



Our Ref.#5993557

8 February 2019

Hon Josh Frydenberg MP  
Treasurer  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Treasurer

**Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils Pre Budget Submission – Kuranda Range Road**

The Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC) was established in the 1980's and represents 13 member councils from Hinchinbrook, north to Cook and west to Carpentaria in far north Queensland. The FNQROC region is the largest and fastest growing region in Northern Australia. It extends over 320,000 square kilometres with a population of approximately 275,000 and a gross regional product (GRP) of \$15.15 billion. Unemployment for the 2018 June quarter was 6.97% which is above the Australian, Queensland and regional Queensland average.

The communities within our region welcome the opportunity to contribute further grow the GRP through the utilisation of existing assets, identifying our gaps and working collaboratively to support sustainable economic growth and develop for Far North Queensland.

This region all agree resolving the safety, capacity and reliability issues of the Kuranda Range Road is a priority. This road connects Cape York, the Gulf Savannah and the Tablelands to Cairns. It is now a proven inhibitor to economic growth with two significant projects not likely to proceed due to the impact on this road.

This road is costing the State and Federal Government on average \$871,992 every week due to fatalities, hospitalisation, injuries and property damage. Attached to this letter is further details about the road however, in summary, the condition and capacity of this roads means:

- Significant productivity loss as a result of:
  - 1.3 unplanned closures each week; and
  - Once a month both the Kuranda and alternative (91km route) are both closed.
- 2.5 fatalities every year;
- 1 person is injured every 4 days; and
- 1.2 hospitalisations every week;

This road has passed its capacity and is not only devastating lives it is clearly constraining productivity and growth of our entire region. We are desperate to get this road fixed and would warmly welcome any assistance the federal government could provide.

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this submission please to not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Gilmore', written in a cursive style.

Cr Tom Gilmore

**CHAIR**

**Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils**



**13 Local Governments**

**17% of QLD Councils**

**316,663km<sup>2</sup>**

**1235km of eastern seaboard**

## REGIONAL PRIORITY: KENNEDY HIGHWAY (KURANDA RANGE ROAD)

### Priority Recommendation

Federal and State investment of approximately \$1billion to resolve the safety, capacity and reliability issues of Kuranda Range Road.

### Impacted Electorates

#### Federal Government

Kennedy, Leichhardt

#### State Government

Barron River, Cairns, Cook, Hill, Hinchinbrook, Mulgrave, Traeger

#### Local Government

All FNQROC Councils



**\$871,992**  
per week

The average cost of fatalities, hospitalisation, injuries and property damage.



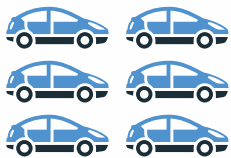
1 injury every 4 days  
at an annual cost of  
**\$2.2m**



2.5 fatalities every year  
with an annual cost of  
**\$6.5m**



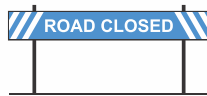
1.2 hospitalisations  
every week at an  
annual cost of  
**\$37.9m**



**8871**  
Vehicles per day



**1084**  
Commercial  
vehicles per day



**1.3**  
Unplanned  
closures each week



**1.3**  
Vehicles damaged  
every week at an  
annual cost of  
**\$0.625m**



**0.7**  
Times per month  
that both Kuranda  
Range Road & Gillies  
Highway are both closed

# KENNEDY HIGHWAY

## KURANDA RANGE ROAD



*Far North Queensland Regional Priority*



# KENNEDY HIGHWAY

## KURANDA RANGE ROAD

*Far North Queensland Regional Priority*

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<b>State Government</b>	Barron River, Cairns, Cook, Hill, Hinchinbrook, Mulgrave, Traeger
<b>Local Government</b>	All FNQROC Councils

### Overview

Kuranda Range Road (Kennedy Highway, Cairns/Mareeba section) links Smithfield with Kuranda and is the coastal gateway to Mareeba, Atherton Tablelands, Cape York and the Gulf Savannah.

In 2000 Maunsell McIntyre (now AECOM) undertook an Impact Assessment Study (IAS) Report, commissioned by the then Department of Main Roads. The integrated transport study was undertaken on a 12.5 km section of the Kennedy Highway known as Kuranda Range Road. At the time it was a two lane road of relatively low geometric standard and limited capacity.

