

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Budget Estimates February 2010
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question No.: NB-II 01

Division/Agency: Nation Building –Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Congestion in Capital Cities.

Hansard Page/s: 38 (09/02/10)

Senator Back asked:

Senator BACK—Can you give some estimate as to how much you think you will reduce that equivalent \$20 billion figure by?

Ms O’Connell—We have not done the predictive modelling in terms of what that might reduce by. We can certainly take it on notice to have a look at what modelling might have been done in terms of that reduction. I think it is fair to say that when all of these projects were assessed, they were assessed with criteria that did look at issues like reduction of congestion, as in each individual project, but we have not got an aggregate in terms of reduction of congestion.

Answer:

The estimate of \$20 billion in avoidable congestion costs for Australia’s capital cities in 2020 assumed capacity growth of one per cent a year.

The estimate has not been updated to take account of specific projects and it is extremely difficult to estimate in advance the impact that individual projects will have on city-wide congestion.

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Question No.: NB-II 02

Division/Agency: Nation Building –Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Pacific Motorway Upgrades

Hansard Page/s: 39-40 (09/02/10)

Senator Back asked:

Senator BACK—What data was used in allocating the priority areas, and can you table for us, or could you take on notice and provide to us, copies of that relevant data? Is that to Ms McNally?

Ms McNally—Yes, Senator.

Senator BACK—Thank you. Can you provide that or do you have it with you?

Ms McNally—I will provide it. Some of it is still the subject of detailed planning, so we can provide what we have available. being provided to?

Senator BACK—Yes. I am looking for the data in terms of what prioritised the areas that needed work doing, and the order in which they were done and therefore the expenditure and what extent, if at all, the minister or staff of the minister took in determining those sections of the M1 to be funded in this particular tranche that you have spoken about. If you could provide me with that information, I would be appreciative. Also, was your department the federal department involved in identifying which were priority orders? The basis on which I am particularly interested to know that is from the perspective of accidents or, tragically, deaths that might have occurred.

Mr Mrdak—We will seek that information. We do not have that detail with us.

Senator BACK—Sure, but could you make that available to me. Finally, on this particular one, since I gave an introduction to my comments just by way of background about the involvement of the Queensland government, when was it that the federal government was informed by the Queensland government that the 18½ kilometres of the promised Tugun to Nerang section would not be upgraded? Can you give us any advice on that?

Ms McNally—I will have to take all of that on notice.

Answer:

Priority areas were identified from the data collected from the planning study undertaken by Maunsell Australia Pty Ltd.

The Queensland Government proposed the order based on data received from the planning study.

Minister Albanese agreed to the projects as identified by the Queensland Government.

The Department has not received advice from the Queensland Government that the Tugun to Nerang section of the Motorway would not be upgraded.

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Question No.: NB-II 03

Division/Agency: Nation Building –Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Urban Infrastructure - Innisfail, North QLD

Hansard Page/s: 41 (09/02/10)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Yes, but do you have any influence over the work that is done? That is a stretch of roadway on a bad highway from Brisbane to Cairns. That would be the worst section. There are a lot of deaths there. There was some suggestion that, because it cut through the rainforest, they were instead going to kill people and save animals and a few trees that are nowhere near unique. I am just wondering if the Commonwealth has any ability to say to Queensland: ‘Look, forget about your green mates in the leafy suburbs of Brisbane. Push the road through. Sure, we will kill some trees and some animals, but it is better killing them than killing people.’ All I am saying is: does the Commonwealth have any ability to push the construction of what is a desperately needed piece of infrastructure to save lives?

Ms McNally—Certainly, we can seek to have the rationale for those sorts of decisions addressed. There also is community consultation as part of these processes, and we can work closely with the Queensland government, and we do, to identify the sorts of issues that each particular road raises and the best outcomes for the community and others on that.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Could you advise me, perhaps on notice, what, if any, submissions are made to the Queensland government in relation to that particular issue, and with what priority they are concerned about deaths there. If you would not mind providing a sort of general report on that particular issue, I will not ask too many other questions. Just another couple of quick ones. There is a desperately needed piece of urban infrastructure in Innisfail, North Queensland—the Jubilee Bridge crossing the South Johnstone River. Funding was applied for and was knocked back, I understand, just recently. Can anyone confirm that?

