




Speech By
Bree James

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Smithfield Mountain Bike Park

 **Ms JAMES** (Barron River—LNP) (2.47 pm): Today I rise to speak about a project that is not only close to my heart but close to the hearts and handlebars of thousands across our region—the LNP's \$15.5 million expansion of the Smithfield Mountain Bike Park. The community had been begging for investment into these trails for over a decade—people like Glen Jacobs will say it is more like three decades—but these pleas fell on deaf ears with the former Labor government. They showed no interest in this project whatsoever—no advocacy, no election commitment and not a single step to make this happen.

As the candidate for Barron River, this was one of my biggest election commitments. In my first month as a candidate I took the now Premier there to show him. I then took now Minister O'Connor there, where he had his first ride and he still has not forgiven me for that! After a year of what some will call advocating but others will call nagging, I was finally able to make this an election commitment. Thankfully I won the election and am here today because now the next steps are taking place, with up to 50 kilometres of new trails to be complete by 2028 thanks to the LNP government.

The Smithfield Mountain Bike Park in Cairns is widely recognised as Australia's oldest mountain biking park. Its origins can be traced back to the late 1980s when a group known as the 'mud cows' began crafting informal trails through the rainforest. These early efforts laid the groundwork for what would become a significant site in the mountain biking community.

In 1992 Smithfield hosted the Queensland state championship, marking a pivotal moment in its development. This event showcased the unique and challenging terrain of the area, distinguishing it from other trails in the country. The park's prominence grew as it hosted the first UCI Mountain Bike World Cup in the Southern Hemisphere in 1994, followed by the world championships in 1996 and again in 2017. Smithfield's early establishment and international recognition solidify its status as a cornerstone of Australia's mountain biking history.

The Smithfield mountain biking track is long overdue for investment. This upgrade is not just so locals and talented mountain bikers of Far North Queensland can have more green time instead of screen time with their families; it is an investment in ecotourism, jobs, the Far North Queensland economy and that holiday feeling. Mountain biking has become a significant contributor to Australia's tourism economy, with substantial impacts at both national and regional levels. Our region has the potential to generate an additional \$95 million per annum, putting us on the map as the reef, rainforest and riding capital of the world.

Despite this wonderful news, our community continues to mourn the tragic loss of a much-loved and well-known local mountain biker who lost his life two weeks ago doing what he loved, where he loved. Frank Falappi was a highly respected former president of the Smithfield Mountain Biking Club and Mount Molloy police officer who tragically lost his life on one of the advanced trails in our area. Frank was an excellent rider, mentor, competitor and a passionate advocate for mountain biking in our

region. Frank, these trails will forever hold your spirit. Frank loved his job, his community, his friends and, most of all, his beautiful family. Frank, you will be greatly missed for your contribution to mountain biking in our region—

(Time expired)