Developing the plan

Listening to our customers

With the Bruce Highway between Brisbane and Cairns being an important connection to enable travel to family, friends, healthcare, education and employment, as well as being the workplace for commercial drivers, it was important for the development of this plan that all these customer voices be heard.

Overseen by the BHTAC, a comprehensive program of customer research was undertaken to understand customer perspectives and priorities for the Bruce Highway and how these are changing over time and by location. From analysing hundreds of customer enquiries, submissions and complaints in recent years, to an online survey of nearly 4000 Queenslanders, in-depth interviews and focus groups with representatives of the people and businesses who drive and rely on the Bruce Highway every day, customers shared their experiences, insights and priorities with us.

The research investigated how the three key objectives of unlocking economic growth, building flood resilience and improving safety ranked in importance for the various customer groups.

Focus areas to improve safety were varied, but there were common themes from customers, particularly considering where they lived and travelled. Customers between Brisbane and Gympie identified traffic flow as the main issue to address. North of Gympie and up to Cairns, customers also identified traffic flow, as well as identifying smoother road surfaces, wider bridges, more overtaking lanes and frequent rest stops as key priorities to address safety concerns (Figure 4).

Progressive duplication of the highway, dual carriageways and increased lane capacity in heavily trafficked sections, more overtaking lanes and rest stops and improving the road surface were put forward as solutions to improve traffic flow and safety. Customers also recognised the benefits of the recent WCLT installed along the single carriageway sections of the Bruce Highway. Customers, north of Gympie and up to Cairns, spoke of how the WCLT installed along sections of the Bruce Highway was a practical treatment that gave them a safer sense when driving because there was a visible separation between themselves and on-coming vehicles.

> ‘Widen narrow bridges, fix bumps in bridges, make sure new or replacement sections of road are done smoother.’ Private citizen

> ‘It needs more overtaking lanes to help us get around others and them getting around us.’ Heavy vehicle driver

> ‘Wide Centreline Treatments with Audio Tactile Line Marking should be rolled out as the number 1 priority for the entire length of the highway.’ Private citizen

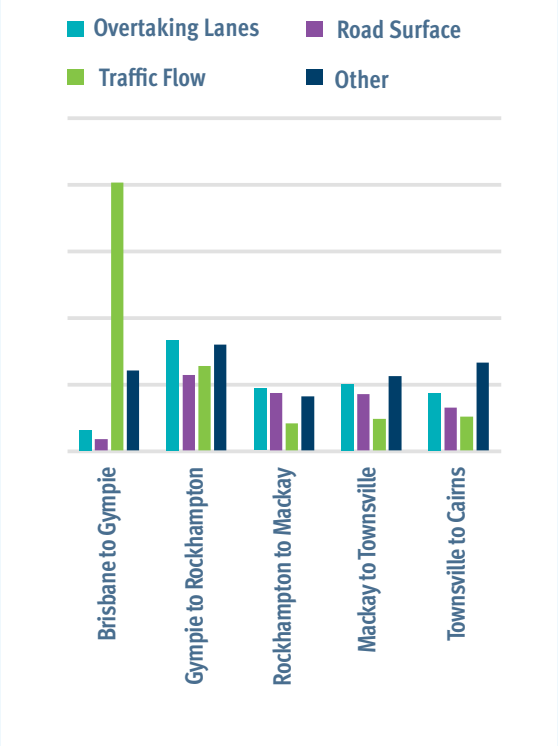
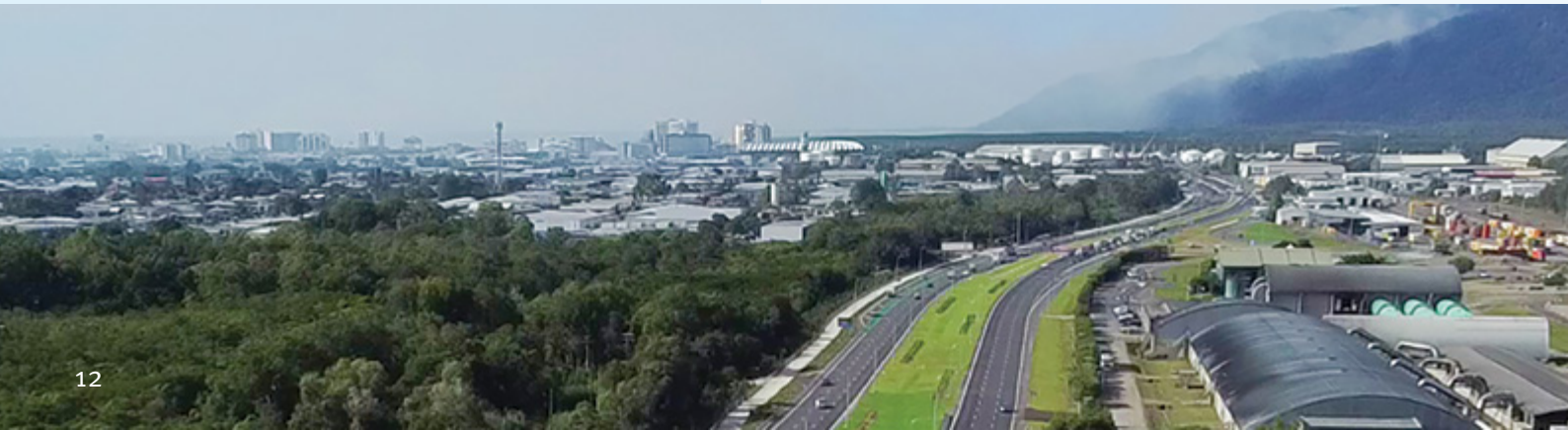


