




Speech By
Hon. Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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MOTION

Far North Queensland, Infrastructure

 **Hon. MP HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Sport) (5.24 pm): Oh, Mr Deputy Speaker, here we go again. The LNP have their representatives up there. They are watching but there are no announcements—nothing at all. They are just sitting there identifying the problems, but once again they have no solutions. Once again we find ourselves sitting in the chamber listening to them identify a little problem but giving no solution whatsoever.

I will remind those opposite what the minister has said. As recently as last Friday at three o'clock I met with the regional director for transport and the district director and we discussed the challenges facing the Barron River bridge. As Far North Queenslanders, we understand how important the Barron River bridge is and we have known for many years. If the member for Chatsworth wants to use that as an excuse to come up and go driving around, that is fine, but we do not need people from inner-city Brisbane telling us about our aging infrastructure. We do not appreciate that.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order, members!

Mr HEALY: The people of Far North Queensland are very aware. As if you are not getting enough money down here! The Department of Transport and Main Roads is actively working, as we have said, to identify a preferred long-term solution for the Barron River bridge near Kuranda. This is evident—and tomorrow you will be voting on this and agreeing with our budget—by the \$15 million that has been allocated in the budget for the preconstruction process. The idea is that before you allocate a budget—and I know that those opposite built nothing while they were last in power—you have a preconstruction process that identifies what it is going to cost. That process is well and truly underway. The business case is underway, and once that is provided we will be able to get construction underway. The anticipated cost of replacement at this stage is around \$450 million, and we will look further into that.

I also want to talk about the work that has happened with the tourism industry as a result of Cyclone Jasper. We have done an enormous amount for our tourism industry—\$29.15 million in the Tourism Recovery and Resilience Program—

Mr Mickelberg interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Buderim!

Mr HEALY: There are 73 applicants who have received funding through the \$10 million Tourism Exceptional Assistance Grant.

Mr Mickelberg interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Buderim, you are warned.

Mr HEALY: These grants provide up to half a million dollars to help businesses that have been impacted as a result of damage to the road which does not allow tourists to access their products. This is the first time ever that the federal and state governments have come up with a package that includes salaries and wages, rent and supplies such as fuel to assist the tourism industry because of the damage to the Captain Cook Highway or, as we call it, the Great Barrier Reef drive. That road was absolutely hammered. Over \$300 million will be spent over the coming years. We do have the lollipop people working there because that is what it takes to fix these things when you live in the north and you get torrential rain. We are well and truly on top of it. In addition to that, assessment is underway for the \$10 million Building Resilient Tourism Infrastructure Fund, which is vitally important—and we continue to invest.

What we are interested in is the 20-year tourism plan that the Leader of the Opposition has been talking about presenting. Not one person in tourism has told me they have had a discussion with the LNP about it—not one person. Last time they were in power they sacked 35 people and they cut \$188 million from the tourism budget. Their lack of investment in the sector severely limited Tourism and Events Queensland's ability to plan, market and deliver events supporting the tourism industry. The LNP's short-sighted vision for tourism put thousands of Queensland jobs at risk, and we saw tourism growth flatline under those opposite. The industry has no faith. There is no consultation. There is no plan. We continue to invest significantly in not only the essential infrastructure like our recent investment of \$87.5 million in water infrastructure—

Mr Minnikin: Meanwhile back to the bridge!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Chatsworth, you are warned.

Mr HEALY: All of these things are essential. We have talked about the bridge. We have given you the answer. If you are having a bit of an issue, I am happy to send you a document. I am confident that we are doing everything we can, and as quickly as we can, to get that bridge fixed and repaired.