Ms McNally—I have not got that information with me. I would have to take that on notice.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I thought one of your assistants behind you looked as if she might have known something about it.

Ms McNally—No, they have not got it with them.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—There was an application for funding. It really joins Innisfail. Innisfail is dissected by two major rivers, the north and South Johnstone. This bridge goes over one. It is quite an old bridge. It is the Jubilee. I am not sure which Jubilee it was, but it has been there for a long time. It is about to be condemned and cannot take heavy traffic. They applied for nation building and, as I understand it, they were knocked back. Could I get the reasons for that and any other information you could give me about it.

Ms McNally—Yes, I will see what we can do.

Answer:

The Department works closely with the Queensland Government to identify safety issues. The project area has the following crash history (1990 – 2008):

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▪ Fatal	5
▪ Hospitalisation	23
▪ Injury	19
▪ Property	31

The upgrade of the Bruce Highway on the Cardwell Range will address many safety concerns. The upgrade will also provide for a road over rail overpass at Rungoo, which is the site of the crash that resulted in two train drivers' deaths.

The Cassowary Coast Regional Council has written to the Government seeking financial support towards the cost of replacing the Jubilee Bridge. As the bridge does not form part of the National Land Transport Network, funding for a replacement bridge is a matter for the Queensland Government and Cassowary Coast Regional Council.

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Question No.: NB-II 04

Division/Agency: Nation Building –Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Mackay Road Project Funding

Hansard Page/s: 41 (09/02/10)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—We know the history, Minister. Just quickly, in Mackay, there was a project where the government announced \$14.4 million for a road project in January last year. In December of last year, there was a much celebrated opening of that project, but the funding was said to be \$12.3 million and we just wonder if you could, perhaps on notice, give me a brief explanation of the difference?

Ms McNally—We are happy to do that, Senator.

Answer:

The Australian Government commitment to the “Upgrade the southern approach to Mackay” project was \$50 million, as announced prior to the 2007 Federal Election.

The total Stage 1 cost of \$14.4 million, as announced in February 2009, included concurrent works undertaken by the Mackay Regional Council and local developers. The level of Council and developer investment subsequently varied, reducing the overall cost of Stage 1 to \$12.3 million.

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Question No.: NB-II 05

Division/Agency: Nation Building –Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Bruce Highway Upgrade

Hansard Page/s: 43 (09/02/10)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Can you give me details of how many houses would have to be resumed, how many businesses would have to be closed down and how many schools would have to relocate or have major alteration to their entrances? Could you try and get that information for me?

Ms McNally—The study is still being undertaking.

Senator Conroy—Studies and planning have indicated that progressively upgrading the existing Bruce Highway is the way to go. We have \$150 million invested in it. We are getting on with the job. After 12 years of inaction, you seem now to be arguing for more studies and more delays.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Minister, because at times I like you, I would just suggest to you that I would not get too fixed on a particular route at this time, bearing in mind Leichhardt is a very marginal seat. If I can get the answer to my question about how many people's homes will be resumed, how many people's businesses will be destroyed and how many thousands of people at the schools will be adversely impacted by the proposed route, then you might be as interested as I will be in the answers to that. So if we can get that—

Ms McNally—The detailed study is not due till the middle of this year and information relating to those resumptions will not be available until after that. So I guess the answer is we could take that on notice eventually.

Mr Mrdak—We will get you what information we can at this stage. But, as Ms McNally is indicating, the full details of those options and implications will not be available till the study is completed later this year. We will get you what information we can from Queensland at this stage.

Answer:

The Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads has identified three potential options for the upgrade of the Bruce Highway on the southern approach to Cairns. Extensive community consultation has been undertaken on the options as part of the planning process. The Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads have indicated that the preferred option will be finalised by mid 2010 at which time the impact on property owners can be determined.

