



Speech By  
**Steve Minnikin**


**MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH**

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**MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Bruce Highway**

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (2.36 pm): I rise today to inform honourable members about my recent 2,830-kilometre road experience driving from Cooktown right down to Coolangatta. The primary purpose of this trip was to inspect the condition of the roads, predominantly the Bruce Highway, to see firsthand the actual road conditions which those using the highway must navigate. It was also to meet with heavy vehicle transport operators, road builders, traffic control contractors, local councils, port authorities along with tour and charter bus operators to receive their valuable input.

Roads act as enabling infrastructure that support economic growth and social connectivity. They are critical economic arteries for building and maintaining a community. It was evident that many sections of the Bruce are undivided, so overtaking can be dangerous, as many members would know, and outdated bridges prevail. Annual flooding events have caused the destruction of road pavement and structures, resulting in poor and unsafe driving conditions on damaged surfaces. While there were roadworks occurring along the Bruce, understandably this brings long delays to traffic. Also the placement of speed restriction signs of 40 and 60 kilometres per hour where absolutely no work was occurring was hard to justify and it was frustrating motorists.

The 1,652-kilometre stretch of road is the single most important piece of infrastructure in Queensland, which is why it is so disappointing that it took the Palaszczuk Labor government almost three years to hold its first Bruce Highway Trust meeting. Despite promising to establish the trust prior to the 2017 state election and being part of the transport and main roads ministerial charter letter, the incompetent TMR minister delayed holding a meeting until 103 days out from the forthcoming October election. This hardly demonstrates that the Bruce Highway is a priority for this lazy and incompetent Labor government. To add further insult to injury, the membership of the trust did not include one person who resides north of Gympie. Local knowledge of road conditions is a huge benefit and so regional representation should be a key ingredient of the Bruce Highway Trust. An LNP government would ensure full regional representation on the Bruce Highway Trust, unlike the transport and main roads minister, referred to as 'foolish' by the CCC.

Of further concern is that in 2018 Queensland's Auditor-General identified that as a result of chronic underfunding there was a backlog of \$4 billion to maintain the state controlled network. This backlog has grown to over \$5½ billion, which means severe consequences for road safety as well as productivity. Despite the many challenges, I would like to acknowledge the positive attitude of regional Queenslanders. There were plenty of examples of innovation and determination to get on with shovel-ready projects. However, many of them are frustrated that red and green tape are clogging the system and stalling projects.

In terms of integrity measures the general view is that, while the CCC recommendations are supported, the ideological, Labor inspired reforms are grinding council operations to a halt. These shackles need to be removed and local government empowered to once more become a highly

functioning, responsive and agile system of government for local communities. An LNP government will partner with local governments as part of our economic strategy to stimulate the overall economy. We will provide practical solutions and the best opportunities for local communities to survive and prosper. The LNP will explore every possible avenue to assist these councils to maintain their full-time workforces with a regular pipeline of supply works and also secure work for local contractors.

Queenslanders know that the state was in an economic crisis well before COVID-19—not because of it. The Palaszczuk government had the last Premier to announce an economic stimulus package that would actually do something for the state, to rectify the economic malaise we find ourselves in. However, no budget means that Labor is flying blind through the biggest economic crisis in almost a century. Particularly in these troubling times, we simply cannot afford another wasted term of Labor government. In contrast, an LNP government will deliver its budget within the first 100 days in office.

The Bruce Highway requires all levels of government to work together towards planning, funding and building a better Bruce. An LNP government would work closely with the federal coalition government and immediately stump up our funding share under an 80-20 arrangement. We need to get works underway as soon as possible. This will form part of our new 10-year plan for the Bruce Highway, Queensland's economic artery from Brisbane to Cairns. The people of Queensland deserve better than what this lazy, incompetent Labor government is currently delivering—very little. I challenge the TMR minister to drive the 2,830 kilometres from Cooktown to Coolangatta, as I did recently, to see the road conditions for himself.