



Speech by

VAUGHAN JOHNSON

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Hansard 17 September 1998

OUTBACK HIGHWAY

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (10.22 a.m.): Next Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, a group of people from western Queensland—namely, from the Winton and Boulia Shires and other shires associated with western Queensland—will journey to Alice Springs to take part in a convention to promote and seek support for the upgrade of what is known as the outback highway. I hope that the Minister for Transport and Main Roads will be able to attend that meeting in Alice Springs next Thursday. I know that members of the Department of Main Roads will be in attendance at that meeting.

Importantly, this promotion is all about upgrading a highway from Western Australia to Queensland through the centre of this great continent of ours. It starts at Kalgoorlie and goes through to Laverton, back through Ayers Rock to Alice Springs and across to Boulia and Winton. This incorporates the reef to the rock concept on the Queensland/Territory side. There are some 860 kilometres of unsealed road on this highway.

The road is significant—nationally as well as internationally probably—to this great continent in the areas of exports, tourism and the like. The upgrading of this road needs the support of the Government. I know that people in Mount Isa currently are not very supportive of this road being upgraded—they say that it will take a lot of patronage away from Mount Isa City and the north-west area—but this is about promotion of an area. The Minister for Transport would know this, as he lives in the north of Queensland.

The reef to the rock concept is certainly important to that area of Queensland as we promote tourism. I say to members of the Government and to everybody in this House: please get behind this concept. Everybody can take advantage of the benefits that will flow in the areas of tourism, livestock and so on. I seek the Government's support on this important issue.