In 18 years, little has changed with regard to the geometric standard of the road however the road has now surpassed its capacity identified in 2000.

#### 2001 to 2017 Snap shots<sup>1,2,3</sup>:

- 918 incidents resulting in 1,356 individuals requiring medical treatment, (on average over the last five years), somebody is injured every 4 days at an annual cost of \$2.2mil.
- 17 fatal incidents resulting in 45 fatalities, on average, 2.5 fatalities every year with an annual cost of \$6.5mil.
- 867 incidents resulted in 556 individuals requiring

hospitalisation, an average of 1.2 hospitalisations every week at an annual cost of \$37.9mil.

- In addition to average fatalities and average hospitalisations, on average 1.3 vehicles are damaged each week at an annual cost of \$0.625mil.
- \$871,992 per week (on average) is spent as a result of fatalities, hospitalisation, injuries and property damage.
- Vehicles per day 5,700 (2000) increasing to 8,871 (2017), exceeding the roads capacity by 1,686 vehicles per day. Extrapolating this growth out, 2019 will see 9,503 vpd and 2025 will see 11,681 vpd.
- 228 (4%) Commercial vehicles per day (2000) increasing to 1,084 (12.23%) per day in 2017.
- 1.3 unplanned closures of the road each week.
- 0.7 times per month both the Kuranda Range and Gillies Highway (91km alternative route) are closed.

This road is now stifling economic development and urban growth in the Cairns, Mareeba, Cape York, Atherton Tablelands and Gulf Savannah regions.

CSIRO is currently undertaking an assessment on this road using the Transport Network Strategic Investment Tool (TraNSIT).

<sup>1</sup> Table 18 Estimation of crash costs by injury severity, Human Capital (HC) values, June 2013 <https://atap.gov.au/parameter-values/road-transport/4-crash-costs.aspx> (\$2,622,924/fatality, \$608,184/hospitalisation, \$24,217/injury, \$9,257/property damage)

<sup>2</sup> TMR Crash data from Queensland roads <https://data.qld.gov.au/dataset/crash-data-from-queensland-roads>

<sup>3</sup> Kuranda and Gillies unplanned closures – RTI 135-05880



# KENNEDY HIGHWAY

## KURANDA RANGE ROAD

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### 2000 & 2004 Impact Assessment Study and Addendum<sup>4</sup>

In 2000, the consequences of not upgrading the road included:

- Net loss of regional biodiversity values
- Increased freight costs and loss of economic development opportunities
- Inability to accommodate urban and economic growth
- Increased travelling time and cost
- Loss of tourism trade
- Reduced access for residents to access services in Cairns
- Poor reliability

In 2000 and 2004, it was identified that the key shortcomings were:

- The existing road has severe geometric and structural inadequacies that result in:
  - Poor safety
  - Poor economic performance (travel times, vehicle operating costs and inability to accommodate freight-efficient vehicles), and
  - Poor reliability
- Capacity problems that will restrict growth at even modest rates and certainly prohibit orderly urban development on the northern Tablelands, and
- Inability to accommodate freight-efficient vehicles and consequential excessive cost of freight transport.

The Department of Main Roads in the terms of reference for the Integrated Transport study identified the existing Kuranda Range Road:

- Is likely to experience unacceptable levels of service for road transport by 2005 if current growth continues;
- Has a poor safety record;
- Has inadequacies in terms of:
  - vertical and horizontal alignment;
  - road width;

- crossfalls and super elevation;
  - maintenance and slope stability;
  - pavements;
  - drainage;
  - potential for tree falls;
  - accommodating emergency vehicles when the road is blocked by accidents, earth slips or treefall;
- Is a barrier to fauna movement and experiences large numbers of road-kills.

#### **Community support**

Community responses to the Draft Transport Options Study indicates community support for and recognition of the need to upgrade the existing Kuranda Range Road.

#### **Impact on freight**

Freight consequences identified in the IAS 2000 identified that if the road is not upgraded, the Kuranda Range Road will become increasingly uncompetitive as a freight route and this could impact on the economic performance of the Cairns Seaport and Airport. Limitations arise from extended travel times, increased vehicle operating costs, and the fact that freight-efficient vehicles cannot use the road.