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Question No.: NB-II 06

Division/Agency: Nation Building –Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Princes Highway Duplication - Traralgon to Sale

Hansard Page/s: 44 (09/02/10)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—I want to talk about the Princes Highway east from Traralgon to Sale in Victoria. I refer to a commitment that was made in a media release of 27 November 2007 by the minister Martin Ferguson for \$140 million to start duplicating the Princes Highway east from Traralgon to Sale. Can you provide an update on that update?

Mr Mrdak—My understanding is that the construction contract for the Traralgon East section was awarded on 14 January this year to Fulton Hogan Pty Ltd. Construction of that section commenced on 1 February.

Senator NASH—I think the section of road is over 50 kilometres. Is the \$140 million figure correct?

Ms McNally—That is correct.

Senator NASH—As I understand it, there is a lot of single lane along those 50 kilometres. How much of that 50 kilometres is that \$140 million expected to address?

Ms McNally—We will have to take that on notice. It is 44 kilometres in total.

Senator NASH—Is there any commitment for future funding to deal with the last six kilometres, or is there a reason that is not being dealt with?

Ms McNally—I would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

The Princes Highway east from Traralgon to Sale in Victoria is approximately 50 kilometres. However, approximately 6 kilometres of the highway runs through existing townships and will therefore not be duplicated.

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Question No.: NB-II 07

Division/Agency: Nation Building –Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Finalisation of schedules of projects under MOU's with states and territories

Hansard Page/s: 50-51 (09/02/10)

Senator Abetz asked:

Senator ABETZ—Which was at the hands of the bureaucracy, one would imagine, at all times and deliberately not provided. I now turn to NBII 06. I asked in relation to the MOUs that were signed with the states and territories. I was told by Ms McNally:

The list was finalised when the MOUs were provided to the states and territories.

I then asked:

And what date was that?

Ms McNally:

I would have to take on notice.

Quite reasonable. I am then told:

The Nation Building projects can be found on the Nation Building Program website.

Just press the button for the same answer. I actually want to know the date. I am not interested in the projects. I

was asking about the date the various MOUs were provided to the states and territories. Can we be told that, please? What was the date?

Mr Mrdak—I will find that for you, Senator.

Answer:

The National Partnership Agreement on Implementation of the Nation Building Program 2009-2014 (also known as MOUs) were provided to the state and territory Ministers in February 2009.

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Question No.: NB-II 08

Division/Agency: Nation Building –Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Heaslip Road Interchange Launch

Hansard Page/s: 54 (09/02/10)

Senator Abetz asked:

Senator ABETZ—Right. Now, who has been invited to this official launch?

Ms McNally—I do not have that information with me, Senator. I would have to take that aspect of the question on notice.

Answer:

The issuing of invitations was undertaken by the SA Government in accordance with the protocol established in the MOU.

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Question No.: NB-II 09

Division/Agency: Nation Building –Infrastructure Investment
Topic: Northern Economic Triangle Development Funding
Hansard Page/s: 56 (09/02/10)

Senator Milne asked:

Senator MILNE—Under the nation building project, what money has been set aside for the Northern Economic Triangle development? Is the Commonwealth investing in that in any which way under this Nation Building-Infrastructure Investment program?

Ms McNally—I will have to take that on notice, Senator.

Answer:

The Australian Government has committed funding of \$552.6 million for the period 2008-09 to 2013-14 for projects located within the geographical area of Queensland's Northern Economic Triangle. In addition, the Government will fund thirteen boom gate projects in this geographic area.

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Question No.: NB-II 10

Division/Agency: Nation Building –Infrastructure Investment

Topic: MPF **Status:** Coal export from Waratah and Hancock Coal projects in the Galilee Basin

Hansard Page/s: 56 (09/02/10)

Senator Milne asked:

Senator MILNE—Can you tell me what volumes of coal we are expecting to be exporting from the Chinalco, the Hancock mining and Waratah Coal developments?

Ms McNally—I would have to take that on notice as well, Senator.

Answer:

According to the project proponents, Waratah Coal Pty Ltd, the Waratah Coal development is intended to have a 40 million tonne per annum production capacity.

