Future-proofing the Bruce
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Message from the Premier

Running almost 1700 kilometres from Brisbane to Cairns, the Bruce Highway is a vital artery supporting the transportation of goods, workers and businesspeople that are the lifeblood of our regional economies.

Of the 1.4 million people who live outside South East Queensland, 1.2 million live north of Noosa. The cities, towns and regions that the Bruce connects support 600,000 jobs.

The Bruce Highway is critical to the tens of thousands of local movements of people and freight to our five major ports and regional business centres. Millions of tonnes of meat and livestock, sugar, grains, fruit and vegetables, and hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders and tourists rely upon the Bruce Highway for some portion of their journey.

Traffic activity on the Bruce Highway intensifies within these regional economic zones that are an essential element of a myriad of supply chains in our national economy.

Many Queenslanders’ lives and livelihoods depend upon the safe and reliable operation of the Bruce Highway. However, the capacity of the Bruce Highway needs to increase to meet the demands of growing volumes of freight and passenger vehicle movements as our population and exports increase.

If this corridor does not allow fast, reliable freight movements, the opportunities for continued economic growth in these regions and our national economy will be unnecessarily constrained. Too many accidents occur. Flooding frequently disrupts the flow of traffic along the corridor.

Queenslanders need an efficient Bruce Highway and certainty that it will be upgraded and maintained into the future.

I want to take the politics out of upgrading the Bruce by tasking a new Bruce Highway Trust to identify the upgrades most important to Queenslanders and deliver more than $1 billion of funding annually.

Only the Palaszczuk Government will ensure safety, unlock economic benefits and efficiency, and strengthen flood resilience in Queensland.
A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will:

- Establish the Bruce Highway Trust, with a total investment remit of $1 billion annually, to deliver long-term investment certainty for Queensland’s longest road
- Commit $200 million annually to the Trust and provide an initial injection of $175 million for targeted productivity-boosting, safety and flood resilience projects
- To kick-start our renewed focus on a better Bruce, we’ll bring forward the upgrade of the Townsville Ring Road to dual-carriage way between Douglas and Bohle Plains
- Fight for Queensland’s fair share of Federal Government funding and return of the $116 million raided by the Turnbull Government from the Bruce Highway Upgrade Program
- Complete the Gympie bypass with the construction of the final missing link – Cooroy to Curra (Section D).
The Newman-Nicholls Legacy

Under the former Newman-Nicholls Government, Queenslanders saw massive cuts to programs as they slashed more than $600 million from roads and transport infrastructure funding, including $60 million cut from road safety and a further $73 million cut from cycling infrastructure.

At the same time, the Newman-Nicholls Government established a secret branch within the Department of Transport and Main Roads to fast-track plans for privatisation and outsourcing, despite its ‘no asset sales’ commitment to the people of Queensland.

They spent more than $30 million in taxpayer money on this work – all of it before asking Queenslanders whether to go ahead with the Newman-Nicholls Government’s controversial agenda.

When Tim Nicholls was Treasurer, RoadTek roles were slashed by over 700 staff members.

These job losses were part of the former Newman-Nicholls Government’s hostile attitude towards public servants, with more than 14,000 Queenslanders sacked – breaking another clear election commitment.

As Opposition Leader, Tim Nicholls did nothing as his federal LNP colleagues raided Bruce Highway funding to the tune of $116 million.

Tim Nicholls’ cut, sack and sell approach had a massive impact on Queensland’s road and transport sector – an impact that the Palaszczuk Government is still working to repair.
The Palaszczuk Government’s Record

With a state-controlled road network of more than 33,000 kilometres, it is essential that we continue to deliver safe, more efficient road networks for all Queenslanders, regardless of where they live.

A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will maintain its investment in funding programs which deliver improved infrastructure for regional Queensland. This includes the current $8.5 billion 10-year program to fix the Bruce Highway, which is jointly-funded with the Federal Government.

