




Speech By
Shane King

MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

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TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (2.09 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Transport and Resources Committee Report No. 46, 57th Parliament, *Public works inquiry into the state-controlled roads from Birdsville to Bedourie and Birdsville to Windorah*, tabled on 30 November 2023.

This report was the result of a self-referral public works inquiry into the condition, suitability and quality of roadworks and the road network in the two state sections of roads out of Birdsville at the request of my colleague the member for Gregory, our deputy chair. The terms of reference for the inquiry were as set out in section 94 in the Parliament of Queensland Act 2021.

All in all, the works met the criteria that were set out in the terms of reference, but the committee did make some other recommendations and noted some other circumstances that could be improved. Not all of these issues are able to be solved by the state, but I am sure that by working collaboratively with other levels of government we could achieve some better outcomes for the local people.

I will go through the recommendations that are pertinent to that. Recommendation No. 2 states—

The Committee recommends the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) should consider a) flexibility when applying national guidelines for low volume roads in areas that experience high seasonal levels of road use, particularly with respect to the width of seal necessary to locate additional overtaking lanes of sufficient length to mitigate the reported impact of dust reducing visibility, and b) the need for appropriate signage to inform road users of the length of overtaking lane available.

What we saw out there—and I am sure my colleague will give further details—is when you are following a road train, all you can see is dust, so you have to go back a fair way. The overtaking lanes are five kilometres in length and it takes you nearly five kilometres, once you get clear of the dust, to round up and overtake the vehicle without speeding and doing all of the wrong things. It is particularly dangerous for tourists. Some people buy a caravan and four-wheel drive and head out not knowing these conditions. We thought the recommendation for signage and some sections with longer lengths of road for overtaking for safety would be a good idea. The Royal Flying Doctor Service use the road network to land. There are only certain places they can land. As aircraft have been upgraded over the years they need more width and length to land these aircraft for people's safety. We thought that was relevant.

We recommended that the Minister for Transport and Main Roads consider urgent steps to pave and seal the remaining 15.7 kilometres of unsealed length of the Eyre Developmental Road between Birdsville and Bedourie to ensure Birdsville is no longer the only township in the central west district located on a state-controlled road that does not have fully sealed access. In making this recommendation, we were aware that if that section of road were to be raised in any way it would block water flow to a lot of properties, The OBE organic beef suppliers and the Brooks family highlighted at length that if we created a dam wall, as such, their properties would not get water which would hinder production. Building the road up with culverts is not feasible due to the cost. It was said that even if it

were bitumened at the current level it would recuperate better from a flood, which would be a lot better for all concerned. There were other local issues. The causeway from Birdsville to the race track—which is a council issue—is in shocking disrepair. If everyone could work together and get this to happen, it could provide safety for major events such as the Birdsville Races, which would be a good thing.

I have to touch on one more thing: after hearing of all of the difficulties of travelling these roads—and hearing constantly from the member for Callide his reservations about electric vehicles—at our overnight accommodation we came across two fully electric Porsche SUVs that had come across the desert to Birdsville which blew those reservations out of the water. Anyway, they were there, and that is where they came from.

The communities appreciated our inquiry, and the fact that we actually came out to have a look—it was of value to everyone. We encourage the minister to particularly look at that 15-kilometre road section. I note the government response that there is some movement on that issue and we do appreciate that. I would like to thank all of the submitters, the Diamantina Shire Council, the Brooks family for showing us around, those from the Barcoo Shire Council who travelled five hours to reach us—I know that is normal out there but we do appreciate it—our amazing team, Jodhi from the secretariat and Deane from Hansard, who kept us all in line and got behind the committee, that I no longer chair. We did a good thing. I would also like to thank the shadow minister, the member for Chatsworth, who came on that trip. I think we all did some good work.