



MEDIA RELEASE

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National Highway / Ring Road: Let's talk facts.

Daniel McCarthy KAP candidate for Leichhardt welcomes the budget announcement to extend the National Highway to Smithfield but is very disappointed once he digs down into the facts in the budget papers.

McCarthy certainly supports upgrading our Highway and has been pushing for significant road improvements for years.

Last month McCarthy released his plan for our Highway extension and the Kuranda Range Road upgrade, but sadly the government's proposals fall well short, and the details get even worse.

"The government has been full of fanfare stating there is \$287M for the Cairns Ring road ready to go. The outgoing Member for Leichhardt is claiming he has 'delivered' the project. However, the factual details reveal it's all just hot air".

"The budget papers reveal that NO money is allocated until 2021/22. That's the end of the next term of government, when another election budget is due..... and then it's only \$87M..... \$200 Million dollars short of the election grandstanding propaganda", says McCarthy.

"People in Far North Queensland have well and truly had enough of the smoke and mirrors and disgraceful exaggerations. We want honest communication and commitments from our MP's and government, not desperate election porkies", says McCarthy.

This traffic congestion problem isn't new, nor is the exaggeration for that matter, it's been building for 20 years, yet both Labor and the LNP have entirely failed to address it to date.

The last serious money spent on our northern Highway was nearly 40 years ago.

It's Only now, on the eve on an election and after years of pressure from us having made Leichhardt a very marginal seat that there is finally some movement in Canberra's very tight purse strings.

"Applying this pressure is squeezing commitments out of government. Just imagine what we can achieve if we have a balance of power situation after the election" says McCarthy.

Putting the money 'not being there' aside, let's compare our KAP proposal to what the government talks about doing.

* A month ago, I released our roads plan.

* Our plan includes extending the National Highway to Weipa, 800 km to the north.

I'm disappointing that the best the government can do is to extend it a measly 15kms to Smithfield.

* Our plan includes upgrading the Kuranda Range Road to two lanes each way on the existing alignment, with a concrete barrier in the middle to stop head-on crashes (there will be regular breaks in the barrier for wildlife crossings for cassowaries and other animals)

The government's plan has completely failed to incorporate the Kuranda Range Road and failed to provide vital funding to upgrade it.

* Our plan includes \$250M for the Peninsula Development Road including building ALL crucial bridges to provide vital year-round access for the people of Cape York.

The government's plan has sadly fallen short. Their \$190M plan has ignored critically needed bridges which will leave the road useless over 40% of the year. And the money for this doesn't even start until 2024/25.... two terms of government away.

Without upgrading the Kuranda Range Road, the government's proposal is simply social infrastructure.

Farmers on the Tablelands will continue to suffer the very same issues getting their produce to the airport and seaport that they face today.

“Our region is long overdue and desperately requires significant industry enabling infrastructure in order to grow our regional economy, and we need it now not years down the track,” says Daniel.

Further, governments ‘commitment’ is conditional. It will only happen IF the state government puts in the final 20%.

“Seriously, when will the Federal government just do the job on their own. Isn't that the whole idea of making it a federally owned road “? asks McCarthy.

While the government has put some of the money for these projects in the budget, which I welcome as a good start until the budget is passed its still just a pipe dream.

We all know an election is about to be called and the fate of this budget will be entirely up to the next parliament.

“If the people elect me in Leichhardt you can be assured, I will fight very hard to bring these projects to fruition. I will insist on including the vitally important improvements and conditions to the project and bring the dates forward to get the programs started”, says McCarthy.

“My main condition will be that ONLY local contractors get the work. Not just letting them tender for it But ONLY local contractors will be allowed to tender for it.

Our region has suffered for decades with the very little infrastructure projects we get here all too often being given to contractors from down south, I will change that”, says McCarthy.

Finally, the Government has allocated \$100M nationwide infrastructure projects. On a population basis (1.16%) this equates to \$1.2B in our region. To further add insult to injury their total here is \$760M falling well short.

Far North Queensland has been short-changed once again.

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