HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

SPEECH

Thursday, 5 May 2016

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Mr PITT (Hinkler — Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister) (13:25): Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker Vasta. It is certainly good to see you in the chair again. I rise today to speak on the address-in-reply. This debate gives me an opportunity to update the House and my constituents of Hinkler on what has been achieved and what is in the pipeline.

There has been a strong flow of infrastructure funding throughout the Hinkler electorate across a wide range of assets. Just last week, I announced $390,000 for the Black Spot Program to fix three problem intersections in Bundaberg. Two of the intersections are right beside local schools, Bundaberg South State School—which incidentally will celebrate its 120th anniversary on 21 May—and Bundaberg East State School. Work at these sites will see both intersections upgraded, bike lanes added and pedestrian facilities improved. Residents in Bundaberg know firsthand how notorious these locations are. Accidents take huge tolls on families, on our communities and on the economy. I am delighted to see these upgrades approved.

Since June 2014, the Hinkler electorate has received $1,912,348 towards black spot funding. This includes road intersections in not only Bundaberg but Burnett Heads, Nkenbah and Pialba. The coalition government has committed $5 million to the Black Spot Program until 2018-19—and got an improvement on Tuesday night, as I recall. The Black Spot Program is improving road safety and infrastructure across country. The program allows anyone to make a submission for a safety upgrade to a road or intersection in their local area, and I encourage the residents of Hinkler to get online and submit any roads that they think are dangerous. According to the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, there were 1,242 road deaths in Australia in the 12 months to February 2016. This is far too many and we must continue to campaign to make our roads safer.

Continuing on the theme of roads, the road widening works on a 2½ kilometre section of the Bruce Highway near Pig Creek and Little Pig Creek, between Childers and Torbanlea, is progressing very well: the $3.4 million road widening works will help improve road safety on this part of the Bruce Highway and is part of the Australian and Queensland governments' $8½ billion dollar program of works to upgrade the Bruce Highway. To date, there has been $29.7 million in upgrades on the Bruce Highway in my electorate of Hinkler. There has been $8 million worth of upgrades to the three intersections near Childers, completed in July 2016; $6 million for an overtaking lane north of Howard, which was completed in August 2014; $4.5 million for widening a four-kilometre stretch near Adies Road at Apple Tree Creek, which was completed in July 2014; $7.1 million for the widening of the highway for 2.2 kilometres near Wongi State Forest, south of Torbanlea, which was completed in December 2015; and $700,000 for the widening of a seven-kilometre stretch Booyal, which commenced in February 2016.

There are other safety improvements scheduled for the Hinkler stretch of the Bruce Highway in the 2016-17 financial year as well. Significant work is being done on sections to the north and south of my electorate, which will directly benefit Hinkler motorists. Motorists' safety, freight route reliability and emergency accessibility are essential for the people who live, work and run businesses in regional Queensland, as well as the tourists and visitors that help boost our local economies.

The coalition government is committed to making not only the Bruce Highway but also local regional roads safe. Another successful regional infrastructure program is the Capital Grants Program. Last month, I had the great pleasure of hosting the Minister for Education and Training, Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham, in my electorate as we opened new science facilities at St James Lutheran College in Hervey Bay. The school received a $650,000 grant through the Capital Grants Program, and the facilities that they have built are absolutely first-class. When Senator Birmingham spoke to the students, teachers and school community, he said he hoped a future great Australian breakthrough would be produced by a student inspired by the new science facilities. And, really, absolutely anything is possible.

Another school in my electorate, St Luke's Anglican School in Bundaberg, was also the recipient of $500,000 in the Capital Grants Program.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour.