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P. 07 4741 2900 F. 07 4741 1741
PO Box 274 Hughenden Q 4821
34 Gray St, Hughenden Q 4821
flinders@flinders.qld.gov.au
www.flinders.qld.gov.au

Dear The Hon Warren Entsch MP

Recently there has been much discussion in regards to the upgrading of the Bruce Highway, the volumes of heavy vehicle traffic that use this Highway and the safety record and reliability as a goods corridor.

The Bruce Highway would and could be a much safer and well-maintained Highway if large trucks were given a new "in-land highway" as a viable alternative option.

This viable alternative route largely exists now, as shown on the attached plan, encompassing the following Highways and roads:

- Kenney Development Road from Cairns to Hughenden
- Torrens Creek to Aramac Road (Starlight Way)
- Landsborough Highway from Aramac to Augathella
- Mitchell Highway from Augathella to Bourke
- Bourke to Griffith and then onto Melbourne via the Hume Highway.

The only unsealed section of the above road system is 105 kilometers on the Hann Highway between the Lynd Junction and Hughenden and 35 kilometers on the Torrens Creek to Aramac Road. The total estimated cost to seal these two sections is \$150 million.

The proposed new 'in-land highway would see approximately 600 kilometers of travel cut from the Melbourne to Cairns route via this new corridor. This alternative route, once fully sealed, would see traffic travel from Cairns right through in-land Queensland including the Atherton Tablelands, the Shires of Etheridge, Flinders, Barcaldine, Blackall-Tambo, Murwah, and Paroo and then onto western New South Wales and central Victoria.

Once the remaining sealing is completed, the saving in distance is equivalent to up to 2 days reduction in travel time between Melbourne and Cairns on an all weather road. The economic benefits to everyone cannot be overstated.

The alternative in-land route that has been suggested from Mareeba via the Gregory Development Road to Charters Towers onto Emerald and Toowoomba will not deliver the economic benefits of the proposal outlined above.

Heavy Haulage Vehicles (Type 2) are not currently permitted to use this proposed route (this highway can only take Type 1 road trains between Clermont and Roma); the route is only 30 kilometers shorter than using the Bruce Highway to Brisbane; and very significant outlays would be required to 'flood proof' this alternative. One example being the Belyando Crossing, known to be impassable for weeks at a time at least once a year. Several other rivers would require bridge construction, which make this option unviable in the current budget climate. The economic savings would be much lower, and therefore the heavy transport industry will not see this as a viable alternative to the Bruce Highway.

Another great advantage of the proposed in-land highway, as shown on the attached Plan, is that it better addresses the need to get product not only to Brisbane but to the southern States as well. This proposed

route will better deliver the North's fresh produce and other goods and services going to Sydney and Melbourne and beyond.

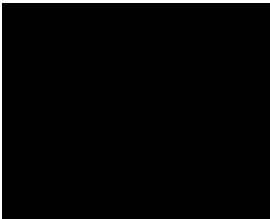
The vision of a 'northern food bowl' is better delivered through the proposed in-land highway as shown. This route will take heavy traffic off the Bruce Highway which is a political must, will deliver significant economic benefits to the transport industry that will encourage this industry to make the change from the Bruce Highway, and at the same time deliver economic benefits to in-land communities along the way.

The sealing of the Hann Highway and the Torrens Creek corridor is supported by many organisations, including the Etheridge and Flinders Shire Councils, Advance Cairns, Hughenden Chamber of Commerce and Hann Highway Action Groups. There is a definite need for the upgrade of the Hann Highway and it stands as the best option to increase safety and reliability for the Heavy Haulage Industry and the travelling public alike.

I will continue to lobby and work with the State and Federal Governments over the coming months to have the necessary financial resources allocated to the remaining sealing work. I also seek your support in making representations to both State and Commonwealth Governments towards our common benefit of having the remaining sections of the Hann Highway and the Torrens Creek to Aramac Road completely sealed and utilized to its full potential.