According to project proponents, Hancock Prospecting Pty Ltd, the Alpha Coal project and the Kevin's Corner project will each have a 30 million tonne per annum production capacity.

The Department does not have the information on the Chinalco output tonnage.

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Question No.: NB-II 11

Division/Agency: Nation Building –Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Multi-cargo Port Facility - North Queensland

Hansard Page/s: 57 (09/02/10)

Senator Milne asked:

Senator MILNE—Sure. On this multicargo port facility that is being proposed for North Queensland, can you just include that in terms of whether the Commonwealth has got any money in these port facility expansions for those coal developments. Thanks, Chair.

Answer:

The Australian Government has not committed any funds to the Abbott Point Multi-cargo facility in North Queensland.

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Question No.: NB-II 12

Division/Agency: Nation Building –Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Funding Agreement - City of Wanneroo / Extension of Ocean Reef Road

Hansard Page/s: 57 (09/02/10)

Senator Back asked:

Senator BACK—I will draw the attention of the committee for a few minutes to a couple of projects in Western Australia. The first one relates to the funding agreement between the former government and the City of Wanneroo, which was signed in 2007. I understand it was a \$7 million grant to assist with the extension of the Ocean Reef Road from Hartman Drive to Gnangara Road north of the city. Are you aware of this project?

Ms McNally—No, I would have to take that on notice.

Senator BACK—I would ask you to take a number of questions on notice. First, there was an understanding that the project would be finished by June 2010 under that agreement, but it will not be. When will it be completed? Are the department and the minister aware of the delay? What is the involvement of the department and/or the minister in authorising that delay and the occasioning of it? What, if any, funding variations have been authorised in the project and by whom? So we cannot throw any more light on that one at the moment?

Ms McNally—No.

Answer:

The Australian Government has provided the City of Wanneroo \$7,030,100 to extend Ocean Reef Road under its Strategic Regional Program.

The Council requested in January 2010 that the project's completion date of June 2010 be extended to June 2011. The request is currently under consideration.

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Question No.: NB-II 13

Division/Agency: Nation Building –Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Perth Airport Intermodal Link Project

Hansard Page/s: 58 (09/02/10)

Senator Back asked:

Senator BACK—At this stage would you be aware of the convening of this particular task force?

Ms McNally—I would have to check. There have been a number of meetings between us and the Western Australian government. I have not personally attended those, so I will check exactly which particular groups are getting together and what our knowledge is of those.

Senator BACK—Thank you. If you do that, I would also like to know whether or not to this point the Commonwealth has actually allocated any funding to the task force itself and, if so, how much. Obviously we are all keen to know what will be allocated in the forward estimates for that particular project.

Ms McNally—I can answer now that \$3 million has been provided to Western Australia to develop the Perth airport transport master plan. A steering group oversees that. I am not sure if that is the same as a task force; sometimes they have a number of committees. So I will double-check that aspect.

Answer:

The development of the Perth Airport Transport Master Plan is being overseen by a Steering Committee chaired by the Western Australian Department of Transport and comprising Main Roads Western Australia, the Western Australian Public Transport Authority and the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.

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Question No.: NB-II 14

Division/Agency: Nation Building –Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Midland Highway duplication

Hansard Page/s: 62 (09/02/10)

Senator Bushby asked:

Senator BUSHBY—When I went and had a look at *Hansard* I found that the minister was basically referring to proposals of other parties, not the government. The question was about the Prime Minister ruling out the provision of funding directly, not whether other parties were putting forward proposals or what the government thought of those proposals. The answer did not go to the merits of the case; it was more about the format and the way that the proposals had been put forward by the other parties. I am interested in knowing on what basis the Prime Minister ruled out providing funding.

Senator Conroy—I am not sure the officer could possibly answer that. You have asked about the Prime Minister's motivations. We are happy to take that on notice.

Senator BUSHBY—I would have thought that the motivations of the government in making decisions are actually quite relevant for the people of Australia to know. It is not something that is a matter of opinion.

Senator Conroy—I said that Mr Mrdak would not be able to answer that question. We are happy to take that on notice for you.

Answer:

That is a matter for the Prime Minister.

