




Speech by

Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

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KURANDA SCENIC RAILWAY

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Multicultural Affairs) (12.05 am): I rise to acknowledge this month's 120th anniversary of the opening of the Kuranda Scenic Railway. When the railway was opened in 1891 it was hailed as an engineering marvel, and when you travel along the line today you can see why. Climbing steeply up through the Barron Gorge National Park from Cairns to Kuranda, the ride can take your breath away. During the wet season of 1882, tin miners in and around Herberton in the Tablelands were cut off and unable to obtain supplies, including basic food items. Nearly starving, they cried out for a rail line to the coast to ensure supplies, even during heavy wet seasons. The line was constructed in three sections. The first section between Cairns and Redlynch saw the backs of two contractors before being completed by the colonial government. The 24.5 kilometre section 2 was the most arduous. When the Queensland government opened the tender process for section 2, on 13 January 1887 the *Cairns Post* pointed to the magnitude of the task, stating—

The construction of this line will be an achievement of engineering skill, the likes of which has never been attempted in these colonies.

The rail line consists of 15 tunnels, totalling over two kilometres in length, and 55 bridges and snakes around almost 100 curves through terrain that is as rugged as it is beautiful. During construction, workers had to contend with slopes averaging 45 degrees and a surface covered with layers of disjointed rock and soil. In all, over 2.3 million cubic metres of earth was removed during construction and much of it was used to fill in low-lying wetlands around Cairns.

However, the project had its doubters, especially in the south-east corner of the state. The Stony Creek Bridge, the line's most spectacular, was completed in April 1890. The then Governor, Sir Henry Wylie Norman, visited the area to see the completed bridge, which runs 26.5 metres above the creek bed in front of a majestic waterfall. After the entire railway was opened to traffic in June 1891, it provided the Tablelands mining and agricultural sectors with a reliable supply of goods and freight, allowing the region to expand. Cairns became a port city for the industries of the Tablelands and became the city that we know today. At the top of the range, Kuranda became a tourist destination with its train station known as the 'honeymoon station'. In 1926, Queensland Rail advertised the trip in a publication called *Beautiful Queensland From a Railway Carriage Window*. It described the journey as follows—

Still climbing over gorges, along spider bridges, through tunnels and cuttings, out upon narrow lengths where sheer drops of hundreds of feet hold our fascinated gaze.

Today the Kuranda Scenic Railway is an important attraction for visitors to Cairns, attracting over 330,000 visitors a year. On Friday, 24 June and Saturday, 25 June the Cairns community will be out in force to celebrate this magic milestone of 120 years. I am sure that the railway will continue to be popular for another 120 years. It will be a fantastic day of celebrations and I look forward to being there for this very special event.