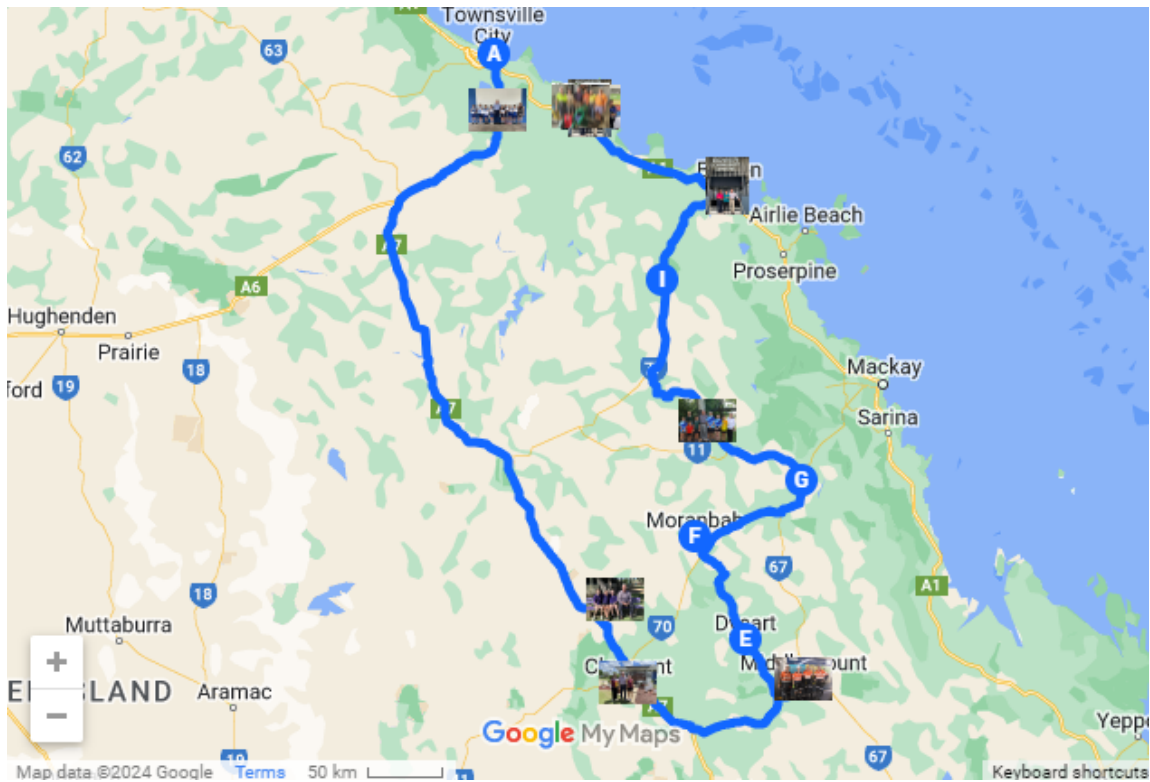




I've been everywhere, in the Burdekin
Electorate



[See where I have travelled lately](#)

It's been a busy start to the year with three parliament sittings ticked off, a trip to the western area of the electorate as well as plenty of chances to catch up with new school leaders, present flags and represent you.

Parliament Update

We're mid-way through the third sitting of parliament for the year and already I've had the chance to raise a number of big issues our region is facing including cost of living, reliability in our electricity supply (more on that to come) and ensuring our emergency services are fully resourced. As youth crime continues to have an impact on communities right across this state and more particularly North Queensland, we also saw a committee's report about victims of crime support handed down.

Cost of Living

It's safe to say that no matter where you live, everyone is feeling the pressures of cost of living, especially in rural and regional Queensland.

In the second sitting of Parliament, the LNP brought the matter to the fore and with it, I took the opportunity to highlight the pressures our community is facing. Residents, farmers and business owners have all felt the sting of increased power costs, grocery prices have skyrocketed while our horticulture farmers have struggled to make ends meet. We have also seen insurance premiums rise to unprecedented levels pricing some residents and business owners out of the market whilst transport companies face double digit increases in the cost of fuel.

These pressures are real and in rural and regional areas like ours, these impacts are significantly magnified.