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Question No: NB-II 15

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Bilateral discussions – future of WA grain rail freight network

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Can you provide an update on the status of any discussions with the WA State Government about the future of the WA grain rail freight network?

Answer:

The review undertaken by the WA Strategic Grain Network Committee (SGNC) was released on 18 January 2010. The WA Government is currently considering the Review's recommendations.

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Question No: NB-II 16

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Request for Cth Funding re upgrade of the WA grain freight network

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Has the Commonwealth received any revised funding request to contribute to the upgrade of the WA grain freight network?

If so – how much assistance is being sought from the Commonwealth?

Answer:

The WA Government has not yet determined its funding allocation. It has asked the Commonwealth to match its contributions when finalised.

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Question No: NB-II 17

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Cth project assessment of upgrade of the WA grain freight network

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Adams asked:

How long will assessment by the Commonwealth of this project take and when will a recommendation regarding funding be made?

Answer:

Refer to NB-II 15.

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Question No: NB-II 18

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Funding for Perth Airport Intermodal Links

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Back asked:

1. What is the status of negotiations with the WA Government to fund the Perth Airport Intermodal Links?
2. Has any commitment been undertaken to fully or partially fund this project?
3. Are you aware of a Taskforce has been convened to work on this project?
4. Who is on this Taskforce and what contact does the Department have with them?
5. Are any commonwealth funds being used to fund the work of the Taskforce?
6. If so, how much funding has been allocated by State / commonwealth?

Answer:

- 1&2. The Australian Government committed \$350 million towards upgrading the Perth Urban Transport and Freight Corridor. The WA Government has contributed \$350 million. The Corridor program includes extensive works along the Tonkin and Leach highways to reduce congestion around the airport. The scope of the upgrade projects in the vicinity of the airport will be informed by the Perth Airport Transport Master Plan which is expected to be finalised in June 2010.
- 3&4. Refer to NB-II 13.
- 5&6. The Australian Government provided \$3 million for the development of the Perth Airport Transport Master Plan and the WA Government is contributing \$0.5 million.

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Question No: NB-II 19

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Change in funding commitment for the Northern Sydney Rail Freight Corridor

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

I refer to the Labor Party's promise during the 2007 election campaign. I quote a Labor Party's press release date 19 November 2007 that *Labor will provide \$840 million towards a dedicated freight rail track from North Strathfield to Gosford.*

Now I notice, on the department's website that this \$840 million commitment has turned into a \$15 million study:

The Australian Government is providing \$15 million to undertake planning for the Northern Sydney Rail Freight Corridor. The planning involves developing a concept design, environmental assessment and development approval for infrastructure improvements along the rail corridor between North Strathfield and Broadmeadow (a suburb of Newcastle). The focus of the planning work is to provide additional capacity for freight rail services, segregate passenger and freight services and to reduce peak-period restrictions on freight services. The planning work is being undertaken by the Transport Infrastructure Development Corporation (TIDC), a NSW Government corporation.

I also notice on this website that this planning study is not to finish until late 2010. Is that right?

So let's be clear – a \$840 million election promise to fit one of Australia's most significant rail freight bottlenecks has turned into a \$15 million study to be completed by the end of the Government's first term of office. Is that right?

Answer:

The \$15 million Northern Sydney Rail Freight Corridor Planning project will finish in 2010.

The \$840 million allocated to Freight Rail Upgrades between Sydney and Newcastle is a separate project from the \$15 million Northern Sydney Rail Freight Corridor Planning project.

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Question No: NB-II 20

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Northern Sydney Rail Freight Corridor Planning Study

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Adams asked:

Is this another example of the Government promising everything and delivering nothing?

How is the study going?

Who is on it?

When will it be finished?

What will be the benefits of the Northern Sydney Freight Line?

When will it be built?

What is the Government's promise on this project?

Answer:

The study is considering a program of works for delivery under the \$840 million Northern Sydney Freight Corridor program.

The study is being undertaken by NSW Transport Infrastructure Development Corporation and is being overseen by a Steering Committee with representation from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, NSW Transport and Infrastructure, the Australian Rail Track Corporation and RailCorp.

