




Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR HILL**

---

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2023

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (3.25 pm): In speaking to the appropriation bills I would like to say that there are definitely some positives to the budget and there are also some negatives. I want to highlight some of the positives and the first is the \$3.5 million for the Kurrimine Beach boat ramp. That is a big positive for the region.

In rural and regional areas, most activities are around either hunting pigs or fishing. If you have no access to the water, it is difficult to engage in fishing. I acknowledge the community for their powerful lobbying. They have spent almost four years pushing for this boat ramp. At the present boat ramp you have to deal with crocodiles and jellyfish. When the tide is out you have to use a tractor to bring in the boat and then you have to deal with sandy erosion and congestion. Sometimes fishing competitions have had to be cancelled because it is too congested. If you cannot facilitate a competition then the need for a new boat ramp is evident.

I acknowledge the Minister for Main Roads and Transport particularly for getting members of his department to visit Kurrimine Beach and to draw up the plans. Now we have the funding. We are very excited for Kurrimine Beach but the whole region benefits. It is a great initiative. We are very appreciative and no doubt the community welcomes that funding.

I acknowledge the \$8.5 million for overtaking lanes to be built between Mareeba and Ravenshoe. Everyone gets frustrated with roadworks but the end product is important. We have seen a lot of works happening between Atherton, Mareeba and elsewhere. There has been a lot of frustration felt over a number of years because of those roadworks. The big issue, as I mentioned before, is congestion. Another issue is not having the opportunity to overtake, which is especially difficult in a farming community when tractors and other vehicles are trying to get from one place to another. Therefore, our community very much welcomes that \$8.5 million for passing lanes. That is good dollars well spent.

I want to mention the \$1.46 million to widen and seal the Ootan Road, which is an inland road that is mostly dirt. Trucks unload at Mount Garnet and then go through the Tablelands to Mareeba and come back again to pick up another dolly. That means that there are a lot of trucks on the road causing congesting on the Atherton Tablelands. Most truck drivers would prefer to go on the Ootan Road. If we sealed that road we would see hundreds if not thousands of truck movements every year going around the Tablelands, through the Gulf and up the cape. While this is a great investment, much more money needs to be spent. However, we appreciate the \$1.46 million that will go to that project.

I acknowledge the \$50 million to upgrade the Bruce Highway from Cairns to Innisfail and Innisfail to Ingham, along with the bridge upgrades at Flying Fish Point Road, which has been an issue, and Mundoo Road, Bamboo Creek. That is very important.

In good news, there is \$7.1 million to complete the Atherton Hospital, which is almost ready to be opened. There have been petitions and we have been working with the community. We acknowledge that a number of ministers have come up to the Tablelands, particularly when we had the Ravenshoe

blast where we saw a number of deaths. The Atherton Hospital could not cater for many of those injured in that blast. We are looking forward to seeing that opened. No doubt, that will benefit the whole of the Tablelands region in different fields and sectors. The good news, too, is that we now see evidence that people have submitted applications to apply for those positions when those extra spots become available.

There is \$1 million for the Atherton State School to install a security fence around their grounds for the safety of students. This was a big issue. A lot of people found that it easier to walk through the middle of the school during the day and this posed a huge safety issue. I acknowledge that the Minister for Education stepped in and saw that this as a safety issue. We definitely thank the minister for the \$1.1 million in funding for that fencing around the school to address the safety issues, in particular.

There is \$3 million towards the acquisition of land for a new site for the Atherton fire and rescue service. Everyone understands that over the years we have upgraded to new appliances and they are state-of-the-art appliances. However, Atherton could not fit those new appliances in the old fire station. Receiving this \$3 million for the land and to construct the new fire station is vitally important, particularly in terms of access for those new appliances. There is an element of excitement in being able to quickly and safely resolve emergency issues. These will be good dollars well spent.

The final funding has been delivered to complete the new Atherton neighbourhood centre. This community hub is still in the process of being constructed. It has been a long process. We received funding for the case study going back probably five years ago from the previous minister for communities. We ended up getting half the funding on the condition that the federal government would put in half the funding. Finally, after two or three years the federal government put in that funding. The money is there and it will probably be completed by about November this year.