Modern freight-efficient vehicles will seek alternative routes and possibly draw business away from Cairns. This could affect the economic performance of the Atherton Tablelands, Cape York Peninsula and Gulf of Carpentaria due to increasingly uncompetitive freight prices. Industries likely to be particularly affected are agriculture and mining.

There is evidence to suggest that some degree of lost economic activity is already occurring and the loss could be as high as \$250million a year (2000).



# KENNEDY HIGHWAY

## KURANDA RANGE ROAD

*Far North Queensland Regional Priority*

### Road Capacity

The capacity of Kuranda Range Road is 8,100 vehicles per day on the eastern side of the range summit, and 14,800 vpd for the western side. (Based on Austroads manual for mountainous terrain (eastern side) and undulating terrain (western side)).

Increases in the level of Commercial Vehicles from 9% to 15-20% results in a decrease in capacity on the eastern side of the range of 21% and 32% respectively.

At the time (2000), Rural Roads were generally upgraded once they reach Level of Service D. The eastern side of the Kennedy highway had been assessed as LOS D with an expectation to soon reach its capacity (LOS E). 9,500 vehicles a day places the road in LOS category E (if commercial vehicles remain around 9%).

### Situation in 2018

#### Safety

Between 2001 and 2017 there have been a total of 918<sup>5</sup> incidents resulting in 1,356 individuals requiring medical treatment. Of these:

- 17 fatal incidents resulting in 45 fatalities (location map below)
- 867 incidents resulting in 556 individuals requiring hospitalisation (location map below)

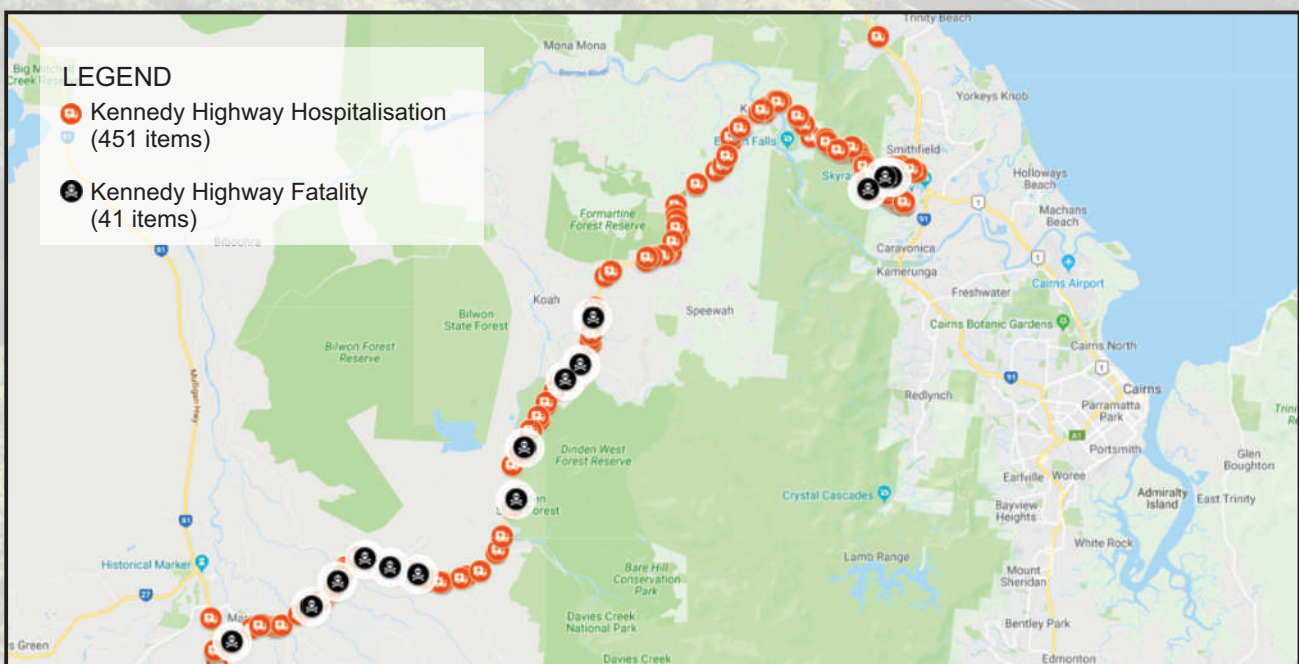


Figure 1: Kennedy Highway Fatalities and Hospitalisations 2001-2017

<sup>5</sup> This figure excludes incidents that resulted only in property damage as reporting ceased in 2010.