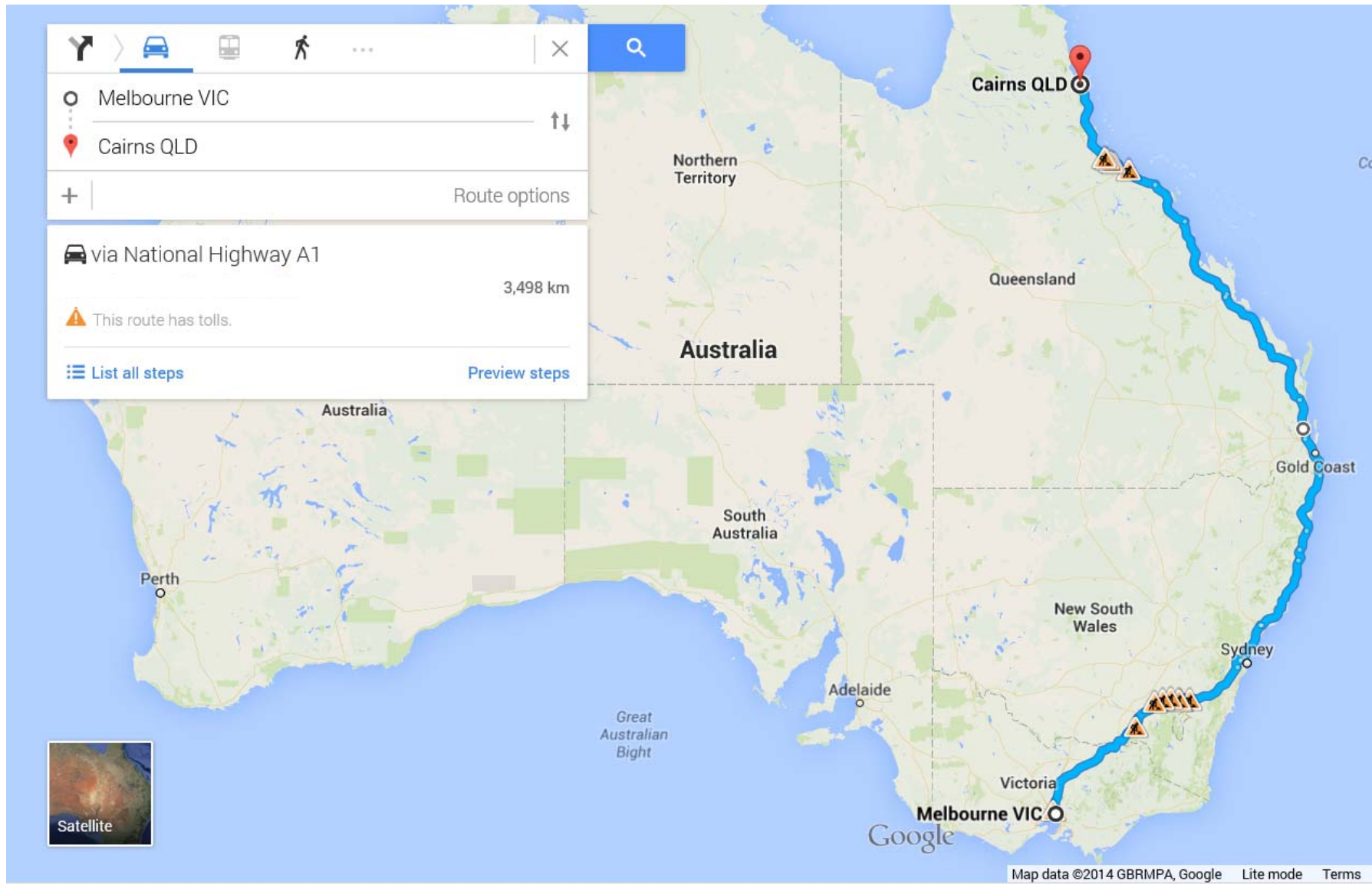
I am also seeking your support to have the proposed in-land highway (as shown on the attached Plan) adopted at a State and National level so that adequate financial resources are allocated to this route in future budgets.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Greg Jones
Mayor
Flinders Shire Council

Google Map - Cairns to Melbourne via National Highway A1 (via Brisbane) 3498km



Google Map - Cairns to Melbourne via Hann and Mitchell Hwy 2870km

