was focused on developing recommendations that contribute to enhancing cost certainty, planning effectiveness, and delivery performance across the Queensland Transport Roads and Investment Program (QTRIP). Released annually, QTRIP outlines the state's planned investment in transport and road infrastructure over a four-year period.

Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program (QTRIP)

Since its establishment, QTRIP has enabled the delivery of a wide range of critical transport infrastructure across Queensland. Its strengths lie in its strong alignment with long-term transport planning, a committed four-year investment pipeline that provides funding certainty, and its ability to support projects of varying types and scale—from major metropolitan upgrades to targeted regional improvements. This structure has helped drive coordinated, strategic investment across the state's transport network.

It has seen substantial growth in its four-year funding allocations over the last decade but particularly since 2020. The 2020–21 to 2023–24 program allocation was \$26.9 billion, which increased by approximately 19.4% to \$32.1 billion in the 2023–24 to 2026–27 cycle. The most recent QTRIP for 2024–25 to 2027–28 increased a further 16.6% to \$37.438 billion. This represents a total increase of 39.2% since 2020.

TMR has a mature roads delivery function with strong success in road infrastructure program delivery, along with broader public transport and maritime infrastructure delivery. In addition to the rapid growth in the scale of the program the composition of the pipeline has shifted in recent years towards an increasingly large share of both rail investments and larger value and more complex road infrastructure upgrades.

TMR's ability to deliver on this program is challenged by a range of strategic risks, including cost escalation and funding pressures; environment and sustainability including extreme weather events; population growth; market factors and the time pressure of delivery in time for the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and

Paralympic Games. This period has seen an increasing number of projects not meeting original expectations on key measures such as budget and time, eroding confidence in QTRIP amongst stakeholders.

There is an opportunity for Government and TMR to adapt more quickly to the evolving challenges within QTRIP, sharpening their focus on better development planning, delivery and performance that will deliver better value for money. While there is clear evidence of considerable work already underway within TMR, further uplift is required to meet the demands of a larger and more diverse infrastructure program. Greater integration, discipline and strategic focus will be essential to achieving long-term success.

At the same time, delivering on the ambitions of QTRIP requires a collective effort. While TMR leads and coordinates the program, its success depends on a strong partnership with stakeholders and industry. Lifting performance, enhancing cost certainty, and building delivery confidence cannot be achieved by government alone. It demands active engagement, greater commercial maturity, and the involvement of fresh thinking from industry's best and brightest—consultants, contractors, and suppliers alike. Strengthening this partnership will be critical to turning QTRIP's investment ambitions into tangible, timely, and value for money outcomes for Queenslanders.

Recommendations Overview

Recommendations from this strategic independent review focus on the:

- **QTRIP Profile and Structure (A):** Opportunities exist to enhance how QTRIP is structured, elevating the program to a strategic level (aligning to government objectives), delivering a more sustainable pipeline of work, moderating expenditure growth while confidence in delivery is developed, and grouping projects by phase and program.
- **Project Development (B):** Opportunities exist to enhance project development by applying selective Rapid Assessment processes, strengthening the QTRIP reporting discipline, adopting risk-based approaches and improving the cost allocation throughout each stage of the project lifecycle.
- **Project Procurement and Delivery (C):** Opportunities exist to introduce consistency in contract packaging and commercial models, inclusive of early market engagement, a wider range of models and minimum commercial readiness requirements, supported by timely performance monitoring.
- **Risk, Cost and Contingency Management (D):** Opportunities exist to develop better risk management frameworks, update key guidelines for cost estimation and link contingency to quantified risks using structured tracking to promote transparency and proactive cost control, supported by a regime of timely review cycles.
- **Project Approval and Assurance framework (E):** Opportunities exist to embed a risk-based project profiling framework that guides project assurance, updates to the Queensland Project Assessment Framework (PAF), the focus of infrastructure governance and gating on strategic and systemic risk oversight, and the inclusion of independent oversight on Major Projects forums.
- **Other Considerations (F):** Additional observations were made during the review which relate to implementing consistency in governance and management across all infrastructure programs, strengthening capabilities (through learning, training and development) critical to delivering the program and formally tracking progress against recommendations of multiple reviews.