The \$15 million planning study is expected to be finished in late 2010.

The benefits of the Northern Sydney Freight Line are described on the Nation Building website.

The \$840 million allocated under the current Nation Building program will deliver the Northern Sydney Freight Corridor program and construction is expected to commence during 2010/11.

The Government is committed to invest \$840 million in the Northern Sydney Freight Corridor program.

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Question No: NB-II 21

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: National Stimulus Package – 17 Rail Projects

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

I refer to the recently released Commonwealth Coordinator General's Progress Report providing an update on the so-called *Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan*.

Can you please give me an update of the status of the 17 projects approved under the plan?

How many have started?

When will they finish?

Answer:

Details of the progress and expected completion dates of the 17 projects are available on the Department's website.

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Question No: NB-II 22

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: ARTC Economic Stimulus Rail Projects

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Is ARTC aware of any slippages in timeframes or costs for these projects?

Answer:

Refer to NB-II 21.

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Question No: NB-II 23

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Improvements to NSW grain lines

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

In October 2008 the federal government's Grains rail task force was established. About 12 months later made recommendations which included:

The need for more capacity on lines into the Port of Newcastle, where competition for rail between coal and grain has increased.

Port of Newcastle to be better integrated into the east coast rail network in the future.

The maintenance of the lines is handed over to the Australian Rail Track Corporation.

Is ARTC at present working on improvements to the NSW grain lines?

Answer:

Yes. The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) currently undertakes maintenance at the direction of the NSW Rail Infrastructure Corporation (RIC).

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Question No: NB-II 24

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Government consultation with ARTC re improvement to grain rail lines

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Has Government consulted with ARTC or discussed with ARTC increases in your maintenance responsibilities?

Answer:

No.

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Question No: NB-II 25

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Grain rail task force report – further improvements to grain rail lines

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

From your perspective what further needs to be done to improve grain rail lines? My understanding from the report is that those lines should be maintained as a class 5 line – but class 3 seems the more optimal as it can carry heavier loads at higher speeds.

Answer:

This is a matter for the NSW Government to consider.

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Question No: NB-II 26

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment
Topic: Maintenance costs – Class 5 and Class 3 grain lines
Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

What is the annual cost difference to maintaining a class 5 and class 3 lines?

Answer:

This is a matter for the NSW Government.

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Question No: NB-II 27

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Cowra to Demondrille and Cowra to Blaney Study

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Adams asked:

My understanding is that the taskforce also called for an independent study of the Cowra to Demondrille and Cowra to Blaney line because of its uses outside of grain transport. Are you aware if that study has been undertaken?

Answer:

This is a matter for the NSW Government.

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Question No: NB-II 28

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Status of approved 17 infrastructure projects for ARTC Rail Investment yet to commence

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Can the Department explain why two of the 17 infrastructure projects approved for ARTC Rail Investment are yet to commence?

How were projects prioritised?

Why were the projects yet to commence deemed a lesser priority?

Answer:

The two projects which have not commenced construction are on the Hunter Valley coal rail network. ARTC's investments in infrastructure on the Hunter Valley coal rail network are guided by the *2009-2018 Hunter Valley Corridor Capacity Strategy*. ARTC's approach is to deliver increased network capacity ahead of demand for coal exports, having regard for port capacity constraints. The *2009-2018 Strategy* was developed by ARTC in consultation with the Hunter Valley coal industry.

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Question No: NB-II 29

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: National Stimulus Package – 14 Road Projects

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Can the Department explain why five of the 14 infrastructure projects relating to national road projects are yet to commence?

How were projects prioritised?

Why were the projects yet to commence deemed a lesser priority?

Answer:

A list of all projects and their status is on the Department's website.

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Question No: NB-II 30

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Status of 127 Black Spot Program projects yet to commence

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

1. Can the Department explain why 127 black spot program (out of 607) are yet to commence?
2. How were projects prioritised?
3. Why were the projects yet to commence deemed a lesser priority?

Answer:

Details of these projects are on the Economic Stimulus Plan website.

