



Speech By  
**James Martin**


**MEMBER FOR STRETTON**

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Record of Proceedings, 14 February 2024

**TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (2.31 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*. I would like to acknowledge the work of the committee members on this important report. I would also like to thank all of the individuals and organisations that made written submissions to the inquiry and appeared at the public hearings. Like other members of committee, I would like to thank the TMR staff who helped drive us the 650 kilometres, the secretariat and Hansard who came along for this epic journey.

It was a real experience for me travelling those 650 kilometres because it was a real reminder that Queensland is an incredibly vast state. It was a long drive, and it certainly reminded me of the special challenges that regional communities face when it comes to accessing services. Most importantly, for me it was an example of the real changes infrastructure can make to communities and individuals and the important work that state government departments play in that.

The committee came to several positive conclusions about the project, including: that the work was suitable for its purpose; that it was necessary and advisable; that it was good value for money; that costs were reasonable; and that the work had a positive impact on the community, the economy and the environment. The procurement method for the work was also found to be suitable. The balance of public and private sector investment was also good. One of the great examples of private sector investment that has come out of work on the PDR in particular is the benefit to local Indigenous owned and operated businesses that contract to TMR. The construction that is happening there goes on to create jobs, much needed investment and ongoing, sustainable Indigenous owned businesses. It was really great to hear about that.

The committee resolved to conduct the public works inquiry into the PDR in November 2021. We received submissions from stakeholders and subscribers, including TMR. The committee undertook a site inspection by driving the whole length of the PDR and further—we went on to Cooktown—in June 2022. We also held hearings with local communities to discuss the works.

Works on the PDR have been happening steadily since 2015. The PDR was identified back in 2014 as a road that needed to be upgraded as part of the Cape York Regional Package. The road provides a vital transport route through over 500 kilometres of Cape York. Only one-quarter of the road was sealed prior to 2014. As members have heard, it is often flooded and cut off for up to four months during each wet season. Since 2014 a total of \$466 million has been spent in two instalments through the Cape York Regional Package, and the ongoing upgrades have sealed a further 201 kilometres of road.

The committee saw—and it was really great to see in person—the improved social outcomes for locals and First Nations communities in Cape York as a result of these road improvements. These improvements have provided better access to health services and employment and education opportunities. It has improved safety, and the improved accessibility of the PDR has also resulted in an increase in tourist and visitor numbers to the cape. We did hear that increasing visitor numbers also meant increasing challenges, particularly at the council level as they have to service the road. The committee received overwhelmingly positive reports on the impacts of the project; however, the likely further influx of people to the cape has created a need for improved local amenities. One of the examples that came up was emptying rubbish bins when the bin is a three-hour drive away.

All levels of government will need to work together to encourage local economic growth and ensure services continue to improve for the residents of Cape York and visitors to the region. They also continue to deal with the challenges of construction in this part of Queensland. As members have heard, you can work on the road up there for only seven months of the year. I was happy to be part of this inquiry. I commend the committee report to the House.