



Speech By  
**Steve Minnikin**

**MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH**

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Record of Proceedings, 22 May 2024

**TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (2.29 pm): At the outset I would like to say a couple of quick thank-yous. As members have heard, I was very privileged to attend the inquiry at Birdsville. The first person I would like to thank is the chair of the committee, Shane King. He did a very good job. It was a good committee to work on and I very much welcomed the opportunity. I also thank Trevor Watts who was not able to make that trip and I was honoured to fill that role in his absence.

As was mentioned by the chair in his foreword remarks, officers from the Barcoo Shire Council drove for five hours to attend the committee hearing. I know that 'five hours' rolls off the tongue pretty readily, but they drove for five hours to turn up to a meeting which may have lasted for only an hour and then drove for another five hours to get back home. That dedication cannot be overstated. The dedication of the ladies and the men in the bush is truly amazing.

The committee recommendations have been stepped through but I believe the best thing I can do in my contribution is to highlight something that is pretty critical that came out in our investigation. It is something that I was aware of prior to going to Birdsville. It is the disparity between the costs of works when it comes to sealing roads on a per kilometre basis. At page 17 in section 6.1 the report states—

Sealing cost per kilometre varied between \$260,000/km and \$650,000/km for these public works.

That is quite a spread between the lower and the higher ends. When you are talking about country roads, bush roads et cetera, the best way to drive down the cost of sealing roads is to give local authorities access to the two key ingredients they need for good roadworks, which are quarry stockpiles and ring tanks for overland flows of water. Water and crusher dust are essential to making a good sealed pavement, particularly on country roads.

I want to highlight the committee's recommendation that that issue be taken up with the relevant state departments and agencies to ensure local authorities, wherever practicable, get access to that all-essential quarry material. As I have already demonstrated, if they do not get access to it then the costs of hauling gravel to complete road sealing can add hundreds of thousands of dollars to the cost per lineal kilometre. When you multiply that by 15, 30 or 100 kays, it adds up considerably. The key thing that I want to emphasise is access to quarry material and access to an adequate water supply.

I would like to acknowledge the great job that the Royal Flying Doctor Service does. I am a city-based member. I live in Belmont near Carindale, but I grew up in the bush in Mount Isa in the mid-seventies, so I am acutely aware of the great role that the Royal Flying Doctor Service plays. A previous speaker mentioned a recommendation in relation to the service. It is quite remarkable when you have a bird's-eye view of sections of the road that have been sealed adequately and you see, effectively, turning aprons at two ends of that section. It is quite a unique Australian feature that allows a state controlled highway to be used as a runway by the Royal Flying Doctor Service in an emergency.

To be fair, when these turning aprons were first used in this way, the width of the road was pitched towards lighter aircraft. Now the Royal Flying Doctor Service has a fleet of larger King Air twin turboprop aircraft that need a wider road and wider turning aprons. Wherever practicable going forward, that is a sensible measure that needs to be taken on board. All members share a common passion for quality health services, whether you live in the city or the bush.

In closing, I want to thank the committee members. They were very good to work with. I thoroughly enjoyed the couple of days I spent on the trip with the committee. My special thanks go to the secretariat whose professionalism was, as usual, first-class.