



Qld Govt slams road surface

THE Queensland Government has again come to the defence of stone mastic asphalt, dismissing local media reports that blame the widely used road surfacing technology for many fatalities in recent years between Cooroy and Gympie.

Main Roads Minister Warren Pitt said SMA was being cited in newspaper reports as the primary cause of the road crashes, when this was not the case.

"It was a contributing factor in several crashes near the town of Federal, where the geometry of the road was the main problem. However, to suggest it is the major or underlying reason for the accidents and deaths that have occurred over recent years between Cooroy and Gympie is misleading," he said.

Both the Sunshine Coast Daily and The Gympie Times reported the surface was deemed responsible for a fatal accident at Tanawha in May last year despite two reviews finding SMA an "appropriate surface for Queensland roads", and "poses no systemic safety issues".

The newspapers also reported that Main Roads resurfaced the Tanawha exit of the Bruce Highway after extensive testing following the accident.

These claims follow last week's double fatality on the Bruce Highway, near Coles Creek, in which SMA is believed to have been a contributing factor.

Pitt said the claim that the surface was responsible for the 2007 fatality at Tanawha ignored the findings of an extensive investigation into the crash.

The investigation found that a contaminant, such as oil, was the most likely road factor in that crash.

"What we are seeing is stone mastic asphalt being made the scapegoat for all these crashes, while the true reasons - varied as they may be - get off the hook," Pitt said.

"Nowhere in the findings of that investigation are suggested that stone mastic asphalt was responsible.

"The fact is that stone mastic asphalt has been declared an appropriate and safe road surface by a number of thorough, independent reports."

Pitt said of the 34 fatal crashes on the Cooroy to Gympie stretch of road since 2000, the vast majority had been attributed to driver behaviour or driver error. Fewer than half had occurred where the road surface was SMA.

"The crash history of the section of road where last week's crash occurred was analysed in the 2005 independent review of Main Roads' use of stone mastic asphalt," he said.

"The review found this site showed no statistically significant increase in crash rate following the laying of stone mastic asphalt, just as the report found it was a safe and appropriate surface for Queensland roads."