In 2017-18, there are more than $500 million of works scheduled along the Bruce Highway, with another $5.1 billion programmed over the remainder of the forward estimates. A number of key projects and programs are already underway:

- Cairns Southern Access Stage 2 - Robert Road to Foster Road ($58 million)
- Cattle and Frances Creeks Upgrade south of Ingham ($118.9 million)
- Sandy Gully Bridge Upgrade north of Bowen ($57.5 million)
- Mackay Ring Road ($497.8 million)
- Cooroy to Curra - Section C ($384.2 million)
- Caloundra Road to Sunshine Motorway ($929.3 million)
- Bruce Highway Safety Package, including pavement widening, safety barriers, and rest areas ($1.22 billion)
- Bruce Highway Overtaking Lanes ($369 million)

Northern Access Upgrade Stage I, Rockhampton ($121 million)

(*funding amounts are estimated total project costs)

We will continue to deliver these key projects, while working with the Federal Government to reinvest any savings into new projects, such as the recently-announced $662.5 million for priority upgrades between Pine River and Caloundra.
Our Plans: Putting Queenslander First

Our Commitment to Upgrading the Bruce

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to the $8.5 billion Bruce Highway Upgrade Program. The Bruce Highway is the backbone of Queensland’s extensive road network and critical to Australia’s economy. Queensland must have a continuous long-term investment and construction planning framework to develop and sustain this critical asset.

The Bruce Highway Upgrade Program was intended to provide investment certainty through to 2022-2023. The Federal LNP Government has raided this fund to the tune of $116 million. Any savings made during projects should be reinvested along the Bruce, and not pilfered for other states.

A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will go above and beyond our funding commitments for the remainder of the program, and will take the fight to Canberra to stop raids on funding for political gain in other states.

Future-proofing the Bruce

A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will deliver long-term investment certainty for Queensland’s most important highway.

Queenslanders deserve better than a single lane road that dates back to the 1950s as their national highway and primary transport corridor. Upgrading the highway to four lanes can’t be done overnight, but targeted investment in the key parts of the corridor that carry the greatest volume of traffic, or are vulnerable to closure from flooding, could transform perceptions of mobility in those regions and open up new opportunities for trade, investment and jobs.
The growth pressures in South East Queensland could be eased if businesses and families could trust there is an efficient and reliable connection between our cities and social networks. Regional cities along the coast have the facilities and services in place to support larger populations, but businesses and people won’t move there unless they believe they can travel reliably, safely and efficiently.

Twenty years ago it took almost three hours to get to Byron Bay or Noosa. Now with four-lane highways all the way, many people in Brisbane consider it an easy day trip.

Since the process of building dual-carriageways along the Pacific Highway in NSW started 20 years ago, the number of serious accidents has reduced by 50 per cent. By 2020, the Pacific Highway will be dual carriageway from Hexham right through to Brisbane. Of the 1682 kilometres of the Bruce Highway, only a fraction is dual-carriageway, and it is now one of the most dangerous roads in Australia.

By bolstering the current rate of investment in the Bruce Highway for the next 20 years beyond the current program, the busiest parts of the network will be able to be traversed safely, reliably and efficiently, and investment decisions can be made without worrying about the risks of transport failure.

Our Solution

Upgrades to Queensland’s longest road should be determined by the Queenslanders who know it best. A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will establish the Bruce Highway Trust to develop a new 15-year vision for the Bruce Highway.

The Trust will identify and prioritise projects to be delivered through rolling five-year Action Plans.

All too often, key projects have been constrained and delayed due to funding commitments. A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will allocate at least $200 million per annum following the delivery of the Trust’s first Action Plan to deliver priority projects.

In line with historical funding arrangements, the Federal Government will be expected to meet its fair share of funding commitments consistent with the funding arrangements for the National Land Transport Network. This will result in an annual combined expenditure on the Bruce locked in at over $1 billion a year.

How it will work

The Bruce Highway is too important to be used as a political football. A re-elected Palaszczuk Government would appoint a pre-eminent Queenslander as Chair of the Trust.

The Trust will draw on the knowledge of the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), the Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (RACQ), the Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF), the Queensland Trucking Association (QTA), Transport Workers Union (TWU) and other peak bodies. Representatives from the Department of Transport, Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and the Federal Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development will be invited to join the Trust to provide subject matter and governance expertise.
The Trust will identify projects on the basis of three key factors:

- Contribution to economic growth and productivity
  - Faster, more reliable freight flows on to a lower cost-of-living in all regions along the coast. The vehicle operating cost of driving a semi-trailer for one hour is around $100, or $120 for a B-Double. The 660 km Pacific Highway upgrade has reduced the journey time from the Tweed River to Newcastle from nine hours to less than seven hours. Modern roads also reduce the wear and tear on heavy vehicles.
  - Potential candidate projects include:
    - Rockhampton Ring Road
    - Ingham to Cardwell Range Deviation
    - Childers Bypass.

