



TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr SR King MP—Chair

Mr JR Martin MP

Mr LL Millar MP

Staff present:

Ms D Jeffrey—Committee Secretary

PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE PENINSULA DEVELOPMENTAL ROAD (LAURA TO WEIPA) PROJECT

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

MONDAY, 6 JUNE 2022

Weipa

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The subcommittee met at 2.55 pm.

CHAIR: I now declare open this public hearing for the committee's inquiry into the Peninsula Developmental Road (Laura to Weipa) Project. Thank you for your interest and attendance here today. It is a huge crowd; we like to see that. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to elders past and present. We are very fortunate to live in a country with two of the oldest continuing cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whose lands, winds and waters we all share. My name is Shane King; I am the member for Kurwongbah and chair of this committee. With me here today are Lachlan Millar MP, the member for Gregory and deputy chair, and James Martin MP, the member for Stretton.

On 29 November 2021 the Transport and Resources Committee resolved to conduct a public works inquiry into the Peninsula Developmental Road (Laura to Weipa) Project. The purpose of today's hearing is to assist the committee with its consideration of the inquiry. The committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. As parliamentary proceedings, under the standing orders any person may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the chair or by order of the committee.

The committee will not require evidence to be given under oath, but I do remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. You have previously been provided with a copy of instructions for witnesses so we will take those as having been read. The proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. The media may be present—I hope so—and will be subject to the chair's direction at all times. The media rules endorsed by the committee are available from committee staff if required. All those present today should note it is possible you may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings by media and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. I ask everyone present to turn mobile phones off or to silent mode. I also ask that any responses to questions taken on notice today be provided to the committee by 4 pm on Thursday, 16 June 2022. During this hearing we will hear from Rio Tinto from 3.00 to 3.30 and Weipa Town Authority from 3.30 to 4.00.

MARKHAM, Ms Shona, General Manager, Weipa Operations, Rio Tinto

CHAIR: Thank you once again for your attendance here today. Would you like to make an opening statement?

Ms Markham: I am Shona Markham, the general manager of operations here in Weipa. I have been in this role for approximately three months, but I have spent nearly 20 years with Rio Tinto across other operations through Queensland and Tasmania. In terms of who we are and what we do, I am sure you are reasonably familiar but I will give you some idea of Rio Tinto.

We have been in the cape for over 60 years. We produce about 35 million tonnes of bauxite each year. We are the largest bauxite deposit globally. It is a growing commodity. As aluminium in particular is essential in a decarbonised world, the demand for aluminium is significantly increasing. We are very proud to be part of a significant value chain in Australia—and, importantly, in Queensland—of over 6,000 jobs when you take into consideration what we do here in Weipa through Gladstone and then on to the end product.

Here we have three mines: Amrun, which has just started and has a 55-year mine life; East Weipa; and Andoom. I will put it into perspective like this: our geography is larger than if we take the top of the Sunshine Coast to the bottom of the Gold Coast. That is the scale of what we are doing here in terms of land size, so it is quite large. There are two ports and a rail operation. We have about 1,400 full-time employees and another 500-odd contractors. We are a major contributor in the cape region.

We work with three traditional land agreements—the WCCCA, the Ely and our Comalco town agreement—across 12 traditional owner groups. I would say we have really strong relationships through our traditional owner groups. We pride ourselves on our employment of Traditional Owners, our Indigenous employment, as well as female employment, which is between 25 and 30 per cent of our workforce. We are a very significant employer of Traditional Owners and females. We support works to continue to upgrade the road. We think it is good for the cape. We think it is good for diversification and business in the cape, and we are supportive.

Mr MILLAR: Congratulations. I was reading your LinkedIn profile and you have a significant investment in the resources industry. You are doing a good job. Rio Tinto is incredibly important not only to this region but to the rest of Australia as well. Talking about the road, what impacts has that road had on your business? Obviously, it would impact the moving of heavy machinery and wide loads. I have been there a couple of times and the bauxite goes out from the port down to Gladstone.

Ms Markham: Certainly all our bauxite is loaded and goes out by ocean, and about 40 per cent of our ships go around to Gladstone. Actually, we are proud to say that we have the last four ships of Australian crews in the country and they go around to Gladstone, but we are also sending bauxite direct into Asia. In terms of incoming supplies, we work very closely with the barge suppliers that come in and around from Cairns. We have a good relationship with them. At times it can be a little unreliable and there can be issues because of that.

