




Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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ADJOURNMENT

Minister for Transport and Main Roads

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (12.11 am): Congratulations, Speaker, on your appointment. I will have more to say about that tomorrow night.

Last week the new transport minister turned up in Cairns, and what a privilege it was. With the wet season approaching, I thought he would have addressed some immediate issues—for example, road repairs up around Cape Tribulation or Port Douglas or maybe even updated reef operators on the new fee structure at the Cairns marina—but his focus was on the Cairns Common User Facility. This is a really important initiative that both federal and state governments have been working on together. It is not only important for our precinct but also vitally important for our regional economy and jobs. The transport minister howled about cost blowouts and made some wide, sweeping and unsubstantiated allegations about hidden costs for political gain. Allegedly, the previous government dumped the project. It was all quite interesting. At the end of the day, a journalist at the local paper wrote a couple of stories saying these statements are grossly and impressively inaccurate. As stated in the *Cairns Post*—

Tropical Reef Shipyard manager Andrew Wagner said the cost blowouts did not come as a surprise to him when compared to a similar project in Darwin.

Mr Trent Toomey, who is well known to many on the other side, stated that he was sure the cost increase was of no surprise. Even the retiring federal member for Leichhardt, Warren Entsch, was quoted as saying ‘the costs will be greater than \$600 million’, and that was in a speech in 2022! It was also reported that the Miles government acknowledged the cost blowout but remained committed and instructed the department to renegotiate with the federal government to determine a new funding split.

Making public announcements while having discussions of this delicacy could potentially be a commercial breach. If the minister had any commercial experience he would understand that. It really would not serve any purpose, so the minister’s statements were plainly wrong. Many of us in the Far North suspect this is part of a softening-up process. This is what the Crisafulli government does before it cuts vitally important projects. I cannot see why Premier Crisafulli cannot find the money for Cairns when he has not batted an eyelid at spending extra billions on CopperString for Townsville, on Cross River Rail in Brisbane and on extending the Sunshine Coast heavy rail line.

In closing, I would like to let the minister know that the people of the Far North have noted the change in wording when it comes to the Barron River bridge. We understand that now it is going to be ‘fixed’. We are just looking for a little bit more detail on what ‘fixed’ looks like and how soon that will happen. We are very keen to find out what he has to say in that space.