



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard Tuesday, 13 May 2008

GREGORY DEVELOPMENT ROAD

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (9.56 pm): I would like to table a non-confirming petition from 662 petitioners calling for the urgent upgrade of the Gregory Development Road.

Tabled paper: Non-confirming petition requesting funding and repairs for the Gregory Development Road.

The petition states—

We, the undersigned, are fed up with the state of the Gregory Development Road.

The petition calls on both the state and federal governments to provide sufficient funds to repair and upgrade this major highway to a standard that is useable by all industries.

From the outset, on behalf of all concerned, I would like to thank the Hon. Warren Pitt, Minister for Main Roads and Local Government, for his visit to Charters Towers to meet with interested parties and hear their concerns about the shocking state of this road. There was much appreciation for his visit.

Local road users refer to this road as a billygoat track and a one-lane nightmare. There has been at least one fatality and up to 23 accidents in the last two years between Charters Towers and Greenvale. This road is heavily used by ore road train triples that service the mines, increased numbers of livestock carriers and increasing numbers of tourists who are usually hauling caravans on extensive sections of a one-way roadway and who are not accustomed to driving on roads in such a shocking state.

It is estimated that Kagara Zinc alone will require 48 round trips a day of 80-tonne payload triples from Balcooma to Thalanga for the next four years. It is downright dangerous and, sadly, a daily occurrence that regular road users are confronted by triple road trains on a single sealed road with winding bends with no vision or warning of any oncoming traffic. Any slight veering will result in a car ending up down an embankment, into a tree or head-on into an oncoming prime mover.

Greenvale has grown from a population of 60 to almost 300 since 2002. There have been a number of new mines kicking off in the region, such as Kagara Zinc mine at Conjuboy Station, which employs 200 people at its mine site. Other mines include the sapphire mine at Mount Fox, Christmas Creek Mine and Pandanus marble mine. Metalica Minerals are aiming for a 2009 nickel processing operation tipped to generate up to \$120 million a year in revenue. The Einasleigh copper project is also forecasting that the output of copper concentrate will be approximately 10,000 to 15,000 tonnes per year, which will be trucked to Townsville through this road for export. At Greenvale, when the early nickel mine was in operation, its population was roughly estimated to be 3,000. As a result of the mineral boom, population growth is again expected to explode.

The transport, grazing, tourist and mining industries, as well as Townsville Enterprise, the Charters Towers Regional Council, the Charters Towers Chamber of Commerce, local residents and parents, are screaming out for this road to be fixed. Huge amounts of royalties and payroll taxes from local mines are being paid directly to the state government. It is estimated to be up to \$18 million per year in full production. Fast-tracking the upgrade of the Gregory Development Road not only would create an inland highway during the wet but also will relieve traffic congestion from the coast, reduce accidents, open up investment to the region as well as save lives. We call on the state government to fix this road once and for all and seek extra funding through the Cabinet Budget Review Committee.