In terms of direct business impact, we work around the seasonal impacts in terms of the road. Generally, we have to work around seasonal impacts anyway in terms of particularly our major construction works et cetera. We would be bringing in a lot of our supplies—most of our supplies would be coming in by barge. Whenever we get the opportunity we bring them in by road. At this time of year we would start to take that opportunity.

Mr MILLAR: Have you had any feedback from your suppliers about the condition of the road or the impact on vehicles and machinery? Which are the rough sections of the road at the moment?

Ms Markham: You are driving the road tomorrow. I drove it yesterday and I am proud to say that the Rio Tinto section was one of the better sections. It changes very rapidly—I think that is the key point—from day to day and week to week. Depending on rain and the traffic that has come through, it significantly changes. It can rapidly change plans for people, including particularly tourists who want to come up to the cape. It can make quite a bit of difference day to day. It would be hard to say, 'This section is the worst.'

Mr MILLAR: It would depend on the conditions?

Ms Markham: Yes, it would depend on the conditions. I am sure you are talking to some people who are regularly on the road who will know better than I do about the section in the worst condition. We would put most of our heavy mining equipment on the barge because of the condition of the road.

CHAIR: Future stages are being planned for the 10 years following 2023-24. Has there been consultation with Rio Tinto about—I realise you have been here for three months, so you might not be aware—expectations and what would go on there?

Ms Markham: I am not sure about any consultation, no. It may have happened. I can actually get an answer back to you if you want me to take that on notice.

CHAIR: Yes, that would be good. Thank you. Offhand, do you have anything—we will be writing a report on this—that you think, as a manager, Rio Tinto would like to see? I understand there are sections that the weather affects for up to 80 days a year. I am not trying to put words in your mouth.

Ms Markham: There are certainly sections that have become impassable for a very long time because the rivers go over the road and they cut off communities. Some of those communities are our signatory communities. Some of our team members come from those signatory communities, including what happens with Aurukun. Certainly being able to easily get our team members and support into those communities is important. I think it is important in general for the cape.

Mr MARTIN: I think you touched on it briefly before. Could you go over some of the benefits to Rio Tinto that you saw following the completion of stage 1? Can you share with the committee what you think the benefits to Rio might be at the completion of stage 2 and also elaborate down the track about the 10 years following 2023-24? I believe there are 164 kilometres of unsealed road. If you have thought about it, what would be the changes to operations for Rio and potential benefits down the track?

Ms Markham: The largest benefits will be through the town impacts and what that means for the town, the livability of the region and the investment in the region in general. It is important for me from a skills perspective that we have access to a wonderful town full of potential employees, so livability in Weipa is important. The biggest issue we find is the time in which it is cut off because of weather impacts, particularly through those bridge sections.

Being able to get supplies in more easily is going to be a positive for the region. As you will no doubt hear from others, we are at the mercy of the barge systems and there has been a historical lack of reliability in that at times. There are many significant—I will give you one practical example—

wait times in getting cars transferred around. It is up to three months at the moment. There are no hire cars in town because there is a three-month wait in getting a car around to Weipa. That is an example of the kind of issue we face.

CHAIR: That is Sea Swift?

Ms Markham: Yes.

CHAIR: We did an inquiry into intrastate shipping the other year. Just to digress, we were meant to come here but we used the SmartShip simulator to see your port instead because that inquiry was just about the ports. That is when we found out about the Australian crewed boats. It is very important with the reef to have Australian crews learning, so it is really good that is happening.

Ms Markham: It is a good training ground for future leaders.

CHAIR: Maritime Safety Queensland.

Ms Markham: Pilots et cetera, yes.

CHAIR: I understand Sea Swift changed ownership in the last year or so. Has there been any improvement?

Ms Markham: It is hard for me to say since I have been here for three months. I can take that on notice as well, but I can tell you it has been an issue of late.

CHAIR: It would be anecdotal. We need facts, but if there is any factual improvement, that would be handy to us—or if it is worse. Thank you.

Mr MILLAR: If I could give you a magic wand to find the money to completely seal the road, what benefits would there be to Rio Tinto?

Ms Markham: I think it brings benefit to the community, which therefore brings benefit to Rio through team members wanting to be here because they have good access in and out. There is this element of—I am trying to find the right words—being trapped maybe.

Mr MILLAR: Isolated?

