



Speech by

**Rosa Lee Long**

**MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS**

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## **TABLELANDS ELECTORATE, GROWTH**

**Ms LEE LONG** (Tablelands—ONP) (9.59 pm): I rise to highlight the tremendous growth that is underway in the Tablelands electorate. This growth is practically across-the-board—population, industry, education and primary production. I may be biased but I believe my electorate is the best part of the best state in the country, and it appears more and more people are recognising this. Atherton and Mareeba shires in particular have booming housing approvals. Indeed, home prices in Mareeba shire have soared above 30 per cent in the past 12 months and there have been similar price rises in the other shires. Only recently just one developer announced that projects at Mareeba, Atherton, Tolga and Malanda were expected to total around 1,400 residences. That would mean a population increase of something like 6,000 extra residents from these projects alone in the short term.

Available supplies of essential building materials such as sand for concrete blocks and other raw materials are stretched to the limit keeping up with demand. There is a reinvigorated mining sector ranging from the operation of Kagara Zinc to new discoveries of iron ore and even coal. These projects will bring more jobs to the tablelands and more transport onto our roads, especially as rail has all but vanished from the tablelands as a transport option.

Tableland farmers continue to sharpen their skills and target niche and overseas markets. They have terrific soils and a great climate, and produce supreme quality milk and beef. There is also a proposal for intensive dairying for the overseas market that could take the industry into a new part of the tablelands. Indeed, this government's own draft far-north Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy identifies that the agricultural sector's demand for water is growing at four per cent annually, and this will mean that all available allocations will be fully utilised within just 15 years.

The tourism industry also continues to grow. It is almost entirely a road based business in my electorate between tour coaches and self-drives. All this growth is entirely separate to the major population node that was part of the 2010 regional plan which identified a site near Myola as a future home for up to 11,000 new residents. That project was matched closely with the upgrades of the Kuranda Range Road. However, it is absolutely arguable that, with or without Myola, the tablelands is racing ahead and the need for a fully upgraded Kuranda Range Road is becoming more urgent every day.

Future projects are strong, but the truth is that there is massive real world investment in the tablelands and this government must commit to the tablelands range upgrade and get it underway as soon as it is physically possible and before the costs rise even higher. Half-measures are no answer but excuses that will not meet the needs of the north or honour the ALP promises made for the past decade.