




Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

Hansard Wednesday, 24 August 2011

NETTLE CREEK BRIDGE

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—LNP) (8.31 pm): As the wet season races closer, I want to raise the deplorable condition of the Kennedy Highway, the Kennedy Development Road and the Gregory Development Road again, and I will continue to bring this vital freight and transport route to the attention of the House until something is done. One important part of this highway that needs immediate redressing is the Nettle Creek bridge crossing on the Kennedy Highway at Innot Hot Springs. I recently inspected this bridge with transport operators who are wondering how this government fails to recognise the massive cost to operators who have to deal with load restrictions, permit requirements and road closures and the resulting economic damage to the whole region. Nettle Creek bridge is a low-lying, one-lane structure that is a constant source of problems for the trucking industry in the wet season. The bridge is in urgent need of repair. The bridge is substandard and would not be allowed on a major highway in the south-east corner.

Heavy vehicles travel across this bridge every 20 minutes. Main Roads is aware of the problem and last year weight restrictions were placed on heavy vehicles, which is a major inconvenience and massive expense to operators. In March this year a hole in the bridge caused by severe flooding was patched up and a large timber girder is scheduled to be replaced before the 2011-12 wet season. These are bandaid solutions that result in long-term maintenance costs that will be higher than reconstruction. In July the minister rejected requests by transport operators for the bridge to be flood proofed and said that it did not require reconstruction or flood proofing. This is a single-lane, low-lying bridge that looks like it dates back to the 1800s! Water goes over the Nettle Creek bridge every wet season and yet the minister cannot see the need to address this problem. It is unbelievable that the minister can say that this bridge does not require flood proofing. It is on a major transport and tourist highway that could have provided a connection between northern and southern Queensland when the Bruce Highway was blocked off for weeks after Cyclone Yasi.

The transport industry, tourists and general travelling public should not be expected to tolerate this unacceptable and dangerous situation. Every year transport operators experience delays and restrictions which impact on local businesses waiting for food, freight and equipment. These local businesses rely entirely on road transport since rail services were ended. Every year Emergency Services face huge logistical challenges that pose a danger to crews and patients. Every year cattle are unable to be moved to waiting southern markets as the Bruce Highway and the inland highway are cut off by flooding, particularly at the Nettle Creek bridge. Mining developments are expanding, tourism is increasing and industry is growing across the region and this inland highway is the only access to southern markets during most of the wet season. It is time the inland route from the Tablelands to Charters Towers was recognised as a vital highway and this highway is flood proofed and most importantly upgraded at Nettle Creek bridge to solve these burdensome problems once and for all.

(Time expired)