

MEDIA RELEASE

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Outback Queensland united on the road to the 2020 State Budget

Outback Queensland communities have united to lobby the Queensland Government for a single spending priority ahead of the 2020 State Budget - roads.

North West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (NWQROC), Remote Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) and South West Queensland Local Government Association (SWQLGA) acting as the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils is appealing to the State Government to increase investment in roads to provide the most beneficial and far reaching impact on the entire region.

The Western Queensland Alliance of Councils covers almost 60% of the state's land mass and generates \$9.35 billion of the State's Gross Product from 1.3 per cent of Queensland's population – 2.2 times above the Queensland average.

NWQROC Chair, Councillor Jack Bawden says roads act as enabling infrastructure, which supports economic growth as well as social connection and development.

“Given our regions are vast and, in many instances, geographically isolated, roads are critical for industry, for the community and for being able to continue to contribute to Queensland's economy,” Cr Bawden said.

The Alliance is requesting three clear actions:

1. Reverse the long-term trend of declining funding allocations to the region from the lowest in the state.
2. Build on the success of Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS)
3. Review TIDS to adjust the current 50/50 matching component to 80 / 20, similar to many National Partnership Agreements between the Australian and Queensland Governments..

SWQLGA Chair, Councillor Richard Marsh says funding allocations through the Queensland Transport Roads Investment Program (QTRIP) to the north/central/south west Department of Transport and Main Roads districts are the lowest allocations in the state at 2.7/2.5/2.0 per cent.

“At a very minimum the (QTRIP) allocations should be maintained at not less than 10% across the entire region which would be less than a 3 per cent increase,” Cr Marsh said.

RAPAD Chair, Councillor Rob Chandler says the region needs TIDS to be increased immediately and matching arrangements need to change from 50/50 to 80 per cent from State Government to 20 per cent from Local Government.

“We love TIDS, it is an excellent scheme, but we still have to find half the money for the projects to go ahead All of our councils have very constrained budgets with a low rate base and few opportunities to raise additional own source revenue. The scheme needs to be adapted to be more like many of the National Partnership Agreements between the Australian Government and State,” he said.

Case Studies of Roads that will be assisted by an increase in funding

Normanton to Burketown link

About \$50M is required to seal the remaining 104 km of the Normanton to Burketown link. This road is part of the Savannah Way which joins Cairns to Broome in WA. Locally it's the direct connection between Normanton and Burketown. Currently the unsealed sections are significant deterrent to tourists and during the wet season it closes access to locals and heavy vehicles carting livestock and freight, like groceries. The entire TIDS allocation for the whole of the North West is just under \$5.5M which shows why this relatively flat road is an uphill battle under current funding arrangements.

Birdsville Developmental Road

The Birdsville Developmental Road is a state-controlled road which supports both the cattle industry and oil and gas operators to move heavy vehicles throughout the entire year. It also serves as a tourist route during winter. The road provides access to both the Strzelecki and Birdsville Tracks connecting Queensland to South Australia. This road to Birdsville becomes extremely busy twice a year when the Birdsville Races and the Big Red Bash Music Festival are held attracting thousands to the corner of the state. At this time the gravel road becomes high risk where sections decrease in width from 8m to 4m. While this road requires high capital investment, it's improvement will deliver high economic yield.

Charleville to Bollon Road through Murweh and Paroo Shire Councils

Road widening upgrades to the Charleville to Bollon Road in Murweh and Paroo Shires are a priority for our region. Without them our heavy vehicle transport operators face increased operating costs due to time delays associated with inadequate road widths and poor pavement conditions. In effect, for this industry, time is money and a big variable in their daily operations is the quality of our regional roads network.

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Contacts for interview

NWQROC

Cr Jack Bawden
Chair, NWQROC
Ph: 0427 459 424

Greg Hoffman PSM
Executive Officer, NWQROC
Ph: 0418 756 005

RAPAD

Cr Rob Chandler
Chair, RAPAD
Ph: 0427 512 312

David Arnold
CEO, RAPAD
Ph: 0428583 301

South West LGA

Cr Richard Marsh
Chair, South West LGA
Ph: 0409 692 299

Matthew Magin
CEO, Balonne Shire Council
matthew.magin@balonne.qld.gov.au