



Speech by

Jason O'Brien

MEMBER FOR COOK

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PENINSULA DEVELOPMENT ROAD

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (8.31 pm): I rise again in this place to speak about the state of the Peninsula Development Road. For those who have come in late, the Peninsula Development Road is 550 kilometres of road that stretches between Lakeland and Weipa in far-north Queensland. Most of that 550-kilometre stretch remains unsealed. There is probably only about 50 or 60 kilometres that are sealed. It is the lifeline of the Cape York Peninsula and provides important tourism access during the dry season for people travelling from Cairns to the tip of Cape York Peninsula.

It has become an iconic drive for many Queenslanders and people from southern states who want to see the tip of Australia, the most northern point. The road remains dangerous and unacceptable in terms of providing access to tourism and the ability for cattle properties in far-north Queensland to get their product to market.

A few years ago the federal government named the road a Road of National Importance. It might as well have called the road a pork chop for what it meant, because in describing the road as a Road of National Importance it has committed very little money to the program. In fact under AusLink, the federal government has committed no money to the Peninsula Development Road this year. That was announced just recently. Under AusLink, some money has been allocated to the road that links the Peninsula Development Road to Bamaga, which is what we call an Indigenous access road. It has allocated \$1.6 million, but no money has been allocated to the Peninsula Development Road itself. That is a sad indictment on its commitment to regional Australia. It is a shameful road.

The Queensland government has said to the federal government that we have \$10 million on the table. In May last year the Premier announced that there is \$10 million on the table for the Peninsula Development Road if the federal government is willing to match that commitment. Up to this point, the federal government is unwilling to match that commitment that the Premier gave last year. I think that is a sad indictment. That is a way for the federal government to prove its commitment to the people of Leichhardt in the upcoming federal election.

It is an important issue for people on Cape York Peninsula. That \$10 million from the state government stands if the federal government is willing to match that commitment, but so far the silence from Canberra has been deafening. This is an important road in terms of the economic development of the far north of this state. It is an important road for Indigenous communities as it enables them to participate in the economic activity of this state.

Time expired.