Recommendations

A. QTRIP Profile and Structure

A.1 **Moderate QTRIP capital expenditure growth until greater confidence in cost and delivery is achieved**

Moderating capital growth will support TMR in better adjusting its organisational resources and systems to the scale of the program. It will also support the development of stronger internal capability, improve cost estimation practices, enhance commercial management and better focus the resources of the market. This measure will enable more focused project development and more consistent delivery outcomes across QTRIP.

A.2 **Prioritise QTRIP investments that align with core Government priorities**

A program-wide review should be undertaken in support of moderating capital expenditure growth in the overall program, ensuring available funding is directed to projects that deliver key outcomes such as safety, network resilience, regional connectivity, and the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This approach will enhance fiscal discipline and ensure that both development and delivery activities are more sharply focused on the program's most critical objectives.

A.3 **Restructure QTRIP to distinguish between development-phase and delivery-phase projects**

This distinction acknowledges the significantly different status and risk profiles of projects at each stage. Clarifying project maturity within QTRIP will improve transparency, support more targeted performance monitoring, and enable more informed decision-making by government.

A.4 **Present QTRIP as a more strategic and balanced capital program by consolidating smaller projects into sub-programs**

Major projects should continue to be listed individually, while smaller projects—based on a defined risk profile or value threshold—should be grouped into sub-programs aligned with TMR's internal structures. This approach will more accurately reflect the overall risk profile of QTRIP and respond to the significant growth in program scale and expenditure since its inception.

B. Project Development

B.1 **Apply a more selective Rapid Assessment process to limit the number of projects under development**

A more selective Rapid Assessment process should be used to evaluate the broader pool of candidate projects and focus TMR and industry resources on the most viable and strategically aligned initiatives. This process should utilise TMR's existing 'Gate 0' initial project analysis, but with tighter controls on the number and value of projects progressing beyond this point. The total 'project value under development' within each program should be proportionate with the likely available capital over the forward years—ensuring that effort is directed toward projects with a realistic path to funding and delivery. This approach will reduce sunk costs in lower-priority projects and improve the focus and quality of early-stage planning.

B.2 Strengthen discipline in QTRIP reporting and communications for projects under development

Stronger reporting discipline during the development phase is critical to managing expectations, maintaining trust, and supporting sound investment decisions. Reporting should focus on what is known and controllable—strategic intent, expected outcomes, and clear next steps—rather than premature cost and schedule estimates. Public reporting should be limited until scope, risks, and business case approvals are clearly defined, reducing the risk of unrealistic expectations that can lead to poor planning decisions—such as engaging contractors before the scope is settled to meet an untested public completion date. Development teams should work to indicative targets but also test a range of benefit–cost–time options to improve value for money and support more informed government decisions.

B.3 Adopt a risk-based, context-specific approach to project development

Project development should reflect the unique characteristics of each initiative, with a shift in some cases from broad strategic analysis to more detailed scope definition and implementation planning. Activities should be tailored to maximise value and manage key risks, rather than following a rigid or templated process. This approach—identified early through the Rapid Assessment phase—ensures development effort is proportionate to project complexity and improves the likelihood of success.

B.4 Ensure major investment programs allocate adequate development funding to their projects

This will enable the timely completion of essential technical investigations—such as geotechnical, environmental, and utilities assessments—during the business case phase. Sufficient early funding supports more robust project planning and helps reduce risk during procurement and delivery.

B.5 Standardise cost estimating expectations for business case completion

In conjunction with Category D recommendations, there is opportunity to establish clear guidance on cost estimate maturity, contingency levels, and investigation requirements. Business cases should transparently document confidence levels and highlight any significant residual delivery risks. This will support better investment decision-making and manage expectations through the project lifecycle.