I acknowledge the school funding in my electorate of \$9.2 million. There is \$99 million for roads and \$3 million for infrastructure. We wanted to see funding for preschool swimming lessons through the SwimStart program—the \$150 vouchers. I stood here 2½ or three months ago, raised those concerns and pushed those issues. I am very pleased to see the government providing those vouchers, particularly in rural and regional areas where people have to travel long distances. Sometimes it is a 120-kilometre round trip to get kids to training. There is a cost factor. This will provide families with an incentive to get their children swimming lessons from virtually birth right to school age. It will save lives. One death is one death too many. I believe that they are good dollars well spent.

We did not see the rollout of the telestroke service, but I believe that that is still on the way. I acknowledge the members who have been lobbying for that. It is very important for rural and regional Queensland. If an assessment is done very quickly, it saves lives. It also saves stroke victims from disability and impairment if we can get to them much earlier. We are looking forward to seeing that roll out. I believe that that will come.

A disappointment was the lousy four cents per kilometre for the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme. To give members a heads-up, in 2003 I was a candidate and I pushed for an increase in the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme from 10 cents a kilometre to 20 cents a kilometre. We are seeing so many people travelling to access specialists and surgery. The red tape involved in getting doctors and specialists to sign the forms to get the subsidy for the cost of travel was not worth it. We had it increased from 10 to 15 cents. We pushed and finally by 2012 we had it up to 30 cents. It has not increased from 30 cents and it is now 2023. With the \$15 billion in royalties and given that a lot of patient travel affects a lot of people in rural and regional Queensland having only a four-cent increase is a pittance. That is something that the government needs to look at, because the cost of travel has caused a lot of frustration in rural and regional Queensland. In the city hospitals are close but when you are looking at a 300- to 600-kilometre round trip it is a huge cost.

I raise the ongoing issue of the Herberton Petford Road. I refer to the main section, Watsonville to Irvinebank, which has been a longstanding issue and needs to be addressed. Before I was even the state member, residents had been lobbying for this road to be fully sealed. The part from Herberton to Watsonville is almost finished now. The issue is the road from Watsonville to Irvinebank. There have been numerous, ongoing issues. There is a lot of frustration around that road not being graded every year. There is only a certain amount that Main Roads provides to the council. It is very hard to get that graded every year. There are a lot of potholes and numerous, ongoing issues. If we seal that road it would not only benefit locals but also encourage tourists to visit the area as Irvinebank has a massive, rich history. I will read out a few comments because this has been going on for a long time. I will table these documents soon.

In terms of the Herberton-Petford-Irvinebank road, from 1986 to 2000 12 letters were written either to the council, the minister or the sitting member; there was one question on notice; and there was one analysis done. Another 14 letters were written about the Irvinebank-Petford road from 1998 to 1999. From 2000 to 2005, before I was the member of parliament for the area, there were 68 letters,

one speech and one petition signed by 175 residents. There we have another swathe of letters and petitions. We have also had another 11 letters recently. It adds up to 105 letters, one speech, a question on notice, one analysis and one petition with 175 signatures from 1986 to 2023. The road still has not been sealed. I table all of those letters.

*Tabled paper:* Bundle of correspondence and documents regarding the condition and maintenance of the Herberton-Petford Road, the Herberton-Irvinebank Road and other roads [871](#).

I know that the Minister for Transport and Main Roads will read them all. One letter states—

I just wanted to bring to your attention a proposal for the Department of Transport and Main Roads to consider for this road. As far as I am aware this is a long-standing issue for which promises have been made in the past but remain unfilled.

The grade in January 2022 was good for only 2 weeks and the subsequent grade in August/September was essentially like having marbles spread across the road and the road has been in a terrible condition for the last 9 months.

The grade that has just been completed is already suffering corrugations after about a week due to no new material being available to properly repair the road.

People may argue Irvinebank isn't big enough to justify such expense. However, millions of tax dollars are spent especially in the south-east corner of the state. Also, how are people meant to be attracted to Irvinebank when Atherton, the next nearest large town where work is available, would mean travelling on an unsafe road every day.

They say that the low-cost option of sealing the road would resolve the problems. That section of the road would not have to be graded every year. Those problems would be resolved.

*(Time expired)*