




Speech By
Bree James

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 19 February 2025

ADJOURNMENT

Far North Queensland, Roads

 **Ms JAMES** (Barron River—LNP) (9.09 pm): Fourteen months ago the floods following Cyclone Jasper hit Far North Queensland hard and our region and our roads are still a long way from recovered. Over the past three weeks, Far North Queensland has had some of the worst road closures I have seen in my 20-plus years of living in Cairns. Hundreds of trucks were stranded with food spoiling before it could reach Far North Queensland. Grocery shelves in the two major supermarkets were empty. Thousands of parents were unable to make nutritious school lunches or meals for their families. Local bakeries were closed as they could not get flour, so being the breadwinner was literally true for anyone who scored a loaf. Finding household items and food was like pirates searching for treasure, but that treasure was a tomato or lettuce, and, sadly, many of us did not find any treasure for weeks. People were scrambling and panic buying when food did arrive thanks to flights organised by the Deputy Premier. There were weeks with no tourists making the drive north and tales of those who tried the 22-hour detour, getting lost and needing rescuing. The region has lost \$7 million through cancellations in the past two weeks, forward bookings for the next four weeks are down 44 per cent and the forecast impact by the end of March is approximately \$50 million in lost customers.

The Bruce Highway is an absolute goat track. Every year it closes to Far North Queensland. We have to deal with this issue because Labor governments did nothing for decades. This closure does not impact Brisbane. That is why Labor never cared. They do not care about Far North Queensland and Far North Queenslanders have had an absolute gutful.

I will share one story with members. CSF Industries is a Cairns based large heavy industry business that services the construction industry and employs up to 180 people. This company relies heavily on the transportation of steel and other heavy equipment by road from Townsville to Cairns. It was at risk of being in breach of contracts, with subsequent knock-on delays, due to the inability to get items to Cairns from the major industry service centre in Townsville. CSF came within two days of having to stand down all of its staff.

Thankfully, the roads opened, but Far North Queensland's reputation as a reliable source of materials for major projects across Northern Australia is at significant risk. One Cairns company has tendered for a \$3.5 million job which would secure the livelihood of over 100 jobs and this potential contract is in jeopardy as the client is now considering suppliers in the south.

In Far North Queensland many roads are vulnerable and need considerable upgrades. I stand here not only as a representative of Barron River right now but as a representative of all of Far North Queensland. On behalf of my parliamentary colleagues in Mulgrave and Cook, we must ensure Far North Queensland remains accessible.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Member for Barron River, before you resume your seat I would ask you to withdraw some unparliamentary language you used in your contribution.

Ms JAMES: I withdraw.