Ms Markham: Yes, isolation. Certainly from a team member and engagement with team perspective, that is really important for us. How to make sure the region is—I am using this word 'livable', but it is important for us that we have people who want to be here. On top of that, it is about easily being able to bring freight in and out without being in the queue for Sea Swift, and things like vehicles. There can be delays in bringing equipment in because of the backlog of the barge. Of course, food always takes priority, as it should. Some of our critical mining equipment is a reasonably high priority but at the expense of other items that are important for our mining operations as well.

Mr MILLAR: I know that you have been here for only three months, but do people normally fly out of Weipa to get to Cairns or do they drive?

Ms Markham: You would be surprised by how many people drive out. They will be waiting and you see them on social media asking, 'Is it open?' As soon as it is open, people are out. Quite often people go to Cairns to stock up on supplies. Again, you would be surprised by how many trips are made to Cairns for supplies to bring back. We have the Qantas flights twice a day in and out that are well used. It is really common for Weipa residents to be driving into Cairns for essential services including health services. I was speaking with someone just yesterday who had to take both their children to medical appointments. Because of the nature of the medical appointments, they could not fly and had to drive. They had to delay the appointments until they knew they could get there safely. There are examples where there are community members driving in and out quite frequently.

Mr MILLAR: Do not quote me on this, but I think they have almost finished the Cramsie road from Longreach to Muttaborra or they are getting close to finishing. I think Weipa would be the only town in Queensland that does not have full bitumen road access. Currently it is Birdsville, Muttaborra and Weipa. I come from a region; I see the importance of having bitumen roads. It is essential socially and economically.

Ms Markham: It is a 3½-day barge trip as opposed to a 10-hour truck drive. You think about critical supplies. The town here is very used to doing things like having to put supplies into cupboards and those kinds of things in order to be ready for when the barge does not come. When that happens they would have a six-day wait instead of a three-day wait. It would much easier to get all sorts of goods in with a sealed road.

CHAIR: There is a striking similarity, apart from the sealed road, to when I lived in a mining town in Western Australia when I worked for Rio Tinto in iron ore mining, and I am sure you would know which one. There were two flights in a day and people would choose to drive to Perth rather

than fly in that case because of the expense. My question is about flights versus driving. I understand that fuel costs at the moment are astronomical, but in normal times would that weigh into it, or is it more about the fact that you can physically bring more back in a vehicle?

Ms Markham: There certainly is a cost if you are bringing a whole family and what-not. If you have been here long enough you can get some benefits to reduce the price of airfares. Even so, at the end of the day it is cheaper to drive, particularly if you have a family. Many of our team members drive out. They then have the car on the other side and it is easier to get supplies back.

CHAIR: We were guilty of making the six-hour drive to McDonald's when we lived there, so I understand. Sometimes it is about the isolation of places. It is a great town and everyone gets on, but you do need to go and see the city or something.

Mr MARTIN: You mentioned before about employment. We know you have a significant FIFO workforce. I was wondering if you thought improvements to the PDR might change your mix of employment.

Ms Markham: We are absolutely committed to Weipa. We are FIFOing in specialised skills. The other issue that is leading to at least some FIFO arrangement is the housing shortage in Weipa which is a whole other story. You could probably do another inquiry about that, honestly. There is a genuine housing shortage. We recognise that and we want to be part of the solution to that, but it is really a separate story. We are very clear that we are a residential operation. Unless it is a specialised skillset, we are not FIFOing. Many of the people who FIFO are doing it at their own expense. We are not paying for flights.

CHAIR: The camp at Amrun is more about logistics. Having been there recently and seen that camp I think it is fantastic, but it is about the logistics of getting the boat across.

Ms Markham: Yes. We are very clear that the Amrun operation is effectively FIFO but it is more like BIBO—boat-in boat-out—ex Weipa. To have a role at Amrun you still need to be a resident of Weipa or a resident of surrounding communities—Mapoon, Aurukun, Napranum. Like I said, the FIFOing is for specialised skills. In some instances the housing shortage is driving people to have permanent housing somewhere else in Queensland but they are flying themselves in. We have made some really strong commitments to our TOs that we are not turning this into a FIFO operation. We are 100 per cent committed to Weipa. That is our standard.

Mr MILLAR: I absolutely endorse what you are trying to do keeping fly-in fly-out to a minimum, because you need to have a residential area.

CHAIR: Yes, keeping the towns alive. Is there anything that you would like to add?

Ms Markham: No. That is it from me.