# KENNEDY HIGHWAY

## KURANDA RANGE ROAD

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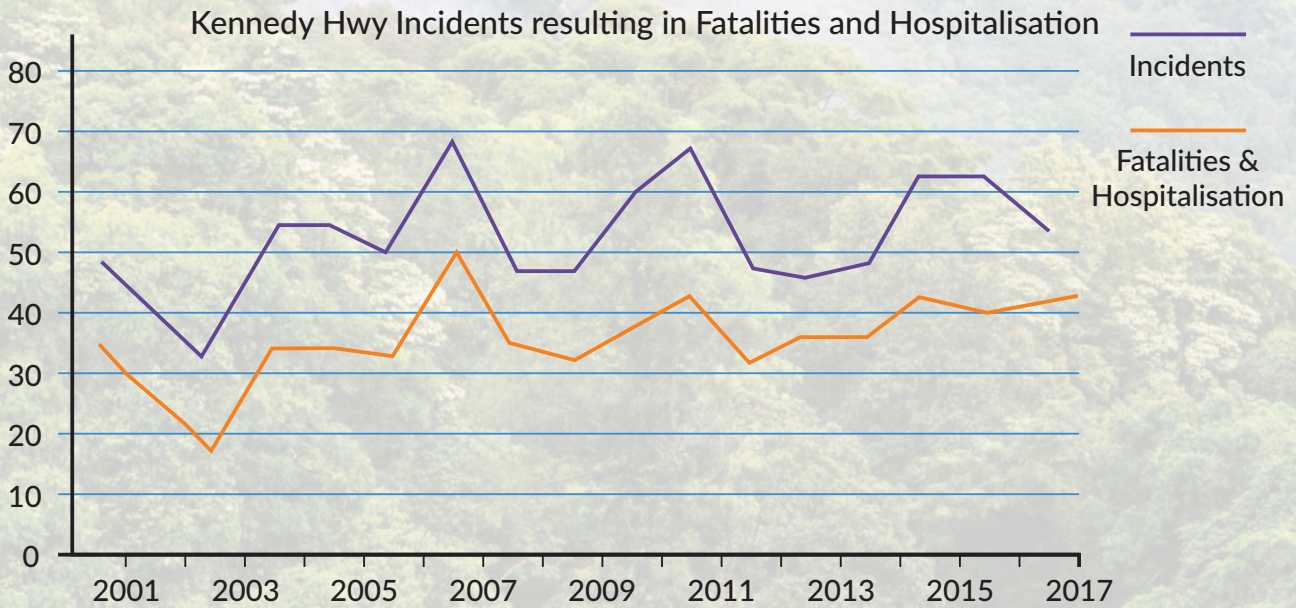


