




Speech By
Hon. Bart Mellish

MEMBER FOR ASPLEY

Record of Proceedings, 12 June 2024

MOTION

Far North Queensland, Infrastructure

 **Hon. BJ MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services) (5.05 pm): It is great to see those opposite back in the chamber. I move the following amendment—

That all words after 'notes' be omitted and the following inserted:

1. The new Miles Labor government's record \$1.6 billion joint investment with the Australian government in transport in Far North Queensland and the Northern Tablelands, including:
 - (a) \$359 million funding commitment for Captain Cook Highway;
 - (b) \$300 million funding commitment for Cairns Western Arterial Road;
 - (c) \$262 million funding commitment for Kuranda Range Road upgrade safety and resilience improvement; and
 - (d) \$60 million funding commitment for future stages of the Cape York Region Package, stage 3.
2. These projects were made possible through the strong advocacy of the members for Cook, Barron River, Cairns and Mulgrave.
3. That the new Miles Labor government's record infrastructure pipeline, the Big Build funded by making multinational mining companies pay their fair share, is delivering critical transport infrastructure in Far North Queensland.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. Member for Nanango, we do this every week and I always say that I want to hear the motion and amendments in silence. You are warned under the standing orders.

Mr MELLISH: I further move—

4. The recovery response in Far North Queensland and the Northern Tablelands after Cyclone Jasper and flooding that followed.
5. That the LNP has not committed anything to the Barron River bridge and the LNP cut \$1.6 billion from roads and transport funding across Queensland during the Newman LNP government.'

North Queensland is no stranger to overcoming challenges. In my first weeks in the job I saw firsthand the devastating impacts of ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper, in particular on the Barron River bridge, which saw water lapping a couple of metres below the deck. We know how important the Barron River bridge is to communities in the Far North. Following inspections of the bridge, issues were identified, specifically with the Macalloy bars. These post tensioning bars were retrofitted in 1963 to provide additional strength on the bridge. As a precaution we have temporarily reduced the bridge to a single lane to ensure the safety of crew and road users. The Department of Transport and Main Roads is acting swiftly to ensure the bridge is kept accessible for the community of Kuranda. We are doing this through three streams of work: we have \$8.9 million to progress an urgent business case to support an

investment decision; we have \$15 million on the table for preconstruction activities to deliver a reference design; and we are accelerating investigations of bridge reinforcing elements to enable the bridge to return to two-lane operations. More importantly, we will fast-track construction following the completion of planning.

However, make no mistake, this project is complex. It has challenges, including the North Queensland wet season and environmental hurdles that need to be overcome. Despite the opposition's view of business cases, it is essential that proper planning and investigation occur prior to construction. On this side of the House we know that if you fail to plan you plan to fail. The Miles government backs North Queensland with a \$1.6 billion investment delivering projects right across the region. I want to thank our outstanding local members—the members for Barron River, Cairns, Cook and Mulgrave—for advocating strongly for their community every single day.

Let us not forget that with the record of those opposite all of this is at risk. They cut \$1.6 billion from Queensland's transport and roads budget—the same amount we have allocated for North Queensland. Those opposite cut 700 RoadTek workers—the very same workers who are essential in the recovery works on the Kuranda Range. Do not be fooled, the member for Chatsworth has already let slip that he has identified a couple of billion dollars worth of savings that he intends to prune if given the chance.

I admire the member's play on words, but we all know 'prune' is just another word for 'cut'. We know they can cut but it is good to know that some of those opposite—some of them—can also read the budget papers. I note the member for Buderim took to social media yesterday, claiming there was no money to get heavy rail started on the Sunshine Coast. I encourage members opposite to have a good read. In terms of that, we have \$2.75 billion, including \$1.5 billion over the forward estimates, on the table. Those opposite actually need to read the budget papers before they vote.

In relation to our investment in North Queensland, we have: \$359 million for the Captain Cook Highway; \$300 million for the Cairns Western Arterial Road; \$262 million for the Kuranda Range Road upgrade; and a \$60 million funding commitment for future stages of the Cape York region package. We are delivering the transport infrastructure needed for Queensland and the Far North now and into the future. On this side we have the members who will advocate for their areas and advocate for the road projects that they need in their regions. We are not grandstanding and parading our candidates through like those opposite. They can barely remember their candidates' names when they are upstairs, but it is great to know that they have their notes sorted today. Our members are the only ones who can deliver for Far North Queensland and North Queensland.