CHAIR: We have a few questions on notice about consultation on future plans and whether there were any improvements in Sea Swift.

Ms Markham: I can get that for you.

CHAIR: Not improvements.

Ms Markham: Whether it has gone backwards.

CHAIR: Yes. Thank you very much. We really appreciate your participation. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript of the proceedings when it is available and it will be published on the committee's webpage. If we can get answers to those questions on notice by 4 pm on Thursday, 16 June, we would appreciate it. Thank you very much.

Proceedings suspended from 3.18 pm to 3.29 pm.

ROWLAND, Mr Michael, Chair, Weipa Town Authority

CHAIR: Thank you very much for your attendance here today. Would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr Rowland: Yes. Thank you, Chair. I start by making an apology for Dave. He is on a charter fishing. He was going to try and get back today, but it just depends on how good the fishing is and how bad the weather is, so he may or may not make it. The first time that my wife and I drove the Peninsula Developmental Road to Cairns it took us nearly three days from leaving Weipa to getting into Cairns and the bitumen did not start until past the Palmer River Roadhouse, which is quite a way down, so we have come a long way since those days. The significance of the PDA to the community of Weipa cannot be underestimated. It is the only road access to all areas south. Not only is it a vital transport route for Weipa; it is also the main access for all of the communities on Cape York.

Over the years the slow but continual upgrading of the road has resulted in increased traffic and ease of access to areas across the cape as well as south. One of the significant indicators of the increased road usage is the number of drive tourists who make the iconic trip to the tip and also include Weipa as part of their journey. The numbers recorded at the Weipa camping grounds vary, but there are roughly 40,000 tourists during the tourist season and up to 60,000 across the PDR, so it is huge. Some of these tourists also continue up to the small community of Mapoon, which is located approximately 80 kilometres north of Weipa, which brings added economic benefit to that small isolated community as they have embraced tourism.

One issue that has been highlighted by the increased numbers of drive tourists is the lack of facilities along the road. There are no serviced public toilets and rubbish facilities or regular spaced lay-bys where travellers can safely pull off the road to help manage fatigue. As a result of this lack, there is a growing problem with rubbish left behind, and many popular areas are reduced to being like an open toilet by the end of the tourist season. There have been articles in the media about the very same thing.

While the amount of sealed road has grown and the impact on vehicles has been reduced, we are yet to see the flow-on effect to the cost of transporting goods to Weipa. The only negative that has been expressed to me by the locals is the length of time it has taken for the sealing program to be completed. The piecemeal approach of the two governments to funding this project has been seen as very cost inefficient. While we all appreciate that this is a huge and complex project and also that the works are limited to the dry season only, this means that the project is not without its own distinct set of problems. The mobilisation of plant and equipment alone adds millions to the bottom line and then the loss of workers from the local businesses because of seasonal need is an added burden to keep the project moving forward. We all look forward to the completion of this road, and one of the challenges for those of us who live in Cape York will be adjusting to the gradual loss of our isolation. We have to start planning now for what the increased access provided by this road will mean for visitors and potential business opportunities. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for that. You have probably touched on it already, but for the approximately up to 80 days per year when the road is out could you expand on the effects that has on the town?

Mr Rowland: I think Shona has probably covered some of it, but especially around freight we rely very heavily on the shipping that comes around during the wet season, and of course that cost from the shipping is higher than the road costs. Whilst a lot of businesses will try to stock up as much as they can prior to the road closing, it is not always possible, especially if you are talking large bulk amounts of things. Also, in the past the shipping has been somewhat unreliable because of issues such as breakdowns and things, so there is obviously that flow-on ripple effect to the community, especially around food. In the past it has had to be flown in simply because they have not been able to get the amounts of food in here in time, and some of the produce—leafy greens and those sorts of things—cannot last that time. When the road is closed, the major impact is just the cost of vegetables and things going up. It is not seen so much as a negative—yes, we cannot drive out and what have you—but it is almost like you get a lull. It is a quiet time in the community and the environment here greens up. We have a different time of year during the wet season. You have to experience it. It is a fantastic time of year.

CHAIR: I asked a question earlier of Tinto about the change in management or ownership of Sea Swift. Have you noticed any difference with that change of ownership in terms of regularity, costing or anything like that? Is it enhanced or not as good?

