



Speech by

**SHAUN NELSON**

**MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS**

Hansard 27 October 1999

**APPROPRIATION BILL  
Estimates Committee C  
Report**

**Mr NELSON** (Tablelands—IND) (4.49 p.m.): It is quite interesting that I get to speak after the Minister for Transport, the member for Cook, because I rise tonight to fulfil a promise I made to the people on Cape York when I was in the area recently. I promised that I would come down here and put their situation to the Minister, who happens to be their local member. I said that I would raise the issue of the state of disrepair of the Peninsula Development Road and the other roads in the cape.

An interesting statement was made to me while I was fixing my tyre on the bank of a creek just outside Laura. I was told that I should count myself lucky that I got only one flat tyre on this bit of road. I have the photos to prove that my electorate vehicle was shaken to pieces on that road over an 800 or 900 kilometre journey up and an 800 or 900 kilometre journey back along a road that I can only describe as the most shocking piece of road I have driven on in Australia. This road happens to be in the Minister's electorate. I was also told by the people who live along that road that they have tried on numerous occasions to make representations to their local member, only to be ignored and as a result, nothing ever gets done about that road.

**Mr BREDHAUER:** I rise to a point of order. Not only are those remarks wrong, they are offensive, and I ask that they be withdrawn.

**Mr NELSON:** I will withdraw what the Minister finds offensive. However, the simple fact is that he is calling the people of the Cape York Peninsula liars. I am talking about people who came to see me, and I actually took the time and effort to drive up to Cape York.

**Mr Lucas** interjected.

**Mr NELSON:** The member for Lytton probably would not even be able to find Cape York on a map, so I do not know what he is talking about.

**Mr Lucas** interjected.

**Mr NELSON:** I am not going to name people so that they can be persecuted by the Australian Labor Party on the cape, like they always are.

I spoke to people who live along that road. I actually took the time to drive along that road and find out what people are saying. I can assure the Minister and the people on the other side of this Chamber that what happened to them last time when the Cape York people got angry is nothing compared to what will happen to them this time when those people get angry.

The road is visible on satellite maps. A report given to the Government last year stated that the dust and the absolute environmental degradation caused by the lack of repairs on that road is phenomenal. When I got to the Moreton Telegraph Station, which is on the Wenlock River just north of Weipa—for those who would not have a clue—I was told that, this year, the grading is only going to get that far; it is not going to go any further.

Another important factor, not just for Cape York but for my electorate, is that the Department of Main Roads seems to forget that we have a wet season in the north and that, when it rains incessantly, it becomes impossible to do roadworks. It seems that, year after year, by the time the Department of Transport actually gets the necessary funding to do the work, it is almost November, it starts raining,

and they have to cancel the work. And by the time the work can be started in the new year, the money is gone. Therefore, important road infrastructure projects go unattended.

This matter was highlighted to me quite poignantly when, very recently, a Labor senator from far-north Queensland raised this subject on the tablelands and made statements about the state of disrepair of our roads on the tablelands. It was pointed out to her that she should talk to the State Minister, because he is holding up the process of getting our roads fixed because he refuses to address the road problems in far-north Queensland. It is interesting to note that, in far-north Queensland, people do not refer to the ALP; they now call it the family.

**Mr Lucas** interjected.

**Mr NELSON:** I challenge the member for Lytton to come to my electorate, jump in my car with me, and I will drive him up to Shelburne Station and back. I will drive him to Bamaga and back. If the member for Lytton is decent, honest and serious about this, he should come up there. I will take him for a drive up to the cape and show him that road. I also challenge the Minister to address the subject of the PDR at Cooktown.

**Mr Lucas** interjected.

**Mr NELSON:** I will take the member to meet the people to whom I have spoken. He can put the situation to them, and I will have them put it straight back to him. But he does not have the guts to do so. And do members know why? Because he knows that I am right and he is wrong! He has no idea on this subject, and I do.

The simple fact remains that when the people of Cape York go unrepresented for too long, they will get their own back in the long run. And members can be assured that the Aboriginal people on the cape feel exactly the same way on this issue as do the white people on the cape.

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