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Question No: NB-II 31

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Status of 137 Boom Gates for Rail Crossings projects yet to commence

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

1. Can the Department explain why 137 boom gates for rail crossing projects are yet to commence?
2. How were projects prioritised?
3. Why were the projects yet to commence deemed a lesser priority?

Answer:

Refer to NB-II 30.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
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Question No: NB-II 32

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: National Stimulus Package – Roads projects

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Why have NONE of the national road projects been completed?

Is the Department aware of any slippages in timeframes or costs for these projects?

What accountability measures has the Department put in place to ensure the projects are completed?

Answer:

All of the 14 national road projects are on track to meet their scheduled completion dates. The expected commencement and completion dates for the 14 national road projects are available on the Department's website.

The *Nation Building Program (National Land Transport) Act 2009* sets out the requirements for approving projects and the conditions of funding. States are required to provide monthly reports on project implementation and progress.

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Question No: NB-II 33

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Status of ARTC rail infrastructure projects

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Why has only 29 per cent of the rail infrastructure projects for ARTC been completed?

Is the Department aware of any slippages in timeframes or costs for these projects?

What accountability measures has the Department put in place to ensure the projects are completed?

Answer:

As of 9 February 2010, 41% or 7 of the 17 Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) Economic Stimulus Plan projects have been completed, 8 are underway and 2 are in planning and development. Details of the progress of the 17 projects are available on the Department's website.

As a Government Business Enterprise, ARTC's financial and operational management (including management of funding sources, including equity) is reviewed quarterly by the Department of Infrastructure and Department of Finance on behalf of the Shareholder Ministers. ARTC provides detailed progress reports on a monthly basis.

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Question No: NB-II 34

Division/Agency: Nation Building - Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Status of Boom Gates for Rail Crossings projects

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

1. Why has only 25 per cent of the 'boom gates for rail crossing' projects been completed?
2. Is the Department aware of any slippages in timeframes or costs for these projects?
3. What accountability measures has the Department put in place to ensure the projects are completed?

Answer:

Refer to NB-II 30.

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Question No: NB-II 35

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Pacific Motorway Upgrades

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Pacific Motorway upgrades:

1. How was funding of the upgrade project allocated and how were priority areas identified?
2. What data was used in the allocation of priority areas? Will the Department provide copy of the relevant data?
3. Was the Minister or his personal staff involved in determining which sections of the M1 were to be funded in this tranche?
4. Was the Federal Department involved in identifying the sections of the M1 that would be upgraded in this funding tranche?
5. Was the Minister or the Department lobbied by Labor Members of Parliament to fund certain sections of the Motorway in this tranche?
6. When was the Federal Government informed by the Queensland Government that 18.5km of the promised 23km Tugun-Nerang section of the M1 would not be upgraded?
7. Will the Department table correspondence between the relevant Federal and Queensland Departments regarding the allocation of federal funding for the upgrade of the M1?

Answer:

1-4, 6. Please refer to NB-II 02.

5. The Department is unaware of any lobbying undertaken regarding funding for the Motorway.
7. No.

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Question No: NB-II 36

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Funding Agreement - City of Wanneroo/Extension of Ocean Reef Road

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

A funding agreement between the former Government and the City of Wanneroo was signed in 2007 for a \$7 million grant to help extend Ocean Reef Road from Hartman Drive to Gnangara Road near the intersection with Alexander Drive. The road was due to be completed by June 2010 in accordance with the funding agreement.

1. The road is not completed. When will it be completed?
2. Is the Department and the Minister aware of this delay?
3. What involvement did the Department and the Minister have in authorising the delay?
4. What funding variations have been authorised in this project and by whom?

Answer:

Refer to NB-II 12.

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Question No: NB-II 37

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Oakajee Port Equity Injection Funding

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Oakajee Port:

1. What is the latest update on the Oakajee Port “equity injection” funding provided in the May Budget?
2. What will the ‘equity injection’ be spent on?
3. What specific conditions (if any) has the Department put on the funds?
4. With construction to start in 2011, has the money been given to the WA State Government or the Geraldton Port Authority? If not, when will it be?
5. Is the Department considering a further allocation of funds after the completion of the feasibility study in 2010?

