



Speech by
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Thursday, 15 November 2012

KIRRAMA RANGE ROAD

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (3.20 pm): I rise to speak about the Kirrama Range Road—a road of interest to residents in the Cassowary Coast Regional Council area. For the benefit of other members, Kirrama Range Road was closed in 2006 after it was damaged during Cyclone Larry. The member for Hinchinbrook is correct that it is gazetted as a public road but is not part of the state controlled road network. But in a 2008 letter to the FNQROC, which I table, he argued at length that upgrades and repairs to the road should be funded by the state government, stating—

I remain of the view that the Department of Main Roads and the Environmental Protection Agency ought to fund the repair and ongoing maintenance of the Kirrama Range Road.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 20 February 2008, from the Member for Hinchinbrook, Hon. Andrew Cripps, to the executive officer of the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils, Mrs Irvine, regarding the Kirrama Range Road [1619].

Clearly in 2008 the member for Hinchinbrook was being politically opportunistic and used the Kirrama Range Road to attack the then state Labor government. He claimed that the repair and upgrade works on the road should be funded by the state despite it being the responsibility of the former Cardwell and Herbert shire councils.

Fast-forward to 2012 and just six weeks after the state budget was released, with no mention of the Kirrama Range Road project, the LNP has found several million dollars for the member for Hinchinbrook. There is no mention of the road in the new QTRIP released by the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. But in response to a growing backlash in the Cardwell area, both at the March election from Katter's Australian Party and because of Campbell Newman's savage cuts to jobs and services, the LNP has conjured up a political rescue package rather than a roads package to bolster its prospects in Hinchinbrook. Finally he had some good news that the state government would provide funding for the Kirrama Range Road on the basis that the Cassowary Coast Regional Council matched \$2.5 million.

But the other part of the story is how this funding deal was put together. It is unravelling by the day. The *Innisfail Advocate* has been tracking the soap opera that is the special committee established to broker the deal. The LNP has made no attempt to inform the public of the existence or membership of this official/unofficial committee. Membership includes the member for Hinchinbrook as well as the mayor of the Cassowary Coast, the councillor for division 1 and also the deputy mayor, who incidentally is also the chairman of the local LNP. There are so many conflicting versions of events as to who was where and when that nobody involved can get their story straight. There are supposedly minutes of the special meeting on 19 October taken by two state public servants, but these remain a secret. But just as important as who was at the meeting is who was not invited—people like Councillor Ian Rule, who has the portfolio of Transport Infrastructure Planning for the Cassowary Coast, not to mention more than 40 years practical experience in road building.

The \$2.5 million announced each from both the state and the Cassowary Coast Regional Council has been pulled out of the air with no cost-benefit analysis. I am not aware of any formal costings for the project by the state government, but we do know it will cost more than \$5 million. The restoration of timber bridges alone may come in at nearly \$3 million. But the member for Hinchinbrook knows from his letter that the entire project had been costed at \$6.6 million by the former Cardwell shire council, and that was in 2008! I call on the member for Hinchinbrook to tell us why he is doing and saying the opposite of what he said in 2008, detail how this deal to save his job was struck and provide notes taken by the state public servants who attended the 19 October meeting. The ball is in your court, member for Hinchinbrook.