



Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR TRAEGER**

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## **MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

### **Traeger Electorate, Road Infrastructure**

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (2.36 pm): I need about 20 minutes each week to keep bringing attention to the problems we have in the western areas of Queensland, more specifically in Traeger. Today I rise to talk about the failure of the transport network and focus on roads. A Grattan Institute report released yesterday stated that there was a shortfall of about a billion dollars a year to stop local government road infrastructure degrading anymore. They are saying it is in poor condition, but to try to arrest the decline in the quality of those roads, a billion dollars more each year is needed. The further you get away from the cities, the worse it gets. Cities underspend by 15 per cent. Remote communities underspend by 75 per cent. That is obviously pretty relevant for an electorate like Traeger.

The report also says, which I find the most interesting and pointed for this government—

Taxpayers would get better bang for their buck if the federal government spent an extra \$1 billion on improving our local roads rather than on building new megaprojects in the major cities ...

That sounds familiar. I do not want to begrudge people in the cities their projects. Every time I come down I see the new footbridge coming over the Brisbane River. There is the wonderful traffic tunnel to get people to work in the city another five or 10 minutes earlier. That is great, but not when everyone in Burke Shire and Doomadgee Shire is crying about the floods and the damage caused and the government goes up there and says, 'What can we do to help?' and people say, 'Oh, we need a new bridge along there. That might be \$30 million,' and the government replies, 'That is too much. We don't have money for that.' Any time something needs to be done—something like the Gilbert River Bridge in the north near the Croydon and Etheridge shires—we are told, 'No, there is no money for that.' There was money for a \$30 million cassowary bridge along the highway which the cassowaries do not even use, and when they come off it they still fall on the railway line or onto another road. We have money for that, but we do not have money for the real things.

That leads me to the Flinders Highway. It is interesting. The Grattan Institute says climate change is the reason these roads are getting worse, which I know the government would fully support. If it is going to get worse and flood-proofing is more of a requirement, why is all this money being lumped into these big mega projects down here in the South-East? The Flinders Highway is an interesting road because about \$7 billion worth of our supply chain go along that road. Interestingly, of the business which has come off Queensland Rail in the past 12 years, 38 per cent is now on the roads. Safety has been brought to the attention of the government on multiple occasions. If we want to talk about safety and efficiency, everyone in the world would think we are the absolute laughing-stock for not putting bulk ore on a train to our major port in Townsville, over 900 kilometres away, and instead are finding it more affordable to put it on a road train.

What else happens when you start putting triple road trains, with their air suspension, over bridges? Bridges and roads fail. On the Flinders Highway we have slowdown signs, potholes and dangerous wheel tracks. Tourists contact my office saying, 'Goodness me, I smashed the trailer on that.'

That is a dangerous road.’ The Warrigal Creek Bridge over Torrens Creek—this is really embarrassing—has been downgraded to a single-lane bridge with 20-kilometres-per-hour speed restrictions. This is a major arterial route for one of our great mining provinces because the rail has been made so expensive by the government and QCA guidelines, which are just a joke.

I have brought this to the attention of the government on multiple occasions for it to fix. It could be a cost-neutral solution. We do not collect revenue from it off the rail. It goes onto the road, where it is unsafe. People get booked on passing lanes—because you have to keep to 110 on the highway—while trying to pass triple road trains because the road is clogged with them. Unless you want to stay behind a heap of triple road trains all the way from Mount Isa to Hughenden, you have to break the speed limit. Then the response from the transport minister is, ‘Let’s whack some speed cameras there to capture the pensioners and the workers in Torrens Creek.’

We have had hundreds of messages from distraught people saying, ‘I haven’t had a speeding ticket for 20 years.’ A 60-kilometre zone was put right outside of Torrens Creek—you are flat out having 150 people there—where there are no streetlights and no houses. There was no signage and no education campaign: ‘Let’s not tell people we’re going to put speed cameras up because we don’t really want to educate them; we just want to fine them.’ Fine them you have! The government has done a very good job of that, but it has also ticked off everyone out there. Now everyone will blame the poor old police, who are trying to do their job in town, for these speed cameras. If the government wants to fix road safety it should fix the roads first, put product back onto rail and educate people, not send them a bill in the post two weeks later for driving in a remote area at 10 o’clock at night.