



Speech by

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SAVANNAHLANDER TRIP

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (7.02 p.m.): If one comes to far-north Queensland, a must-do activity would be the train journey on the *Savannahlander* to the outback town of Forsyth, a former goldmining centre south-west of the Atherton Tablelands. The trip of 423 kilometres leaves from Cairns and travels up Kuranda Range and takes in some beautiful scenic views of the Barron River, rainforests and waterfalls. After leaving the picturesque village of Kuranda, the train heads in a southerly direction, where the terrain becomes much drier and rugged. The *Savannahlander* passes through Mareeba, the largest town on the route, once noted for its prosperous tobacco industry. Very little tobacco is grown these days and other crops are now taking its place. The rich fields are watered from the Tinaroo Falls Dam irrigation system. Before the dam was built by the Labor government in 1956, this country was virtually useless.

The train begins to climb over the Great Dividing Range and passes crops such as coffee, mangos, avocados and tea-tree and the township of Mutchilba. The train arrives at Almaden, the small township known as 'Cow Town', in time for lunch. It is called 'Cow Town' because there are no fences to keep the stock from roaming the streets. It is around this section of line that a lot of maintenance is being done. White ants are rampant in this area and are known to be seen clapping their hands with glee when the thousands of new wooden sleepers arrive to be replaced. At Almaden, once renowned for its country race meeting, one can choose to join a bus to Chillagoe to take in the various attractions on offer, such as the famous limestone caves, old smelters and the museum, among other things. There is an overnight stay and the next day the train journey continues west to Mount Surprise, a gem-fossicking town which is on the edge of the massive Undarra volcanic lava field. The trip then moves on to Einasleigh and the impressive Copperfield gorge, where the population of 25 increases to about 500 each Easter when it holds its annual race meeting. After billy tea and scones, the train journey continues to Forsyth and then people can either choose to return the same way or continue on by bus to the Undarra caves.
