



Speech By
Steve Minnikin

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

Record of Proceedings, 12 June 2024

MOTION

Far North Queensland, Infrastructure

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (5.00 pm): I move—

That this House notes:

- (a) the economic impact to the Northern Tablelands caused by restrictions on the Barron River bridge at Kuranda;
- (b) the inaction of this Labor government in fixing maintenance issues;
- (c) the failure of the members for Barron River and Cook to deliver a proper solution for their constituents; and
- (d) the failure of the member for Cairns to advocate for impacted tourism operators;

and calls on the third-term Labor government to release the business case for this critical Far North Queensland project.

In a few weeks time I will fly up to Cairns, hire a car and do my annual Bruce Highway drive. I will not be just driving to Noosa for the weekend and making out that I know all things Bruce Highway. I will actually fly up to Cairns, hire a car and over seven days drive to the Pine River Bridge at the end of the Bruce Highway. One thing I will do when I am in Cairns, as I always do, is do an inspection of the Barron River bridge. More times than not it is down to one lane.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order, member for Logan.

Mr MINNIKIN: It is amazing, when one thinks that the ALP have been in power for the better part of 35 years, what the ALP have done for the Barron River bridge, which I believe was opened in about 1963: very little. The fact of the matter is that this is the main arterial connection to the Atherton Tableland, to Mareeba, to Lakeland, to Cooktown and beyond that up to Weipa.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Logan.

Mr MINNIKIN: While the current members for Barron River and Cook might be missing in action—in the case of the member for Cook, very much MIA; she does not even have her electorate office in her electorate; a few years ago she packed her bags and moved down to Cairns—there is one person I know who does take on board the impact of the Barron River bridge being habitually down to just one lane, she is here in the public gallery, and that is Bree James, our LNP candidate for Barron River. She is absolutely committed to trying to find a solution.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Members, there is far too much noise in the chamber. There are far too many audible conversations going on. If you want to have a conversation, take it outside. If you are in here you are in here to listen to the speaker on their feet. Member for Logan, you have had a good go. You have been interjecting constantly, even though I have called you to order. You are warned under the standing orders.

Mr MINNIKIN: It does not matter which part of Queensland you are in, whether it be the Bremer River in Ipswich or the Barron River in Far North Queensland, the simple fact of the matter is that the ALP have dropped the bat and ball when it comes to essential infrastructure. They had the opportunity with this budget, but they have absolutely squibbed it yet again. They have blown it. They have had a chance to do something on the Barron River bridge, but year after year they have done absolutely nothing. The situation is that our LNP candidate for Barron River, Bree James, is advocating for a solution. We also have our candidate for Cook, David Kempton, who knows all too well exactly the reasons this essential linkage from Cairns to Kuranda needs to be fixed and remedied. The simple fact is that in North Queensland it is guaranteed you will get a great Penang duck curry at the Tamarind Restaurant, but it is also guaranteed that more often than not when you fly to Cairns and you try to get to Kuranda you will get to the Barron River bridge and you will find it is down to only one lane.

Many people from the local area and from the council are pleading for this government to do something to get that vital bridge connectivity flowing again. It is ludicrous. There is the Gillies Range Road and the Kuranda Range Road and to keep the wheels of the Queensland economy ticking over in Far North Queensland you have to have connectivity. The Barron River bridge needs to be addressed. We need someone who will take action. That person is in the public gallery—Bree James, who is taking a keen note of this issue—as well as David Kempton, our LNP candidate for Cook. They want action. The people of North Queensland want action now.