




Speech By
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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Road Infrastructure; North Queensland Local Government Association Conference

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (12.16 pm): We usually warn people about the dangers of hitchhiking; however, lately I have been hitching rides with trucks travelling the highways and byways of this great state as part of my responsibilities as the shadow minister for main roads. It has been a fantastic way to see these roads and to hear from those who travel them most. I have to say: it was organised hitchhiking, but I have received absolutely fantastic feedback. I will continue to do this as one way to connect with communities and everyday Queenslanders.

Before I report some of my findings and experiences, I will relay a couple of amusing things. When I got into the cabin of one of the trucks in Cairns I did not expect to smell lavender in the air. I felt it was a bit strange, so I asked the very burly truckie, 'Is there lavender in here?' In his considerate way he had actually tried to 'de-bloke-ify' the cabin and had sprayed a bit of lavender for the trip ahead. So there is such a thing as a sensitive new-age truckie. Also, in a strange and ironic way, one of the sections of road between Bowen and Rockhampton was so rough that the Fitbit I was wearing went off and told me that I had done 10,000 steps while I was sitting in the cabin!

Flying over these roads, looking at maps and in good faith being briefed on these roads is completely different from seeing them for yourself and riding with those who travel them the most. That is why I found it so invaluable, and I will continue to do this as one way of connecting with people.

I saw completed works that were outstanding—I will refer to some of them in a moment—but I also saw works that still need to be done. I saw how important these networks are for the jobs of this state, for the businesses that are moving goods to market and for the linking of communities to services and to their work. I also saw some of the valuable upgrades that have been occurring in recent years, particularly under the LNP's Bruce Highway Action Plan in partnership with our federal colleagues, with up to \$10 billion of work programmed over 10 years—record funding from the federal government. In addition to the significant works I saw safety upgrades which are so cost effective, particularly around places such as Gympie, Townsville and of course the Yeppen flood plain. I saw simple safety upgrades like the separation lines and rumble strips in the middle that are moving traffic further apart and the widening of verges. This has dramatically reduced head-on accidents in a number of places. That is due to the innovation of Main Roads and has been very successful.

Obviously there are still many areas that need to be upgraded and we will all continue to advocate and fight for that. When I travelled from Cairns to Brisbane with three different trucking companies it was an opportunity to talk with them and hear their feedback about the need for more overtaking lanes and safe rest areas. Recently I was on the Hann Highway for a section with Bob who was carrying hay bales from the Tablelands to Winton. That is a pretty rough bit of road and you learn firsthand why produce such as potatoes cannot be carried on that road because it is too rough and they will get bruised. While there are sections that are sealed, there are more that need to have a progressive

program of upgrades. I thank the Singles family from outside of Mackay who are part of the Road Accident Action Group and who have been such passionate advocates particularly for roads like the Peak Downs Highway. I rode with them from the port to the pit—from Mackay to Moranbah. That is a road that has had significant improvements, but there is more that needs to be done. I acknowledge our federal colleagues with the Eton Range realignment works. It has invested \$167 million and the LNP government committed \$23 million. Hopefully those works will soon get underway because they are desperately needed. The Walkerston bypass needs to be a project where the design work is completed, the project properly costed and whatever needs to be done put in place in order to program that. I thank the companies and individual truckies who have been good enough to have me on board.

On a different note, I want to also acknowledge the Palm Island council which did an outstanding job hosting the North Queensland Local Government Association Conference earlier this year. I give a shout out to Alf Lacey, his councillors, his staff and the community. They shone—

(Time expired)