- Improving the Bruce’s flood resilience
  - Flooding frequently disrupts the flow of people and goods between and within regions at any of 36 sites along the corridor. The Department of Transport and Main Roads has identified ten sites of major concern between Gympie and Cairns, where flooding has stopped traffic for at least 12 hours, and sometimes for days.
  - Potential candidate projects include:
    - Goorganga Plains
    - Jumper Creek.

- Safety benefits
  - While the installation of 725 km of wide centre land marking appears to have reduced the number of road deaths on the Bruce Highway over recent years, 1,310 people were either killed or seriously injured in the four years from 2013 to 2016, little better than the 1,374 killed or hospitalised from 2009 to 2012. Significant investment is required to dramatically reduce these horrible incidents.
  - Potential candidate project:
    - Mackay to Sarina

To ensure identified projects deliver value-for-money for Queensland, Building Queensland will be tasked with evaluating individual projects where investment is between $50-$100 million and lead preparation of business cases where investment exceeds $100 million. The Department of Transport and Main Roads will undertake the assessment of all remaining projects.

To kick-start our commitment to boosting the Bruce, an initial $175 million will be provided to the Trust for targeted productivity and immediate safety upgrades along the broader Bruce Highway network. Jobs are crucial to growth in regional Queensland. From paddock to port, an efficient and safe road network bolsters our ability to grow our economy and support businesses.

A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will provide the Trust with $10 million over two years for the development of the 15-year vision and initial Action Plan.

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Townsville Ring Road

A growing city shouldn’t be constricted by bottlenecks on its road network. A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will bring forward funding to duplicate the Douglas to Bohle Plains section of the Townsville Ring Road to four lanes. The Townsville Ring Road is one of the busiest sections of the Bruce Highway but a 10-kilometre stretch is still only one lane in each direction and is already at traffic capacity.

Following this project, the entire Bruce Highway link from Cluden to Mount Low will be dual-lane in both directions. The project will also add access to the Ring Road from Beck Drive.

While the Federal Government has allocated a small amount of money for planning and design in 2019-20 and 2020-21, construction is not expected to begin until at least 2022. Townsville cannot wait that long. The Palaszczuk Government will bring forward planned expenditure to finalise design works in 2018 and begin construction in 2019. A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will guarantee its share to this $180 million project.

Gympie bypass – Cooroy to Curra (Section D)

The stretch of the Bruce Highway between Cooroy and Curra was one of the most dangerous sections of the National Land Transport Network. Major upgrade works on this section have increased capacity and most importantly improved safety but there is more work to do. The final stage of this project between Woondum and Curra will create a Gympie bypass and complete the 61 kilometre project. Both the State and Federal governments committed $50 million towards the planning of Section D last year. A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will commit our 20 per cent share of the project to construct the missing link.
Safety Hotspots

Too many families have been touched by tragedy as a result of accidents on the Bruce Highway. A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will commit $30 million to deliver targeted investments in safety hotspots along the Bruce.

This $30 million commitment will be invested to boost our commitment to wide centreline treatments and establish more frequent rest areas. Roadside rest areas are designated spaces on highways and roads where drivers and passengers can take breaks to reduce driver fatigue. When suitably located, they play an important role in improving safety. Wide centreline treatments provide extra distance between opposing directions of traffic and allows for additional reaction time if a driver unintentionally drifts across the highway.

The proposed sites will be strategically-informed by consultation with local government, the tourism industry and the community, as well as a comprehensive analysis of the traffic volume and use of routes, including both freight and tourism, and crash data. The program complements other related road safety initiatives being undertaken through community-industry-government partnerships.

Supercharging the Bruce

The Palaszczuk Government kick-started Queensland’s electric vehicle revolution with the launch of our Electric Vehicle Strategy and the construction of phase one of the Queensland Electric Super Highway. With electric vehicle ownership rapidly increasing, it’s important our state-controlled road network has the infrastructure to support it.

A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will invest $2.5 million to reduce the distance between charging stations along Australia’s longest electric super charger highway. We are committed to accelerating the uptake of electric vehicles and having more Queenslanders and tourists travelling in low or zero emission vehicles.