




Speech By
Cynthia Lui

MEMBER FOR COOK

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TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (2.36 pm): I rise to speak in support of Transport and Resources Committee Report No. 33, 57th Parliament, *Inquiry into the Peninsula Developmental Road (Laura to Weipa) Project*. The Peninsula Developmental Road is an important road network in Cape York in my electorate, providing a vital transport route over 500 kilometres of Cape York. Prior to 2014-15 the road was in pretty poor condition, with only a quarter of its length sealed. The vastness of the Cook electorate makes it incredibly complex, and having a good road is so important to address some of the social and economic challenges that communities face. I can remember my very first trip travelling on the PDR from the NPA. I can tell you that, being an unsealed road, it was not for the faint-hearted. For a four-wheel drive enthusiast, 'yay'; it just was not for me.

The poor state of the road meant that parts of the PDR were subject to major flooding. Communities were cut off, and I have heard many stories about the hardship associated with that. These communities are often cut off for up to four months during the wet season. The impact of the road being inoperable for such long periods each year meant that communities became isolated, so residents would have to stockpile enough supplies to last. Certain services were impacted, especially health, as the only way out would be by air. Isolation also made it very difficult for businesses to thrive, which affected the local economy. It is a known fact that during the wet big road projects, which contract and support local employment, cease operation until after the wet. The prior state of the PDR and the effects of poor connectivity across the cape have contributed to significant disadvantages for anyone living in the region. While a commercial barge service operates to certain locations on Cape York, I acknowledge that it is costly for many of the communities that I look after.

In 2014 the federal government announced a five-year, \$210 million funding package to upgrade key access roads in the region to ensure they are able to withstand severe weather conditions. The Commonwealth investment, combined with the state government contribution, made up the Cape York Regional Package. The Cape York Regional Package did not just focus on sealing sections of the PDR. Other components of the package included Indigenous community infrastructure work and the Endeavour Valley Road sealing, which was delivered shortly after I was elected in 2017.

The sealing of the PDR is now a key economic driver in the region, opening up so many opportunities, especially for those communities that branch off the main PDR. There are many benefits to the region as a result of the state and Commonwealth investment. We are seeing more training opportunities for local people resulting from the strong partnership created between the Department of Transport and Main Roads, local traditional owners and the Cape York Land Council. The roads are becoming safer to travel on so more tourists are visiting our region, therefore supporting our local community. Better and improved roads also mean that our communities stay socially and culturally connected which supports good mental health and wellbeing.

A CY Region Package project board was formed to oversee governance of the CYRP. This is a multiagency board, jointly chaired by representatives from Commonwealth and Queensland government departments and agencies. The board structure is designed to oversee the development of the road infrastructure components of both stages of the CYRP and performs the primary management role relating to key policy, technical and whole-of-government issues associated with the road funding component of CYRP stage 2. This good partnership that is happening across the board will support the future economic viability of a region such as mine—and my region often has limited opportunities to support local jobs. It is good to see that we have partnerships right across the board from state government, local governments and key agencies.

The investment into the PDR is so important. It supports the social and economic wellbeing of all the communities that depend on the PDR. I am always in support of this project. I want to acknowledge Shane King, the committee chair, and also the former minister for transport and main roads, Mark Bailey, who were champions in supporting this big project in my electorate. I commend the inquiry.