




Speech By
Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR MILLER

Record of Proceedings, 14 February 2024

TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (2.26 pm): I rise to support the committee's report into the Peninsula Developmental Road work. This is a particular program that is very special to me as someone involved in transport over the last nine years. I acknowledge the very hard work of the member for Cook, who has been a very strong advocate for this program and for this program continuing. In saying that, I note for all members of the House that this is an extraordinary part of the state. If members have not been up there, I recommend they fit it in at some point. It is an extraordinarily different, diverse and incredible part of Queensland, but it has suffered from having what I have often called in the past probably one of the most dangerous roads in the nation. That is why we are now quite advanced on a second five-year sealing program.

It is unique because for five months of the year you cannot do any work up there. There is the wet season, there is the remnants of the wet season and then there is the entry into the wet season, and you never know precisely when it is going to start. There is a seven-month building program up in the cape and that has unique challenges. It is very remote. What we do know is that a lot of people have died on that road. A lot of those people have been from First Nations communities who live anywhere from Lockhart River to Pormpuraaw and a range of other communities. Those people deserve safe roads as other people do anywhere else in the state. That is what this program is about. I am glad to see the committee looking into it.

In the wet season it is an incredible landscape up there. The Archer River swells to be seven or eight metres higher than it usually is. The area gets cut off and you can only get in there by plane. We are making that road more resilient. To see the road when I first went up there in 2016 to what it is now—it used to be a very rough and ready road. A four-wheel drive is pretty much what you needed. You would be rumbling along and the landscape would be covered in ochre dust as far as the eye could see. Now when you drive along the sealed sections of the road it is as good as any highway anywhere in the country. We have progressively been able to get more done. The Archer River Bridge is a unique bridge because it is designed to be submerged. That is how big the wet season is up there. To be able to get that out of the firing line would be exorbitantly expensive.

That is a phenomenal project. I understand it will be completed this year, and that will see a huge level of resilience going into the PDR. I want to pay tribute to the member for Cook for her strong advocacy. We got a second five-year program negotiated. When the former Morrison government wanted inland rail signed, we wanted another five-year program for this and we got it. That is due to the hard work of the member for Cook and this government's leadership.

Work will need to continue up there into the future. A lot of Indigenous businesses have started road-building businesses. They are contracted successfully to this work and then they go and do work in their local communities as well. That economic sustainability and the capacity for people to work in

their own communities, train their own people and be part of their own community in an economic way has been a huge enabler for the cape, and I acknowledge the contribution of all governments. We have seen contributions from the Rudd-Gillard government, this government and the Morrison government after the inland rail signing. It is something that needs to be continued.

I certainly pay tribute to all of the TMR engineers up there. It is not an easy environment. They work in PPE gear in very hot weather and very challenging conditions, but they do a magnificent job. I say to anyone who has not been to the cape that that road is getting safer every year and it is an amazing place in Queensland to visit.

I want to pay tribute to Wayne Butcher, the mayor of Lockhart River. He is a great leader in the cape. They now have festival grounds and they will be holding the Paytham Malkari Dance Festival every year. They have just had their first one. We are seeing more and more people getting up into the cape because the road is safer. It is not dangerous but something to really explore and enjoy. Those communities want to see people travelling up there because it helps them with revenue and their sustainability. This PDR program is phenomenal. It is something that this government is very proud of and it is something that needs to continue into the future.