




Speech By
Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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MOTION

Miles Labor Government

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (5.36 pm): After the feeble, soulless defence from the member for Barron River, is it any wonder the people of Barron River feel abandoned? He asks what he has done to earn our ire. The answer is: nothing! He has done nothing. The people of Far North Queensland and the people of Barron River know that Craig Crawford does nothing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Member, you will use correct titles.

Mr MICKELBERG: Communities in Cairns and Barron River feel abandoned. Residents feel abandoned. Small and family businesses feel abandoned. They feel abandoned by Labor members who are more focused on their own political advancement than on listening to and fighting for their communities.

Mr Crawford interjected.

Mr MICKELBERG: The member for Cairns—I hear him laughing—is fond of rattling off a little saying about having two ears and one mouth. Unfortunately, the cries of his community and the cries of the Far North fall on deaf ears—the deaf ears of Labor members of parliament more inclined to take their orders from Brisbane than listen to the calls for help from the community members they purport to represent. If they did listen, they would know that Far North Queensland residents are at breaking point under the combined impact of skyrocketing electricity and insurance prices, crippling crime, 33 per cent ambulance ramping and woefully inadequate roads such as the Kuranda Range Crossing.

Thankfully, residents of Cairns and Barron River have hope. Hope is on the horizon—hope in the form of local representatives who will listen to the community, hope in the form of local representatives who will take the fight up for the Far North, hope in the form of the LNP's committed candidate for Cairns, Yolonde Entsch, and our hardworking candidate for Barron River, Bree James.

Last week I spent three days in Barron River with Bree, listening to residents in Palm Cove, Smithfield, Trinity Beach and Speewah. At a community meeting in Speewah, residents told me that they feel abandoned. They told me that they have never seen the member for Barron River and they feel as though he does not care about the chronic issues that their community is facing—with unreliable electricity, with crime, with concerns about road safety, with patchy telecommunications and with constant closures on the Kuranda Range Crossing.

Fighting back tears, one Speewah local mother told me of her fear at watching her son choke, of trying to call triple-0 but not being able to get through, of panicking at the thought that she could not get out because the roads were flooded and of preparing to do CPR on her struggling son. Thankfully, that resident was able to help her son without access to the help that she so deserved, but locals fear that the next emergency may not end the same way.

Locals also fear the impact of young criminals who steal cars and break into small businesses. One business owner told me of young criminals pulling a knife on him over Christmas and of spending more and more on CCTV and security measures to keep his community safe. They feel abandoned and they feel like the state government and their local member simply does not care.

Adam told me about the impact that closures on the Kuranda Range crossing were having. He told me that every day residents up the range need to have a backup plan just in case they get stuck in Cairns and they cannot get home at the end of the day. Adam said he is fed up with the member for Barron River's lack of action. Residents told me they are worried about the Barron River Bridge. Residents up the range are at their wits end after years of review and bandaids. Apparently we are doing more consultation. What they want is action. Adam said to me—

I don't know what it takes. Does someone have to die before they put money into replacing the bridge? You can't really put a price on somebody's life. It needs to happen as soon as possible.

The weight of skyrocketing electricity prices on Far North Queensland small and family businesses is pushing owners to the wall as well. I met with Andrew from Cardzilla in Cairns. He told us that the cost of his electricity charges had increased 55 per cent in the last 12 months. No small business can afford to pass that on.

Michelle and Laurie Woods have invested in solar for their small business but their power bill has gone up 30 per cent. Now they are paying over \$12,000 a month. When they hear the member for Barron River say that power prices have not gone up it is a slap in the face. Increasingly, small and family businesses across the Far North are giving up. They are closing their doors under the combined weight of record power prices, skilled worker shortages, rampant crime and insurance premiums that are going through the roof. The consequence is that communities like Speewah, Palm Cove and Trinity Beach lose the small businesses that are the fabric of their communities.

What is the response from the members for Cairns and Barron River? We get announcements, hollow words and glossy brochures, and they are blaming a government that has been in the wilderness nine years to this day. Nine years ago to this day this government came into power, yet they are blaming a government from nine years ago! That is absolutely ridiculous. That is not listening to and fighting for their communities. The Cairns and Far North communities deserve better than the weak local representatives they currently have.