



Introduction

This document provides a long-term investment strategy to improve the safety, reliability, capacity, transport efficiency and flood immunity on the Warrego Highway. The highway is Queensland's principal east-west freight route, extending 714km west from Brisbane to Charleville.

As the primary road link in south-western Queensland, providing access and economic opportunity to communities and industry in the region, the Warrego Highway provides an essential freight route for the movement of commodities such as coal, grain, meat and cotton to domestic and international markets.

The highway is a four-lane, dual carriageway highway between Ipswich and Toowoomba, and generally a two-lane highway west of Toowoomba. A high proportion of heavy vehicle traffic services the region's agricultural, energy and commercial sectors.

Continued strong growth along the South East Queensland western corridor and the development of the Surat Basin energy province are placing significant pressures on the highway.

The *Warrego Highway Upgrade Strategy* identifies short, medium and long-term priorities spanning the length of the Warrego Highway from Brisbane to Charleville. Collectively, these priorities demonstrate how the Warrego Highway can support the growth and prosperity of southern Queensland over coming decades.

These priorities will be supported by ongoing corridor improvements and continued maintenance as part of a broader vision for safe, reliable and efficient travel. Of these priority investments, those within the one to four-year time horizon are funded (or are the subject of current funding submissions to the Australian

Government), and are either under construction or well-advanced in terms of planning. These priorities are published in the current *Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program*.

Investments beyond the four-year horizon will be dependent on available federal and state funding. This Strategy will form the basis for future funding negotiations with the Australian Government.

As part of the National Land Transport Network, of which the Warrego Highway is a critical link, funding support from the Australian Government is required to enable related highway projects to be completed. The Queensland Government will continue to work closely with the Australian Government to agree on a prioritised pipeline of investments to make this plan a reality.

Key Warrego Highway Facts

- Queensland's principal east-west freight route, extending 714km west from Brisbane to Charleville
- Forms part of the Australian Government's National Land Transport Network
- Is the second-highest trafficked rural national highway outside South East Queensland, after the Bruce Highway
- Passes through the major regional centres of Ipswich, Toowoomba, Oakey, Dalby, Chinchilla, Miles, Roma, Mitchell, Morven and Charleville, and serves as a key tourist route to outback Queensland
- A vital transport link for communities and rural settlements in the Lockyer Valley, Darling Downs, Maranoa and south-west Queensland regions
- Is the transport gateway for the burgeoning energy sector in the Surat Basin
- Will support a predicted population increase of 95,000 by 2031 in the Surat Basin region (including Toowoomba, Western Downs and Maranoa regional councils)

Planning for stronger regions

The *Warrego Highway Upgrade Strategy* forms part of the Queensland Government's overall strategic planning for the state. This planning ensures infrastructure and services can be provided to accommodate population growth, support economic prosperity and enhance the liveability of Queensland's regions.

Queensland Regionalisation Strategy and Queensland Infrastructure Plan

Regionalisation is a key tool in shaping the future of Queensland and accommodating expected growth.

The *Queensland Regionalisation Strategy* focuses on building stronger regions and ensuring growth and economic opportunities are shared throughout Queensland. It provides a vision for Queensland's regions and is the overarching strategic framework for regional policy and planning.

The *Queensland Infrastructure Plan* has been developed alongside the *Queensland Regionalisation Strategy* to ensure that Queensland has the infrastructure to respond to prosperity and quality of life needs as the state's population and economy continue to grow. To be updated annually, the *Queensland Infrastructure Plan* outlines principles to guide long-term infrastructure investment in collaboration with all levels of government and the private sector, supported through a pipeline of investment in growth-related infrastructure when and where it is needed most.

A key action of the *Queensland Regionalisation Strategy* is improving the efficiency and reliability on east-west and inland freight routes, including the Warrego Highway, with priorities for improving safety, reliability, capacity, transport efficiency and flood immunity.

Transport Coordination Plan

The *Transport Coordination Plan* delivers the vision for the transport system to connect Queensland, promote economic development and improve the quality of life for Queenslanders. It informs more detailed transport system strategies, plans and investment decisions.

Integrated Freight Strategy for Queensland

Developed by the Department of Transport and Main Roads in conjunction with industry, the *Integrated Freight Strategy for Queensland* (IFSQ) is a high-level strategy that establishes principles and guidelines to inform government policy, planning, regulation and investment to develop more efficient freight solutions for the future. As a key link in the Australian Government's proposed National Land Freight Network, the Warrego Highway has an important role in the efficient movement of freight. Current capacity constraints of the rail network limit the opportunity for bulk transport by rail of commodities such as coal and grain, making the upgrade of the Warrego Highway even more urgent.

Regional Planning

The *Queensland Regionalisation Strategy* provides the framework for other planning activities to ensure consistency and to support the outcomes of regionalisation.

Other plans, such as statutory regional plans, council planning schemes, regional planning policies and integrated regional transport plans all contribute to good planning across Queensland's regions. A range of plans and government strategies are in place across the state to respond to Queensland's population and economic growth.



Connecting SEQ 2031

Connecting SEQ 2031 is the Queensland Government's long-term transport plan to develop a sustainable transport system in the south-east corner of the state. Over the next two decades, the vision for South East Queensland includes the development of a more fully integrated transport network to support a prosperous region. Upgrading of the Warrego Highway and the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing are strategic priorities identified in the plan for completing the motorway network.

2007 Brisbane – Darwin and Melbourne – Brisbane Corridor Strategies

The *2007 Brisbane - Darwin Corridor Strategy* and the *2007 Melbourne - Brisbane Corridor Strategy* – jointly developed by the Australian and Queensland Governments – provide short and long-term visions for the Warrego Highway corridor. Along with identifying emerging transport demand pressures and performance issues, these strategies provide statements of key challenges, shared objectives and strategic priorities for the corridor and have guided development of the *Warrego Highway Upgrade Strategy*.

Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program

The *Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program*, developed by the Department of Transport and Main Roads, is a four-year rolling program of road and transport infrastructure works. It is published annually on the basis that works identified in years one and two are fully committed, with those in years three and four indicative for planning purposes. This allows local government, industry and the community to plan ahead with greater certainty.

Key projects in the *Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program* are reflected in the *Queensland Infrastructure Plan*.

Surat Basin Future Directions Statement and Draft Surat Basin Regional Transport Strategy

The *Surat Basin Future Directions Statement* released by the Queensland Government in 2010 establishes a framework for the state, community and industry to work together to achieve a prosperous and sustainable future for the Surat Basin region.

Development of the vast coal and coal seam gas resources in the Surat Basin, located between Toowoomba and Roma, will drive significant economic

development in the region over the next 20 years and beyond. While this provides opportunities for economic development, it also puts extreme pressure on local communities, services and infrastructure, including the Warrego Highway. This Statement aims to maximise economic benefits and minimise any unintended consequences of rapid growth for the region. It recognises that an upgraded Warrego Highway is vital to facilitate development of the Surat Basin energy province.

The draft *Surat Basin Regional Transport Strategy* prepared in 2011, considered the various and wide-ranging impacts on the transport network in the Surat Basin and identified strategic actions to support sustainable growth in the region. It recognises that development in the Surat Basin is currently, and will continue to place, significant pressure on the already strained Warrego Highway, and that significant investment needs to be made to ensure the transport network will be able to cater for current and future traffic demand and support continued economic development.

The draft Transport Strategy identifies upgrading the Warrego Highway, including the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing, as short to medium-term priorities.