




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

ADJOURNMENT SPEECH

Kirrama Range Road

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (10.20 pm): I wish to raise the ongoing issue of the Kirrama Range, which runs from my electorate south-east of Mount Garnet to the coast and into the electorate of Hinchinbrook. While in opposition the member for Hinchinbrook slammed the former government for avoiding responsibility for the road and demanded that funding for the upgrade should be shared between the department of main roads and the EPA. The minister rightly stated that the state's responsibility originates from the income the state received for forestry operations before land was locked up under national parks and World Heritage protection. However, it is not only historical income that needs to be taken into consideration. There is significant tourism revenue to be gained from one of the most scenic drives in Queensland which includes the Blencoe Falls. The road provides access to picnic and camping grounds that are now only accessible via the coast, a 500-kilometre round trip up the Palmerston range. The upgrade of the road will also provide access to cattle properties which are flooded every wet season so the graziers are no longer locked in or out of their properties for three months of the year. This will also support the tourism industry of the Atherton Tablelands.

When in opposition the now minister had pointed to the importance of the area for research students at James Cook University and, likewise, a cultural centre for young Indigenous people on the top of the range as reasons for the state to fund the upgrade of the road. Unfortunately, the funding announcement last year by the minister had a cruel hook that has left ratepayers in his electorate disillusioned and angry with the watered-down version of his support now that he is in government.

For the road to be upgraded the council has to find the remaining \$2.5 million. This is a far cry from the member for Hinchinbrook's previous position when he passionately demanded that the state take responsibility for this road without unfairly burdening ratepayers of the Cassowary Coast Regional Council with \$2.5 million for the upgrade. It is entirely unreasonable that the state government expects a small council to contribute an equal amount to the upgrading of a road that, according to the member for Hinchinbrook in 2011, should be the responsibility of the state. As the minister states in a 2008 letter to the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils—

I hope the FNQROC ... now better understands my position. I will continue to pursue this matter on behalf of my constituents and I remain of the view that the DMR and the EPA ought to fund the repair and ongoing maintenance of the Kirrama Range Road.

The minister knows full well the pressure on ratepayers to contribute so much to the road upgrade is both unreasonable and unrealistic. Last week the federal member for Kennedy secured \$1 million of federal funding. I challenge the member for Hinchinbrook to take responsibility for the funding of the Kirrama Range Road and not force the debt burden onto the ratepayers of the Cassowary Coast. The minister knows full well the importance of this road as he lobbied extremely hard to get it upgraded and funded by the state when he was in opposition. Now he is in government. This is a golden opportunity for him to do this.

(Time expired)