Mr Rowland: They have been having some problems lately. I know they do have a brand new ship which, like everything else, has been delayed being delivered because of COVID and all these other sorts of things, so the shipping that they currently are running has been impacted. The other

point is that we are very much at the end of the cycle for transport, with the floods down in Brisbane and issues like that. If it is not getting to Townsville and not getting to Cairns then it is certainly not going to get to Weipa. It becomes a real issue then for them to delay a ship just to make sure they can pick up some priority freight, which might be food or things like that. That means that other things are not getting here on time, and we are not the only destination. They obviously come around the top, so it is a bit of a juggling act for them. If you then throw in a cyclone or a weather event, as quite often happens when the road is closed, obviously they cannot go ploughing through that. The other issues are around mechanical and what have you.

With regard to the food costs, it is part of living here. None of us are really happy about it, but we will work on about 30 per cent above Cairns for everything. If it is around about that, then we are doing all right. The other thing about being here obviously is that we are on higher wages. There is a tax benefit to being here to try and offset some of that stuff, but I do not know how some families with three or four kids get through some of the costs on groceries. It is very high.

I will just add that—I know it is not relevant to this discussion on the road—the part that is missing in this picture is that nearly all the communities on Cape York do not produce any of the consumables. Everything comes in, even here in Weipa. We do not produce any food stocks at all. There have been attempts in the past with a farm at Napranum and others to try and generate that sort of an industry here so that we are not so reliant on everything having to be brought in, but it is not as easy as you would think.

Mr MILLAR: Michael, when the second round of funding is completed there will remain about 164 kilometres of unsealed road. Which sections do you think should be prioritised for sealing and upgrading and why?

Mr Rowland: That is a good question. The stretch that probably causes most of the delays would be the final stretch between Coen and Musgrave. It is just the sheer fact that you are up in the ranges. There are lots of culverts. To the kilometre you can have a number of culverts and very deep. The soil up there is not the best, so you are going to have to haul in a lot of road base and the culverts develop that. A lot of the other areas are fairly flat with pretty good drainage and do not hold traffic up much, but that one would be the main sticking point going forward. I think it is just purely cost per kilometre. It will be huge.

Mr MILLAR: When the upgrading comes or is being planned for the next 10 years, is the Weipa Town Authority included in any engagement?

Mr Rowland: We get invited along to the Cape York Peninsula package, which is TMR, and Professor Allan Dale is the advocate for the project itself and then usually other contractors come along, so we get an invite to them if they are in Cooktown or in Weipa.

CHAIR: Something else that Rio mentioned when the road is down is the effects on the town in terms of workers for the businesses and everything around the place. I know there are flights in every day, but there was an effect there. I was just wondering if you would care to comment on that.

Mr Rowland: I am just trying to think what she is relating to.

CHAIR: Attracting workers to the town.

Mr Rowland: And that is not just the mining company. Nearly all of the businesses here are struggling to attract and retain workers, and there are many reasons for that. Obviously, isolation is not everybody's cup of tea. There are now over 4,000 people in the community. We are like everywhere else. We are growing quite fast and it is about trying to keep infrastructure up with it around housing, child care and things like that, and getting people to invest that kind of money here. Like I said, we work on 30 per cent above Cairns and 50 per cent above Brisbane, so if you are going to build a business here it has to be long-term and you have to be able to absorb those sorts of costs.

The other point is that, when you try to bring in people with the skill sets that you are looking for, they normally have partners who have serious skill sets too. Unless you can guarantee those people a job, the chances are they are not going to relocate. Currently within the town authority we are looking for two financial people with reasonable skill sets—accounting and so on—and one person in the works department as well. You have to provide accommodation; you have to provide child care. The package also has to be commensurate, because you are asking them to leave everything behind. Like I said, if they have a partner who also has a special skill set and they do not have a job, the chances are they will not want to come. It is quite a big area. It is not just in Weipa either; it is across the cape.

Mr MARTIN: We have heard about quite a few of the economic impacts in relation to the PDR, but could you share with the committee any negative social impacts that the community faces as a result of being cut off for approximately 80 days each year during the wet season?

Mr Rowland: Weipa is a unique community and it is a very close community. Some people possibly get a bit of mango madness because they cannot drive out to Cairns and what have you, so a lot of people tend to do that prior to the wet season. They go out and do a bit of a restock, especially on items like toilet paper, nappies and those sorts of things. Although they do not weigh much, you pay a premium just because of their bulk. I do not know that the closure actually causes us many issues around that; it is just reflected in the limited amount of travel you can do. We are a great boating community. We have lots of boats and we do lots of fishing. In terms of goods, if you are trying to get a project going—and normally you are not doing any building during the wet—and you are bringing in freight and what have you, you can possibly cop a premium on that just because you have to bring it around by the barge instead of up the road.