Figure 2: Kennedy Hwy Incidents resulting in Fatalities and Hospitalisation

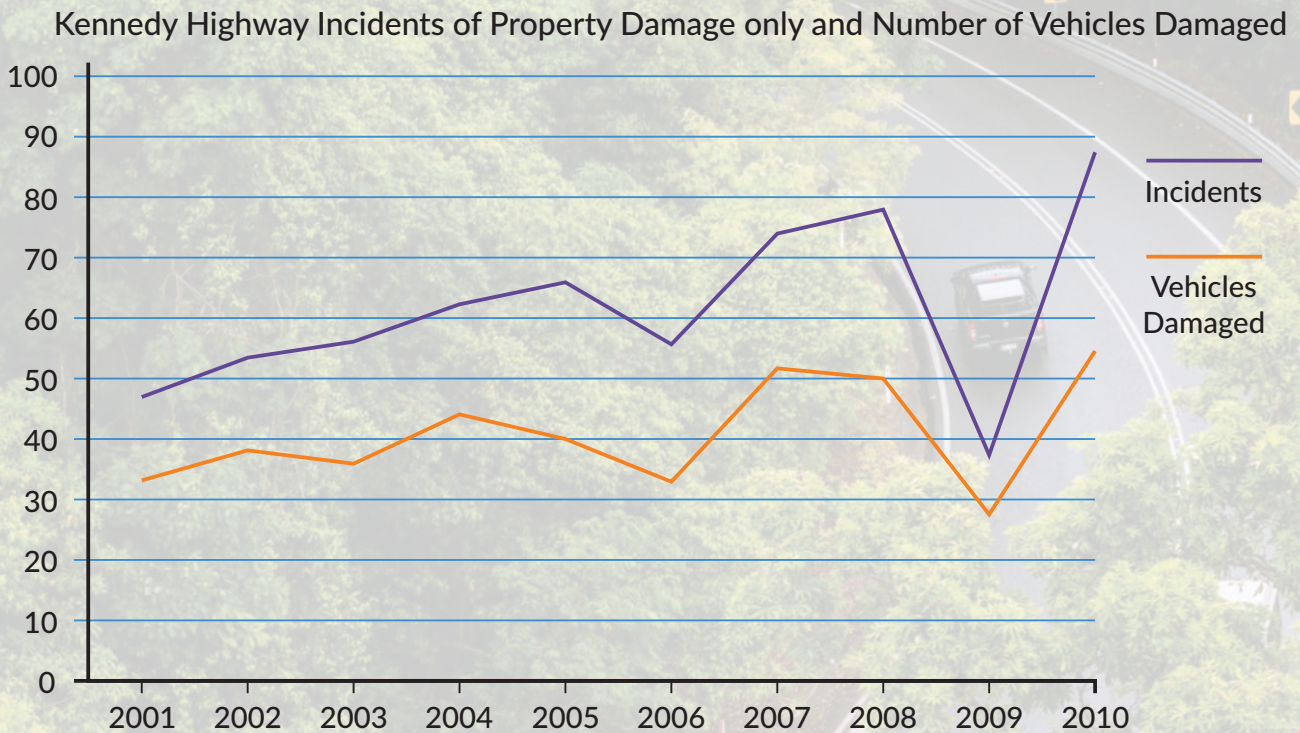


Figure 3: Kennedy Highway Incidents of Property Damage only and Number of Vehicles Damaged





# KENNEDY HIGHWAY

## KURANDA RANGE ROAD

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### Road Capacity

At the time (2000), Rural Roads were generally upgraded once they reached Level of Service D (LOS D). The eastern side of the Kennedy highway had been assessed as LOS D. It is estimated that the current LOS is E, approaching F where flow breakdown occurs and queuing and delays will result if development is not constrained in Kuranda, Mareeba, Cape York and the Gulf of Carpentaria. Constraining growth in these regions is not a viable option.

Based on the study's assessment that an increase in the level of Commercial Vehicles from 9% to 15-20% results in a decrease in capacity on the eastern side of the range of 21% and 32% respectively with 12.35% commercial vehicles, the capacity of the road has decreased from 8,100 to 7,185 (a reduction of 11.3%).

