




Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Outback Way

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (4.02 pm): I rise in this House to follow up on a question that I asked the transport minister the other day about the Outback Way. The Outback Highway, or the Outback Way, is a series of roads and dirt tracks linking Winton in Queensland and Laverton in Western Australia. At 2,800 kilometres, it crosses Central Australia, colloquially known as 'the outback', passing through Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. It has been proposed to provide an inland route between southern Western Australia and North Queensland as an alternative to National Highway 1 along either coast. The roads that make up the highway are the Great Central Road, Gunbarrel Highway, Lasseter Highway, Stuart Highway, Plenty Highway, Donohue Highway and the Kennedy Developmental Road. Support for the project is strong among the seven local government areas along the highway and elsewhere.

In 1998, an Outback Highway feasibility study prepared for Main Roads Western Australia, the Northern Territory Department of Transport and the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads by BSD Consultants Pty Ltd suggested that more than \$70 million over 10 years would be needed to bring the highway to a safe standard. Undoubtedly, that figure has increased since then.

On 3 September 2012, I was very pleased to hear that the federal LNP member for Maranoa, Bruce Scott, said that, if elected, the coalition government could meet \$11 million for three years for a total of \$33 million for Australia's longest shortcut to better transport opportunities through the heart of our vast nation. This was a welcome announcement, which is why I asked the question to the minister as to whether Queensland would be supporting that also. Bruce Scott said further that it is a five-day shortcut that would revolutionise travel and transport within Australia. He stated further—

We will pick up where we left off when last in government.

This visionary project will cross Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. The alternative route to the Outback Way is 1,600 kilometres longer. The federal government funding will be critical to transform the dirt track into a strategic route. They are the only two major highways east to west of Australia. I believe that the Outback Way is strategically important as it will open up trade links within our nation.

The Boulia Shire Council, which is located in my electorate, has an annual rates base of just over \$1 million. That council cannot be expected to maintain this vital link. The Donohue Highway must be made a state road so that it can form part of this project. The council believes that the combination of triple-trailer road trains, local traffic and tourist traffic on badly damaged bulldust roads poses an unacceptable safety risk.

In April 2013 one of the leading cattle transport companies based in Cloncurry, Curley Cattle Transport Pty Ltd, ordered its drivers to avoid using the Donohue Highway because it was disgraceful and caused untold suspension damage to their vehicles. On average, each road truck is having four to eight tyres damaged at \$500 per tyre every time they go along that road. This project presents a great opportunity for this state. It is a nation-building project and must be followed up.

(Time expired)