C. Project Procurement and Delivery

C.1 Establish a consistent framework for selecting contract packaging and commercial models

TMR should adopt a structured decision-making process to guide how major projects and programs are procured. This will support more strategic planning, improve market engagement, and ensure delivery models are better aligned with project complexity, risk, and market conditions.

C.2 Implement structured project performance tracking from business case to completion

For major projects and programs, TMR should establish a consistent process to monitor benefits realisation, value of work completed, cost to complete, and contingency. This should include defined review points—such as pre-tender, pre-award, key milestones, and intervals no greater than 12 months—to ensure benefits remain on track, risks are actively managed, and cost discipline is maintained throughout delivery.

C.3 Embed early market engagement into project planning for major procurements

Structured engagement with industry during the planning phase can help shape procurement models, assess market capacity, and test delivery timeframes and packaging approaches. This will improve commercial alignment, reduce procurement risk, and foster more competitive and informed bidding.

C.4 Use the full range of commercial models to ensure appropriate risk-sharing

The COVID and post-COVID period rightly saw a shift toward more collaborative contracting to maintain momentum and manage delivery risks. Looking ahead, restoring confidence in QTRIP will require broader use of commercial models—matched to project needs and market conditions—to ensure risks are shared appropriately. Achieving this will depend on more disciplined project development and moderating total investment growth to ease supply chain pressures and support a more stable and commercially balanced delivery environment.

C.5 Establish minimum commercial readiness requirements prior to tender release

Ensure that critical elements—such as scope clarity, risk allocation, approvals, and stakeholder commitments—are completed to a defined standard before market engagement. This will reduce rework, variations, and cost escalation during delivery, and improve confidence among bidders.

C.6 Implement delivery performance monitoring at the portfolio level

Beyond individual projects, introduce consistent metrics and reporting on delivery performance across the QTRIP program. This will allow TMR to identify systemic delivery challenges, track trends in schedule and cost variance, and inform continuous improvement efforts across programs.

D. Risk, Cost and Contingency Management

D.1 Implement an integrated risk management framework across project, program, and QTRIP

The framework should establish a clear hierarchy of risk with bi-annual review cycles using both bottom-up and top-down approaches. This will ensure risks are systematically identified, escalated, and managed across the portfolio, and should become a key area of focus for infrastructure governance, specifically improving the strategic oversight role.

D.2 Update and maintain DTMR's cost estimating guidelines for all QTRIP project type

Ensure the guidelines are applicable to small-scale, complex, and time-critical projects, and establish a regular update cycle—at least bi-annually—to incorporate lessons learned, market conditions, and policy changes. This will improve consistency, transparency, and responsiveness in cost planning.

D.3 Strengthen contingency management across the full project lifecycle through disciplined risk tracking and allocation

Contingency should be clearly linked to quantified, identified risks, with a structured process for tracking risk status and associated allocations over time. As risks are mitigated or retired, contingency should be reviewed and adjusted accordingly. This will promote transparency, improve cost control, and ensure that contingency funds are managed proactively and proportionately throughout project delivery.

E. Project Approvals and Assurance Framework

E.1 Adopt a more sophisticated risk-based project profiling framework to guide assurance oversight, including revisions to the Government's broader Project Assurance Framework

Move beyond reliance on simple dollar thresholds by incorporating a broader set of criteria to prioritise high-risk projects for review. The framework could align with practices in other jurisdictions, raising financial thresholds while introducing qualitative risk factors to capture small but strategically critical projects. Less complex, larger projects could receive lighter oversight. Implementing this approach will require updates to Queensland's Project Assessment Framework (PAF).

E.2 Refocus the TMR infrastructure governance to capture strategic and systemic risk oversight

The governance should prioritise the review of high-risk, high-profile projects and broader systemic risks across major investment programs. This will help ensure that assurance processes are targeted, risk-based, and contribute meaningfully to governance and delivery outcomes.