Figure 4: Major safety concerns expressed by customers by link along the Bruce Highway.



Cairns Southern Access Corridor (Stage 4), Kate Street to Aumuller Street, Peter Moss Bridge over Chinaman Creek (June 2021).

Developing the plan

Analysing the data

Drawing on the technical safety expertise from within TMR and oversight and guidance from the BHTAC, interpreting historic crash data was an important part of developing the *Safer Bruce 2030 Action Plan*. Historic crash data, including the types of crashes and the locations where they occurred, was critical to understanding where the greatest safety risks were and informed the most likely treatments to address these risks.

Being the longest road in Queensland, the Bruce Highway takes many forms–from urban motorways with sections between Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast carrying around 165,000 vehicles per day, to rural single carriageways with less than 2600 vehicles daily around St Lawrence, north of Rockhampton.

Approximately 25 per cent of the Bruce Highway is comprised of urban motorway, urban arterial roads (dual and single carriageway) and rural divided carriageway. These sections are generally between Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast and on the approaches to larger regional centres, such as Gympie, Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville and Cairns. Almost half of all fatal and serious injuries (FSIs) occur along these sections. This is typically due to the high volumes of traffic, increased mix of through-traffic and local traffic and conflict points introduced by intersections with local roads and property accesses. Run-off-road, rear-end and other crashes, such as side-swipes and lane-change type crashes are most common along these sections.

The remaining approximately 75 per cent of the Bruce Highway's length is comprised of rural, two-lane single carriageway, predominantly with lower traffic volumes (less than 7000 vehicles per day). Run-off-road and head-on crashes are the predominant crash types on these sections of the Bruce Highway, resulting in high severity outcomes. Significantly, due to the long distances travelled between towns and cities, across all FSIs on the Bruce Highway, fatigue and distraction crashes are all too common. Approximately half of FSIs on the Bruce Highway report 'fatigue' as a contributing factor.

This *Safer Bruce 2030 Action Plan* takes into account these trends and outlines a number of existing and new actions to make the Bruce Highway a safer corridor for all road users.

Bruce Highway between Gin Gin and Benaraby (2021).

Bruce Highway southbound morning peak at Brays Road, Griffin (March 2022).