



Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 22 May 2024

TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.33 pm): I rise to contribute to debate on the *Public works inquiry into the state-controlled roads from Birdsville to Bedourie and Birdsville to Windorah* report. I thank the committee for taking the time to travel to Birdsville and undertaking site inspections of the roads outlined in this report. Welcome to the road conditions that many of my constituents, unfortunately, deal with on a daily basis.

The report touches on an issue of great importance to Queensland local governments, and that is gravel access and supply. The report states that local governments are currently restricted on the use of gravel quarry areas. We know that across Queensland over 1,000 gravel pits are caught in the slow lane under this Labor government. Councils cannot get access to existing gravel nor can they afford to absorb the increased costs associated with carting gravel longer distances. The committee heard about the restrictions on the use of gravel quarry areas because native title and other rules and restrictions have drastically increased the cost of maintenance on roads. That is not an issue just for council roads. In many cases, state controlled roads are also caught in Labor's slow lane.

The Miles-Palaszczuk government are in the slow lane when it comes to resolving the gravel rash that is causing councils distress and taking up an immense amount of time of council staff. In fact, the Barcoo Shire Council said they would like to invoice the state government for the amount of time that it has taken their CEO to work through this. He has not been able to do his day job because he has spent so much time trying to find a pathway through this issue. Councils want a clear pathway to enable them to access existing gravel pits in a timely manner. Without a clearly defined and efficient pathway, councils and the state government will feel the effects of the increasing costs of gravel and roads will continue to deteriorate even further.

The report outlines a recommendation to allocate additional overtaking lanes of sufficient length to mitigate the impact of dust that reduces visibility. Overtaking lanes are like hen's teeth in regional areas. You can count on one hand the number of passing lanes in my electorate of Warrego, which is an area larger than the state of Victoria. The report states that there are concerns in relation to the optimal length of overtaking lanes, particularly as road traffic can increase by as much as 2,000 per cent. Type 2 road trains are often found on the roads around Birdsville and they come in as far as Roma. Can members guess where the 2,000 per cent of increased traffic drives through in order to get to the roads described in this report? They actually drive through my electorate on roads that are in a similar condition to those described in the report, many of which have no passing lanes. Whilst I welcome the increased economic activity across my electorate from the Big Red Bash and the Birdsville Races, road users know that the Labor government has neglected regional roads—roads like the Tara Kogan Road, the Jackson Wandoan Road, the Bollon to St George road and the Mitchell St George Road.

The report also states that, in terms of the current backlog of maintenance funding for the roads the subject of the inquiry, DTMR advised that there was some \$500,000 in capital renewal investment needs for the road between Birdsville and Bedourie and some \$30 million in capital renewable investment needs on the road link between Birdsville and Windorah. If you drive on Queensland's regional roads you will soon find that \$5.7 billion road maintenance backlog and you will feel it as well.

The people of Birdsville, Bedourie and Windorah should not have to come begging, cap in hand, to have sealed the remaining 15.7 kilometres of roads into Birdsville. This region more than pays its way for the state government. When it comes to natural resources, tourism and agricultural production, the region punches well above its weight. In return, all they ask for is a sealed road to help them to drive down the costs of living in their region. I know that Sean Dillon, the LNP candidate for Gregory, will be out there fighting for the region and he will help the LNP show Labor the door in '24.