CHAIR: I suppose we are driving the same point here. As we continue on and the road continues to get sealed there are benefits to the town, and you touched on them before. The member for Gregory talked about having a magic wand. Which stages do you think would benefit the town the most?

Mr Rowland: I would think the Coen to Musgrave stretch. That is why I think it is probably deliberately being left. The easy, low-hanging fruit is what they have been moving on because they can get quite long stretches of bitumen put down, but that one is going to be a problem. Bridges are going in, which is good, so the delays are going to get less and less.

There is one sector that the incremental sealing of the PDR is going to introduce—along with the current road tourists, who tend to be in the big four-wheel drives and the off-road caravans. It is actually going to make it easier for people who do not have the \$100,000 Cruiser and the \$250,000 caravan but who just have an ordinary car and an ordinary van. I do not know if Ron Chapman is still the chair of the Caravan Parks Association of Queensland. He was saying at about 100 kilometres it will not stop them anymore because it is not the 100 kilometres in one stretch; it is broken up. Once you get to that, he said that you will be like Karumba and you will need three camping grounds and people will just come.

CHAIR: And the town would benefit from that tourism?

Mr Rowland: It will benefit. At the moment it is a strain. Last year was a huge year because obviously it was the first time after COVID, with restrictions being lifted but people still not heading overseas. It was a big year. It was a real learning for us because we realised we are not set up yet. We have one camping ground here that was hanging up the shingle saying 'Closed'. For the first time, we had people free camping. We have never had that before. There is another camping ground development application in, but that is taking a bit of time. There are definitely benefits with people coming here and staying here but we also need to work on our tourism product. It is either bauxite or barramundi and not a lot else. If we want people to stay here, we need to actually start looking at what other products we can offer them.

CHAIR: Crocodile viewing.

Mr Rowland: Yes, handfeeding crocodiles. We have thought of many things. We thought of having an Olympic swimming camp here. We could knock their times down real quick because you only have to swim faster than the guy next to you!

CHAIR: Yes, that is all you would have to beat.

Mr MILLAR: Is the population about 4,000?

Mr Rowland: It is about 4,000. During the tourist season, another 40,000-odd wander through. It also depends on whether Rio Tinto have any major works programs. When Amrun was on, obviously then you had a lot of contractors coming in who had to find accommodation here and so on. That stretches things.

Mr MARTIN: You mentioned there was an issue with facilities along the way and there being no toilets and that at the end of season there is quite a lot of mess. Could you expand on that? Have you had any discussions on how to address that?

Mr Rowland: There were facilities built at the Y. You will pass that on your way tomorrow and it is worth stopping and having a look. It is not maintained; it is not looked after. It was built but there was no real ongoing plan around how it was going to be maintained. The concern going forward is that, as more and more bitumen goes down, people are going to be either driving faster or pushing on their days longer so there is a need to have regular spaced places along the way where the toilets are serviced and the rubbish bins especially are emptied.

There was talk in some of the areas whether or not that was something the Laura people, for example, could take care of—say, from Laura north to a certain area, from Coen down and then from Coen north. It was looking at trying to work it out with the communities themselves where they would Weipa

have a team that was servicing those areas during the week—because, people being people, they will do what they do. If there are not the facilities there, it is not a good scene at the end of the tourist season.

CHAIR: And that was my question. The shire would be the ones to maintain those facilities?

Mr Rowland: The Cook shire? Yes. I think you will hear the Cook shire say the same thing—in terms of the money side of it and where that comes from for them.

CHAIR: Hopefully the tourism dollars would filter back through.

Mr Rowland: Peter actually had a wonderful idea about Lakeland and the Gateway project there, which is a good introduction for everybody coming to Cape York. That is a really great thing to just call in and have a look at. He had an idea about trying to sell something like a Cape York passport and to charge a certain price per vehicle. That money would then be used to provide and maintain some of these services; otherwise, it falls back on the ratepayers. It would be a bit more of a user-pays kind of attitude. I thought it was a good idea but it could not get off the ground.

CHAIR: There are no more questions so I thank you very much. We really appreciate your attendance here today. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript of this hearing when it is available. A copy will also be published on the committee's webpage. I declare the hearing closed.

The subcommittee adjourned at 3.48 pm.