Eastern & Western Side Capacity & Commercial Vehicle Influence

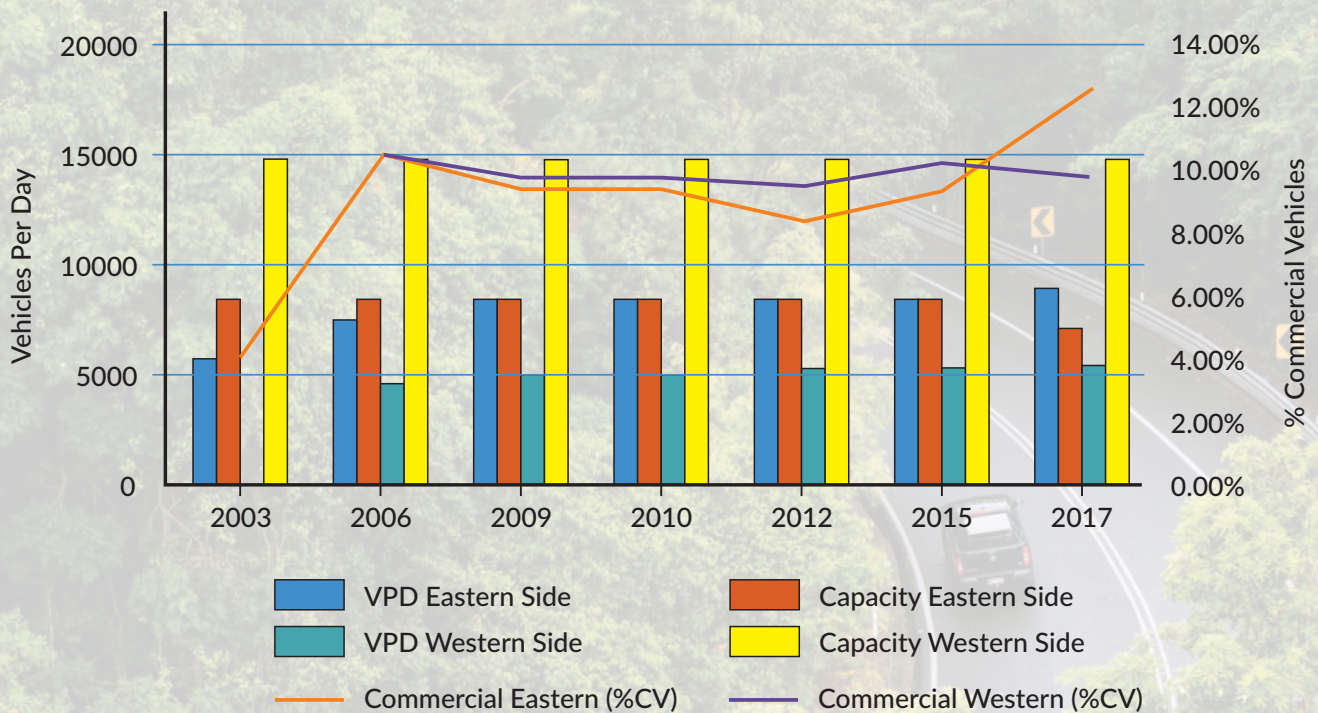


Figure 4: Kuranda Range Road Capacity



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### Reliability

Kuranda Range Road unplanned closures numbered 62 in 2017 with the trend climbing. Closures on Kuranda Range places pressure on the alternative access being the Gillies Highway. This detour creates at minimum an additional 91.3km (1.5hrs) to any travel. In addition to this, when the Kuranda or Gillies Highway are closed it places additional traffic pressure on the road remaining open. The incidents of both the roads being close at the same time are increasing.