Resourcing our Emergency Services

As Shadow Emergency Services Minister my focus is ensuring that when we face times of disaster those who put their lives on the line have every resource they need to keep us and themselves safe. A report by the *Courier Mail* revealed QFES personnel were recently forced to use mobile phones after radio transmissions failed. At the core of this issue however, is a business case to

upgrade the communication systems which were ignored by this state government in the name of costs.

At a time when we are relying on emergency personnel, they are being let down by a state government who are not willing to invest in the infrastructure, equipment and maintenance they need to ensure they can do their jobs safely.

Put frankly, when it comes to investing in or upgrading equipment and infrastructure in the name of safety, our emergency service workers and volunteers should be front and centre.

Victims' voices raised

As North Queenslanders we know all too well about the impacts of youth crime with many of us joining a growing list of victims. Whether you were a victim of a violent crime or you had your vehicle stolen, your home broken into or have been assaulted, for every crime committed is a victim left to pick up the pieces. A Parliamentary Committee is currently investigating the impact on victims of crime and the level of support offered to these victims.

The LNP have always said the rights of the victims need to be put before the rights of an offender and with the recommendations from the committee now in the state labor government's hands I would hope that they are acted upon and that we do see meaningful change.

Petition draws thousands in crime fight

After soaring crime rates hit the Burdekin shire more than 3000 business owners and residents have put pen to paper to say they have had a gutful and are no longer willing to sit on their hands while young offenders run rife in our community.

The petition, which began in early February, called for a permanent increase in police officer numbers, including plain clothes officers, stationed at both Home Hill and Ayr in a bid to provide increased patrols with fully funded security patrols to occur until the additional police officers were assigned.

Since this petition began we have already seen the federal government stump up funds to continue night patrols in another North Queensland community and there is certainly no reason why the same can't be done in the Burdekin.

Now that the petition is closed, it will be tabled in parliament with a response from the Minister forthcoming and I know that nothing short of what is being called for will be accepted by this community.

I want to personally offer my thanks to Steve Wagner who has worked tirelessly to ensure that anyone who wanted to sign the petition had the access and ability to easily do so.



TAFE needs a plan

For too long now, the Burdekin TAFE campus has remained severely under utilised and in that time a number of community representatives, including the Home Hill Chamber of Commerce, have called for more to be done to ensure the facility is used to its full capacity.

The key findings in the report into the *delivery of VET in regional, rural and remote Queensland* included acknowledging the scope for improvement in community involvement in planning for VET services in regional areas. I have again called on the Minister to come to the Burdekin and assist in the development of an iron-clad plan for the local TAFE.

Several stakeholders noted in the report the gaps between the training being delivered by TAFE and the skills required by local industries and at a time when the demand for skilled workers is skyrocketing, this should be ringing alarm bells within the Government.

Having an effective delivery of TAFE courses in the Burdekin is not just about benefitting students but also wider Burdekin industries.

Right now in the Burdekin we still have a group of young people who are being forced to leave the Burdekin to pursue training options that could be offered here at their local TAFE and at the same time we are seeing a dramatic rise in the number of unfilled positions in vital industries.

Our industries and community deserve better than to see a facility that should be supporting it, left to sit dormant while young people take up opportunities to learn and upskill outside of our town.

Sparking fight for reliable electricity



Following more unplanned outages and growing community frustration I recently took the fight for electricity reliability to the floor of parliament.

In the last financial year alone, Ergon's residential customers copped a 28.7% increase in their power bills and at the same time residents of Nome, Julago, Alligator Creek, Cunggulla and Elliot Springs have been left with an essential service that is unreliable at best.

The Minister says the issue is in the transmission system, but local residents have been told the issue is much bigger. At a community meeting they were told that a major contributor to this issue was the need for an upgrade to the Stuart sub-station.

It's my understanding that a request was made by Ergon for funding to replace the sub-station but that was denied. The Minister is ultimately responsible, and residents deserve to know if funding was requested and, if it was denied, who made that decision.

The flow on effects of the current situation are potentially a risk to life. Quite often when the power goes out, the phone network follows soon after and that means people cannot reach emergency services.

All the residents are asking for is a reliable electricity supply and the truth. Surely that's not too much to ask.

