



Speech By  
**Patrick Weir**


**MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE**

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Record of Proceedings, 12 June 2024

**MOTION**

**Far North Queensland, Infrastructure**

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (5.19 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Chatsworth. It was interesting when the Minister for Transport made his address and talked up local members that the biggest cheer in the House came from the member for Cairns, so it is good to see he is his own one-man cheer squad.

The Kuranda Range is one of the biggest issues that the local residents and business have to deal with in their day-to-day commute in the north. It has been put in the too-hard basket by the members for Cairns, Cook and Barron River for too long. Every time I travel to Cairns it is one of the first issues that locals raise. After the recent flooding there have been several sections of the road that have simply fallen down the range, causing ongoing delays for commuters. This section of the Kennedy Highway carries in the vicinity of 9,000 vehicles per day including heavy transport.

On top of that, there is the condition of the Barron River bridge, which has passed its 65-year use-by date, with no credible plans for repair or replacement by this Labor government. The bridge has been subject to weight reductions after the detection of fatigue cracks in 2015. In 2019 TMR reduced the weight limit to 50.5 tonnes. This sounds very much like a situation that transport is facing on the Warrego Highway at the Bremer River Bridge. This Labor government's solution is to impose load limits and speed reductions. I do not think there is one regional member who does not have such signs scattered throughout their electorates.

How about fixing the bridge? How about that for a solution? One would think that would be the best way to solve the issue, but the local members seem to think otherwise. Cairns and Tablelands residents will remember a report released by the state government that stated that Kuranda Range did not need an upgrade for at least 30 years. This position was endorsed and supported by local members. They were proud to go to the media and quote that report.

While members were supporting this position, TMR released another report regarding the Barron River bridge which put forward two possible options. One option was to conduct a major upgrade of the bridge. Option 2 was to build a new bridge. I wonder which one the local members favour, if either. I cannot recall any of them standing up in this House and calling on the Premier to fix this bridge.

We just heard about a proposed business case that is going to be fast-tracked. The Labor Party have been in government for a decade, and now they are going to fast-track a business case for one of the most critical pieces of infrastructure needed in North Queensland! They talk about the Big Build. I do not think the members for North Queensland have delivered very much in the line of a Big Build if they cannot even get this bridge fixed.

There is an old saying, 'When trucks stop, Australia stops.' We have just heard from the member for Gympie about the produce that comes down the Kuranda Range and that relies on that bridge. It is facing another downgrade. If it continues to be downgraded, they will be bringing produce down in car

trailers! Tourism is also a big issue in the north and they rely on this bridge. Buses will be the next thing to be stopped and told to turn around and go back. We heard that the business case is complex. I go back to the point that a decade should be enough time to sort out complexities.

We talked earlier about our local candidates—David Kempton, Bree James and Yolonde Entsch. Every time they go up there they are talking about this bridge. They recognise the economic impact that is being felt every single day because of this bridge. It is time for the local members to not just talk the talk; there needs to be some action. They have had 10 years. The member for Barron River has been here for that entire time. I do not know what he is going to say when he is campaigning at the next election and they ask, 'What have you delivered?' He will say, 'We don't talk about the past.'

**An opposition member:** Don't look back.

**Mr WEIR:** That is right. I forgot about that: 'We don't talk about the past.' Is it any wonder they do not want to talk about the past?