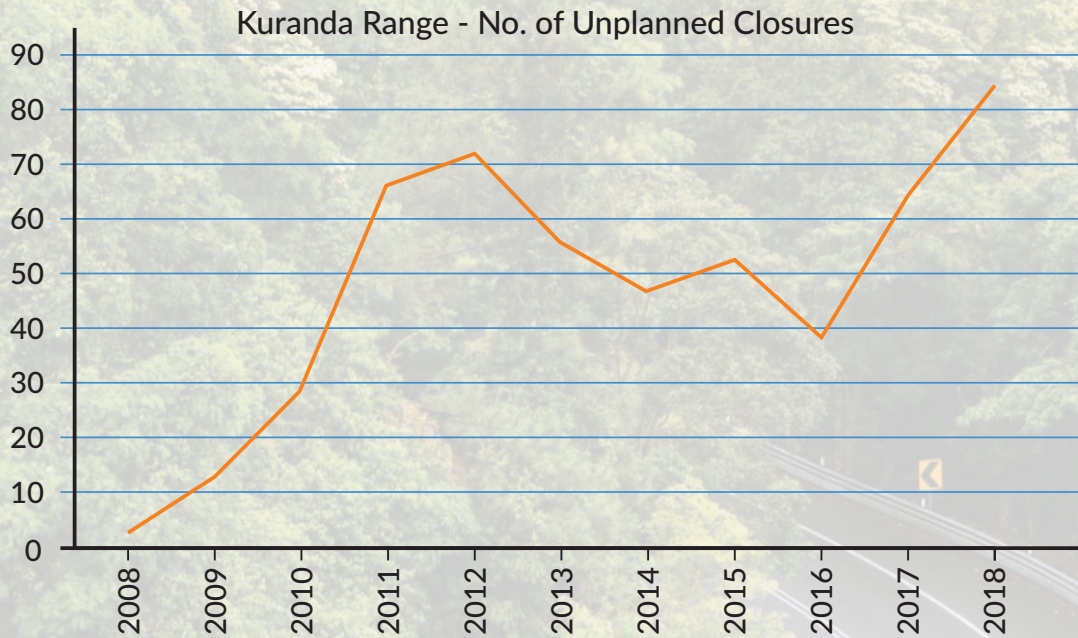


Figure 5: Kuranda Range Unplanned Closures 2008 - 2018

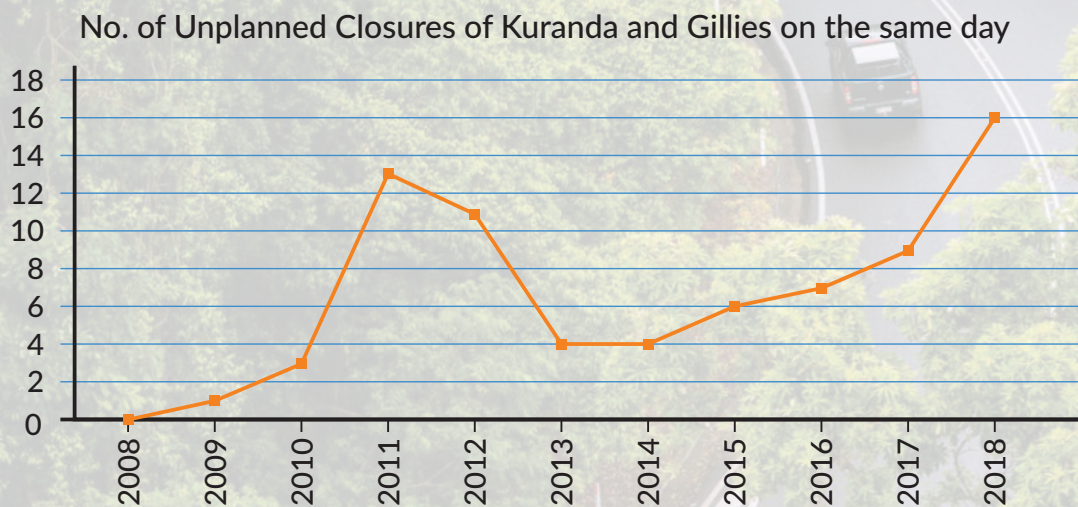


Figure 6: No. of unplanned closures of Kuranda Range and Gillies Range on the same day



# KENNEDY HIGHWAY

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Alignment with:

### **Transport and Infrastructure Council's themes which frame its priorities:**

- Integrating national road, road, aviation, port and maritime supply chains, and improving integration between land use and infrastructure planning.
- Improving system efficiency and extracting the greatest use from existing infrastructure, while at the same time meeting community expectations of safety, security, access and reliability.
- Developing sustainable, efficient funding and delivery models.
- Improving the capacity of infrastructure and transport systems to respond to new and emerging challenges and pressures – and to lessen the need for high cost new infrastructure.
- Improving the environmental performance of infrastructure and transport systems – including mitigating adverse environmental effects, such as transport emissions.
- Continuing a focus on transport safety while maintaining awareness of technological developments that may impact safety and security.
- Removing barriers to innovation, and capitalizing on new and emerging technologies.

### **State Infrastructure Plan**

- Unlock the potential of critical supply chains by identifying and improving the freight network.
- Seek innovation and technology solutions to create a better performing and lower emissions transport system.
- Connect regional communities with access to essential services and opportunities.

### **Transport Coordination Plan**

- Customer experience and affordability – transport meets the needs of all Queenslanders, now and into the future.
- Community connectivity – transport connects communities to employment and vital services.
- Efficiency and productivity – transport facilitates the efficient movement of people and freight to grow Queensland's economy.
- Safety and security – transport is safe and secure for customers and goods.
- Environment and sustainability – transport contributes to a cleaner, healthier and more liveable environment and is resilient to Queensland's weather extremes.

### **FNQ Regional Transport Plan (Draft)**

- Priority 2: It is identified that transport has a central role in supporting the economic function of the FNQ region and is required for an efficient and reliable supply chain that underpins regional productivity.
- The role extends beyond the freight and commercial transport function, to act as an economic driver for tourism, agriculture, mining and emerging industries.
- A transport system needs to support industry and unlock growth, plan and prioritise capacity upgrades and identify new infrastructure.