Answer:

- 1-5. The May 2009 budget decision provided for an equity injection subject to consideration of a business case from the Western Australian Government by Infrastructure Australia. This is still to occur.

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Question No: NB-II 38

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Darwin Port Expansion

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Darwin Port Expansion:

1. What is the latest update on the Darwin Port Expansion project?
2. What exactly will this money be spent on?
3. What specific conditions (if any) has the Department put on the funds?
4. I understand that the funding is subject to the outcome of further work currently underway, has the when is it anticipated this work will be finished?

Answer:

- 1-4. The project requires consideration of a business case from the Northern Territory Government by Infrastructure Australia, which is expected to be completed in 2009-10.

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Question No: NB-II 39

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Funding Commitment for Pacific Highway Duplication/Upgrade

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

We have raised the issue of the Pacific Highway duplication in this place before. I notice in the previous Estimates, dated 20 October 2009, Secretary Mrdak seemed to suffer a bout of unexpected frankness, when he admitted that there was a massive shortfall in funding in order to complete the duplication of the Pacific Highway.

To remind the Committee, the Government has committed \$3.1 billion towards the upgrade of the Pacific Highway from 2008-09 to 2013-14 and the New South Wales Government has committed \$500 million towards the upgrade over the same period. So, a total of \$3.6 billion has been allocated to duplicate the Pacific Highway between now and 2014.

Now the National Roads and Motorists Association in its January 2009 budget submission to the Australian Government stated that it will cost \$6.7 billion to duplicate the Pacific Highway. Therefore it seems that there is a shortfall in funding of at least \$3 billion to complete the duplication of the Pacific Highway.

So, can the Government confirm the correctness of the Secretary's statement – that it would take at least that sort of element, i.e. \$6.7 billion – to complete the duplication of the Pacific Highway?

Answer:

The current \$3.1 billion commitment by the Australian Government and \$500 million commitment from the New South Wales Government will result in 63% duplication of the Pacific Highway by 2014.

The exact amount of funding required to complete the duplication will need to be confirmed once the New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority has undertaken detailed planning and design for the remaining sections.

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Question No: NB-II 40

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Funding commitment for Pacific Highway Duplication/Upgrade

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Given that there is a shortfall of at least \$3 billion to duplicate the Pacific Highway between Sydney and Brisbane, does the Government stand by its commitment in its media release by the Federal Labor Party dated 21 November 2007?

Answer:

The Australian Government remains committed to the full duplication of the Pacific Highway by 2016.

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Question No: NB-II 41

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Commitment to fund the Pacific Highway Duplication by 2016

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

So I ask again, does the Government stand by its election commitment that it will duplicate the Pacific Highway by 2016?

Answer:

Refer to NB-II 40.

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Question No: NB-II 42

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Pacific Highway Duplication

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

I understand, according to the *Report Card of Pacific Highway Upgrade*, dated November 2009 by the NRMA, that of the 821 kilometres of the total road length between Hexham, just northwest from Newcastle and the Queensland border, that 410 kilometres has been upgraded. That means 411 kilometres, or another 50% is still to be upgraded or duplicated. Do you accept this?

Answer:

Refer to NB-II 39 & 40.

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Question No: NB-II 43

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Pacific Highway Duplication rate

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

So given that another 410 kilometres remain to be duplicated, in order to meet the Government's promise, the duplication rate would have to be nearly 70km per year. Is that happening?

Are you confident that additional funds will be provided so the Government can meet its promise?

Even the extra billions were provided, are you satisfied that there is the road building capacity to complete the task?

Answer:

Refer to NB-II 39 & 40.

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Question No: NB-II 44

Division/Agency: Nation Building – Infrastructure Investment

Topic: Adequacy of skills of the NSW Roads & Traffic Authority re: completion of the Pacific Highway Duplication

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

1. Are you satisfied that the competence and skills of the NSW Road Traffic Authority is adequate to meet this deadline even if additional finances are provided?
2. Will the Government meets its election promise?

Answer:

1. Yes.
2. Refer to NB-II 40.