

Truss takes aim at Labor scare campaign

By rebecca.byfield@aussieicon.com Rebecca Byfield | September 4, 2013

Shadow Minister for Transport and Infrastructure hits back at claims he won't commit to infrastructure projects

Leader of the Nationals and Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Warren Truss, in a statement released from his office, says the Nationals, as part of a Coalition government, will deliver a stronger national economy and revitalised regional economies.

“Our proven record of better financial management will create local jobs, improve job security and deliver funding for the 21st century infrastructure needed to take the regions, and Australia forward,” Truss says.

In addition to the \$16 billion Truss has secured for the Bruce and Pacific Highway upgrades, he says he has also committed a further \$2.2 billion to Roads to Recovery in regional communities, and another \$300 million to the new Bridges Renewal Program, which will drive total investment of \$600 million to repair and replace dilapidated local bridges.

“We will spend \$300 million on the iconic inland rail. This will finally get construction on track, benefitting all producers who have to move freight between Brisbane and Melbourne,” Truss says, adding it will also lower costs of production and freight movement.

There are also plans to spend \$33 million on the Outback Way, connecting Cairns to Perth with more sealed roads, making freight movement faster and cheaper.

Truss says all these policies are fully budgeted initiatives to grow regional Australia and encourage more Australians to live and work in the regions.

However, a report by political editor Laura Tingle in the Financial Review newspaper last week says Truss refuses to commit to around \$8 billion in infrastructure projects already announced and funded by Labor including major road works in Queensland and New South Wales.

According to the report, Truss was asked about the future of projects in a list compiled and published by the newspaper that included freight projects such as the Gladstone Port Access Road, the Port Botany rail link upgrades, work on the New England, Princes, Peak Downs, and Great Northern highways, and improvements to Mt Ousley Road, which

carries heavy traffic from nearby mines.

In the report Truss says he has identified the roads and other infrastructure projects he will fund.

Asked what would happen to the hundreds of projects in train under Labor's Regional Development Australia Fund, Truss says the Coalition would honour all signed contracts.

"If there hasn't been contracts signed, then they are just Labor Party election promises," Truss says.

A spokesman for Truss today says Labor is not even able to coordinate their scare campaign.

"Two weeks ago, Penny Wong made the claim the Coalition was overspending \$8 billion on infrastructure. This week, Anthony Albanese claims an under spend of \$8 billion," the spokesman says.

He went on to say that the Australian Automobile Association (AAA) compared the \$20.4 billion in funding commitments for road and land infrastructure from the Coalition against only \$17.9 billion committed by Labor.

"This includes our historic Federal Coalition commitments of \$5.64 billion for the Pacific Highway and \$10 billion for the Bruce Highway in partnership with the Queensland government, which dwarfs what Labor is proposing."

According to the spokesman, the AAA rates the Coalition well above Labor and the Greens in seven key policy priority areas.

"That's from an independent voice, not the lies of failed ministers like Anthony Albanese and Catherine King."

The spokesman went on to accuse Labor of making unfunded promises, saying that many of Labor's election pledges were based on revenue from mining taxes that have barely raised any cash at all.

In contrast, he says the Coalition's National Stronger Regions Fund is fully funded.