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Jensen says sealing Ootann Road key to unlocking Cape cattle

KATTER'S Australian Party (KAP) candidate for Leichhardt, Rod Jensen, says a rapid expansion of the cattle industry in the north is dependent on sealing the Ootann Road.

The Mareeba shire-owned road is a critical connector between the Burke Development Road and the Kennedy Highway to the south.

"Cape York mostly is not good for growing-out cattle and require economies of scale to be viable.

"Economies of scale require triple road trains or better to give volume in transport. If you can take triples out of the Cape and down onto other markets like the Downs Country (Hughenden to Cloncurry) for fattening or straight into central Queensland, then it becomes much more viable.

"Ootann Road can do this.

"The road has been the subject of countless business cases and has received upgrades here and there, but the drip-feed of fixes is failing to deliver the full economic potential of the road to Cape producers.

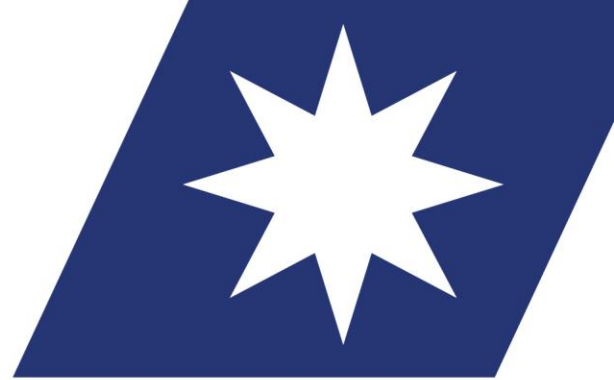
"Ootann Road is a key link for road trains and a critical element in expanding agriculture, cattle and supply chains for Cape York Peninsula, Gulf of Carpentaria and Atherton Tablelands.

"Although it's a local council road, it is effectively a part of the national freight network as an enabler of interstate and international exports.

"It creates an inland alternative to the Bruce Highway connecting with the Hann Highway, improves connectivity to air and seaports and southern and Asian markets."

Mr Jensen said the road is severely pot-holed and prone to flooding which prevents year-round use.

"Truckies tell me to do the 95 kilometres takes them four hours. The road snaps axles and drivers are hesitant to use it at all.



“Completely sealing the road would allow operators to perhaps run quad-style road trains, so four trailers, bringing down producer and end-user costs and making it possible to ship out more product from the Cape at a time.

“The productivity gains not to mention the money coming back to the State and Federal governments in tax revenue would pay for the upgrades in very little time.”

Mr Jensen is calling for senior governments to commit to the full \$60 million required to finish the road.

“I understand the State Government is looking at sealing the remainder of the road but there’s no time-frame in place, so the federal government could offer to co-fund construction to make it happens sooner rather than later.

“Because those benefitting from upgrading the road are producers outside the shire it makes sense that funding should originate with the State and Federal governments, rather than local rate payers.

“As with most of these council roads, Mareeba Shire Council like Tablelands Regional Council and any of these shires don’t have the revenue base to keep them up to the national freight route standard so I’d suggest State and Federal governments enter into a maintenance agreement with the Shires as well.”

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For media inquiries, please call 0456999511.