

## **Question on Notice**

**No. 426**

**Asked on 13 May 2004**

MR O'BRIEN asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas)—

QUESTION:

How is the Beattie Government supporting the Queensland tourism industry with the Copperfield Bridge reinstatement?

ANSWER:

Thank you to the Member for Cook for his question. I understand the Member for Cook has an interest in fostering the benefits from regional economic development and the reinstatement of the Copperfield River Bridge will further assist in the provision of such benefit to the towns in which the Savannahlander Tourist Rail Service travels.

Cairns Kuranda Steam Limited Partnership commenced operation of the Savannahlander Tourist Rail Service from Cairns to Mt Surprise on 3 March 2004. Cairns Kuranda Steam was the successful bidder through an expression of interest process to determine if a private sector operator could maximise the potential of the Savannahlander service at an equal or lower cost to government than the previous service. Queensland Transport has entered a six and a half year contract with Cairns Kuranda Steam to provide the service and during that time it is anticipated it will provide increased benefits in terms of regional development and tourism promotion along the rail corridor and surrounding district.

The Savannahlander line extends 423km from Cairns to Forsayth, and the service provides visitors with the opportunity to combine a unique rail experience with visits to places such as the Undarra Lava Tubes, Chillagoe Limestone Caves and the outback of the Savannah region. Unfortunately, considerable damage was caused to the Copperfield River Bridge, located between Mt Surprise and Forsayth, as a result of flooding of the Copperfield River in February 2002. This has caused passengers to miss the opportunity to travel over what is arguably the most spectacular part of the rail journey, along with the opportunity to visit the regions beyond Mt Surprise on rail.

I am pleased to be able to inform Parliament that Queensland Transport gave approval for the Copperfield River Bridge to be reinstated in November 2003, with 75% of funding for the reinstatement works to be provided through Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements. QR has crews working on site as I speak, with works on track for completion by the end of June 2004.

Once the bridge reinstatement is complete, Cairns Kuranda Steam will provide rail services along the full length of line, from Cairns to Forsayth. This will provide the people in the towns beyond Mt Surprise with the opportunity to work with Cairns Kuranda Steam to promote their region to the people who travel on the Savannahlander Tourist Rail Service, thereby increasing the tourism benefit to the Savannah region.