E.3 Enhance DTMR's quarterly Major Project Review forum by introducing an independent oversight panel

The panel should report to the Director-General and include external expertise in procurement, contracting, and project delivery. It would complement the existing Project Assessment Framework (PAF) by providing additional independent assurance and oversight during the procurement and delivery phases of high-risk or complex projects, and strategic advice as required by the Director-General, strengthening governance and decision-making across the capital program.

F. Other Considerations

F.1 Align non-QTRIP infrastructure programs with QTRIP governance and management frameworks

Where feasible, apply the same project management, governance, and assurance regimes to infrastructure programs outside of QTRIP. This will support more consistent oversight of TMR's total capital investment, improving transparency, coordination, and performance across the portfolio.

F.2 Deliver targeted training to strengthen DTMR capability in risk, cost, and value disciplines

Training programs should focus on risk management, cost estimating, and value engineering, and be embedded into business-as-usual practice. They should be regularly updated to reflect evolving guidelines, lessons learned, and findings from internal and external reviews.

F.3 Strengthen commercial delivery capability across DTMR and improve coordination across related functions

Enhance capability and capacity in commercial delivery models, procurement, and delivery-phase commercial management, with strong integration with cost estimating and risk management functions. This effort should improve support to project and program teams, promote leading practices, and ensure lessons learned are shared across the organisation. It should draw on existing internal expertise while introducing new resources to build greater consistency, alignment, and commercial discipline across the infrastructure lifecycle.

F.4 Create a consolidated register of internal and external review recommendations with action tracking

The register should be regularly maintained and reported to the TMR Executive Leadership team to improve visibility of recurring issues, ensure follow-through on key findings, and reduce duplication of effort. Action trackers will support accountability and help embed continuous improvement across the department.

Next Steps

To build momentum and ensure coordinated follow-through, TMR should prepare an integrated implementation plan within the next eight weeks to respond to the findings of this review and align with relevant recommendations from other recent departmental reviews. The plan should outline clear responsibilities, timeframes, and sequencing of actions, with the aim of addressing the substantive recommendations within the next twelve months.

Attachment: Terms of Reference

In 2025, TMR engaged Rodd Staples to conduct a strategic independent review of the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program (QTRIP). The Terms of Reference for this independent review which has been established to provide advice to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and senior executives of TMR includes:

- i. Review implementation of improvement activities**
Review and provide a current state update on progress towards implementation of recommendations from previous reviews.
- ii. Examine trends and provide insights**
Provide insights on trends in the infrastructure delivery lifecycle that should be further examined by TMR, with a focus on increasing cost certainty in infrastructure project delivery and in delivering value for taxpayers.
- iii. Review the prioritisation process**
Conduct a peer review of the current process used to prioritise projects for incorporation into the QTRIP.
- iv. Propose strategies for contract performance and risk management**
Provide strategies for contract performance management and risk management, considering the impact of program versus project risk and the role of insurance cost bonds as a cost driver.
- v. Streamline governance**
Provide advice on coordination and streamlining of approvals through the infrastructure lifecycle inclusive of formal committees and departmental processes.
- vi. Enhance the QTRIP format**
Provide guidance on the current QTRIP format, layout and display, suggesting alternatives to ensure an appropriate level of detail while improving program agility and maintaining transparency.
- vii. Elevate the QTRIP to a strategic level**
Determine how to elevate QTRIP to a more strategic level with a focus on allocation of funding based on achievable outcomes.
- viii. Assess market capacity**
Consider market capacity to manage pipeline (that is, the best use of tiers in the market, and even with that approach, constraints may mean a prioritised approach to delivery)
- ix. Develop a roadmap**
Provide a roadmap to transition to a future state that ensures full transparency in delivering the department's infrastructure program, while minimising costs and time delays. This roadmap should ensure delivery of the extensive capital works program, meeting the essential transport needs of the growing State and the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and ensuring safety for all users, including those in regional users.