




Speech by
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Tuesday, 13 November 2012

BRUCE HIGHWAY

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (11.46 am): I rise to update the House on the sham that is the Newman government's Bruce Highway Action Plan. As members here would be aware, I have been trying to expose this folly dressed up as a charade for many months. It seems I now have at least one more like-minded supporter—none other than the LNP's own federal member for Leichhardt, Warren Entsch. Mr Entsch obviously could see through this supposed action plan for the political document it is. Not only that, he also had the insight to see that this tawdry political ploy was doomed to fail. That is why last week he came out and described the Bruce Highway Action Plan as a 'motherhood statement'. I should point out that this description was preceded by a rather unparliamentary term but one that we are certainly familiar with in Far North Queensland and no doubt across the state—a term that in mixed company may see the more polite description of 'bovine excrement'. In what can only be described as road rage, Mr Entsch is reported to have said in a letter to his colleagues that the Bruce Highway Action Plan—something touted so longingly and lovingly by the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Main Roads—should be 'justifiably condemned', and I table that article.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Australian*, dated 7 November 2012, titled 'Entsch calls BS on Bruce plan' [[1557](#)].

It is pleasing to see that Mr Entsch has finally decided to expose the truth about this action—or, rather, lack of action—plan. He has realised that his LNP colleagues in the Newman government have no real intention of putting money on the table and no real intention of getting work underway on the much needed upgrade to the Bruce Highway. For all their talk, there was only \$10 million in the 2012-13 budget for the Bruce Highway. As we know, the Premier commissioned this report from the Bruce Highway Crisis Management Group as part of his election commitment to get to work on the Bruce over the next decade. Guess who was one of the Premier's hand-picked group members? None other than Warren Entsch! According to reports, Mr Entsch said he could see no value in the report and his involvement at the invitation of the Newman government was 'window dressing' and 'a complete waste of time'. For once it seems Mr Entsch and I are in full agreement. Mr Entsch was no longer prepared to risk his reputation for the sake of a Premier who is clearly clueless when it comes to politics and public administration. Quite clearly, it is time for the LNP backbench to bring back the Borg!

Members may ask why Mr Entsch has so quickly tried to distance himself from this report. It is very simple. His federal colleagues have seen through the report which goes nowhere to addressing the needs of Cairns and Far North Queensland. Furthermore, this document was designed to lobby Canberra for funds. Judging by Mr Entsch's reaction, he understands that by this objective it has fallen well short—so much so that Mr Abbott has completely ignored the Entsch saga, but, then again, he has problems of his own as we read in today's paper! Despite all of the bluff and bluster, the LNP—both at state and federal levels—has failed miserably when it comes to action on the Bruce. Month after month we have seen stunt after stunt by the LNP over this important national highway, but it cannot even convince one of its own of the merits of this report. And what has the usually outspoken member for Cairns had to say on the matter? The best he can come up with is some wishy-washy statement that Mr Entsch was not meant to be doing the heavy lifting on this matter. What a response! If the member for Cairns thinks Mr Entsch is wrong, he should come out and categorically say so. His failure to condemn Mr Entsch's comments means that he

must agree with them. He should follow Mr Entsch's lead and put the interests of Far North Queensland ahead of the interests of Campbell Newman and the LNP. The member for Cairns, the Premier and this LNP government need to get serious about funding works on the Bruce Highway immediately. If they were fair dinkum, they would not be hiding behind this sham of a report.

They need to stop playing politics on this critical upgrade and get on with the job. I have said in this place before that the Newman government's Bruce Highway Crisis Management Group is itself in crisis, but now as each day passes we see that, in fact, it is the Liberal National Party that is facing an internal crisis of its own. I say that again. Any Bruce Highway crisis is the result of the LNP's own historical underfunding and if Mr Entsch wants to point the finger of blame, he needs to point it at one of his own.