RFS volunteers deserve consultation

Queensland is one of the most disaster prone states in Australia and regardless of whether it is a flood, fire or a cyclone, it is volunteers who answer the call for help. Right now, draft legislation has been put forth which will have a considerable impact on how a number of our front-line volunteer organisations operate. Unfortunately, in what is becoming an all too familiar issue, a lack of consultation and transparency has meant that this legislation has not addressed many of the issues plaguing our emergency services.

At the heart of our volunteers is the communities they serve, whether it's on the front line or fundraising at local events, so each and every one of them deserve to have their say on this bill, which is why I wrote to the chair of the committee requesting an extension of the deadline for submissions from March 15 to April 8.

As a former member of an Auxiliary Fire Brigade and the Shadow Minister for Emergency Services, I understand the importance of this Bill and I will be doing my best to ensure volunteers who respond in our time of need are respected and provided with the resources they need to protect their community.

Funding opportunities open now

There's currently a number of grant opportunities available right now for community groups and sporting clubs to assist with projects and programs your not for profit organisation may be working towards.

If you or your not-for-profit organisation is looking for a letter of support for a grant application please contact my office to find out how I can help.

If you are seeking further grant opportunities that may not be listed below you can always visit <https://www.grants.gov.au/Go/List> or <https://www.grants.services.qld.gov.au/>

Qantas Regional Grants

The Qantas Regional Grants program is back with \$2 million in funding to support communities and projects aimed at benefiting regional areas. The grants can be cash grants, marketing support or flights in kind. For further information, please visit <https://www.qantas.com/au/en/about-us/our-company/in-the-community/qantas-regional-grants.html>

Connected Communities Grants

Applications for 2024 Telstra Connected Communities Grant Program is opening shortly.

In partnership with the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal, grants of up to \$10,000 are available to not-for-profits to help them build resilient, sustainable, and liveable communities.

Funds will be available for new or existing not-for-profit programs to help them scale their impact to help more Australians in rural and regional areas become better connected.

Applications for the 2024 Telstra Connected Communities grant round are now open and will close at 5pm on Wednesday 27th of March 2024.

For more details on the Connected Communities Grant program visit telstra.com.au

Gambling Community Benefit Fund

The super round of the Gambling Community Benefit Fund grants for 2024 is currently open and closes April 30 for projects and improvements in conjunction with not-for-profit community groups. Funding for projects up to the value of \$100,000 is available in the one-off super round for the year.

In the most recent round up to \$400,000 was awarded across the Burdekin electorate and with the super round on the horizon there is certainly plenty of

opportunities for sporting teams, community groups and local contractors to benefit.

For more information visit <https://www.justice.qld.gov.au/initiatives/community-grants>

Champions of our community

Sophie Robertson

Recently I met with Sophie Robertson from Ayr State High School who was awarded the 2024 Premier's Anzac Prize.

This is a great opportunity for Sophie but it's also proof that the Anzac spirit will, quite rightly, be commemorated for generations to come.



Millaroo RFS

I recently had the pleasure of attending the opening of the new Millaroo Rural Fire Brigade building. This building apart from providing a new home to the local brigade also offers space for training, meetings and storage of vehicles and equipment.



Moranbah Discount Tyres and Mechanical

Congratulations to Moranbah Discount Tyres and Mechanical on being named as a finalist in the Australian Small Business Champion Awards. Best of luck for the "Oscars of Small Business" in April!

Until next time, stay safe and well.

Dale

How Dale Last can help you!



**As your State MP
I am responsible for:**

Agriculture	Sport and Recreation
Health and Public Hospitals	Racing
Main Roads	Energy and Water Supply
Education and TAFE	Transport
National Parks	Public Housing
Disability Services	Community Services
Police and Emergency Services	Tourism
Attorney-General	Planning and Infrastructure
	State Government Land



**Your Federal Member
is responsible for:**

Aged Care	Telecommunications and NBN
Centrelink	Trade
Child Support	Indigenous Affairs
Aviation	The ABC and SBS
Defence	Environment
Foreign Affairs	Bureau of Meteorology
Immigration and Visas	CSIRO
Medicare	



**Your Local Council
is responsible for:**

Local Roads	Rubbish Collection
Footpaths	Council by-laws
Animal Control	Water, Drainage and Wastewater
Parks and Recreation	Feral Pest Control
Rates	Local Planning and Building Approvals