



Speech by

**Hon. R. WELFORD**

**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

---

Hansard 29 April 1999

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Mr G. Quaid**

**Hon. R. J. WELFORD** (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (10.04 a.m.), by leave: In 1987, the Bjelke-Petersen Government, in concert with the Mareeba and Douglas Shire Councils, and in contravention of the Commonwealth's World Heritage legislation, allowed a private road to be bulldozed through some of Australia's most valuable and World Heritage rainforest areas. This road was built by a developer by the name of George Quaid. The 32-kilometre road stretches from Mr Quaid's Southedge artificial lake development near Mount Molloy to link up with the Captain Cook Highway near the coastal hamlet of Wangetti Beach.

Heavy rain between 12 and 15 March this year has led to a serious wash-out and landslip on the Quaid road about four and a half kilometres west of Wangetti Beach. The wash-out occurred in an area where a drainpipe was installed in a naturally occurring creek. The pipe was unable to contain the volume of stormwater and the whole road was washed away at that point where the drain was installed.

Officers of my Environmental Protection Agency have reported serious environmental impacts. They estimate that between 5,000 and 7,000 cubic metres of material has been eroded from the site, leaving a chasm 25 metres wide, 20 metres to 25 metres deep and 30 metres long. The eroded sediment has been swept downstream into Hartleys Creek and seven kilometres down to the ocean where it resulted in a sediment plume two kilometres to three kilometres out to sea. Downstream water pumping facilities and the lower reaches of Hartleys Creek have been heavily impacted by the sediment. Water quality and the ability to extract water were adversely affected.

My EPA officers have advised me that there is a threat of further land slumping in the order of the size of the original wash-out. There is an ongoing threat to land-holders and water users downstream of the Quaid road, and Mr Quaid must address this threat. Officers from the EPA and the Natural Resources Department inspected the damage on 31 March with staff of the Wet Tropics Management Authority and a consultant representing Mr Quaid. However, for reasons that escape me, I understand that, through his consultant, Mr Quaid has refused to allow Main Roads Department engineers on the road to inspect the damage. My EPA officers are seeking specialist road engineering advice on remediation and stabilisation necessary to minimise the risk of further environmental harm.

In December 1997, the leader of the coalition supported the handover of the road to the State of Queensland. He was quoted in the Courier-Mail as saying that "clearly there is overwhelming public support for gazettal" of the road.

**Mr Bredhauer:** Not from the then Minister for Transport there wasn't.

**Mr WELFORD:** Indeed. If the coalition had proceeded with the now Opposition Leader's harebrained proposal to take over this poorly constructed road, then today the Queensland taxpayer would be responsible for the ongoing upkeep and maintenance of a road the construction of which was clearly inadequate.

**An Opposition member** interjected.

**Mr WELFORD:** The member was. I want to assure the members of this House and the taxpayers of Queensland that the person who will be held accountable for this road will not be Queensland taxpayers; it will be the person who must take responsibility for the environmental impacts of this road's collapse because of its design, and that will be the developer responsible for its construction.