



**WIRRULLA TO GLENDAMBO ROAD  
19 November 2009**

**Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders):** The Wirrulla to Glendambo Road may be called a road but in reality it is a track. In this case, it is a dangerous track and also a lost opportunity. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of vehicles using it. Its surface varies from sandy corrugations to salt flats that become slippery and almost impassable during the winter months and, in the dry months, it becomes extremely rough with intermittent potholes and corrugations. Its dusty conditions, varying road widths and limited sight distances create traffic hazards for road users including heavy vehicles, road trains and B-doubles, caravans and light vehicles. Believe me, they do use this track or at least they try.

This road presents a wonderful opportunity to become a strategic link between the Northern Territory and National Highway One to Western Australia and Eyre Peninsula. Its upgrade is directly in line with the state's strategic goals to assist the growth of wealth and creation of new employment opportunities in regional South Australia. As it is a strategic road, it could provide a major link between the Northern Territory and National Highway One to Western Australia and the far west of Eyre Peninsula, greatly increasing tourism, and it is conducive to the substantial increase in mining activity in the northern part of South Australia.

The District Council of Streaky Bay recognised the strategic advantage of having this track upgraded to an all-weather road and approached the Eyre Regional Development Board for its support. It identified the Wirrulla to Kingoonya track as a critical transport link to the region of Eyre Peninsula and the national transport network, and in 2001 and 2003 the board prepared and presented submissions for the upgrade of the road for the government to consider.

Of significance is the burgeoning mining and resources boom in the Far North of the state, with significant investment currently being undertaken at Prominent Hill, and the mining potential of Cairn Hill, Peculiar Knob and Hawks Nest, all of which are accessed from the Stuart Highway. A significant quantity of mining machinery and other infrastructure suitable for these developments is sourced from Western Australia, and an upgraded sealed roadway providing a more direct and significantly shorter transport route would enhance these operations. Royalties follow mining, and mining follows infrastructure, so to increase royalties from mining first of all requires supporting infrastructure.

The Gawler Craton is widely recognised as one of the most exciting potential prospects for this state. It covers Eyre Peninsula to the north and west, and it has been described as one of the most undeveloped mineralised areas in the world. Despite opposition, setbacks and disinterest by the Labor government, the mining exploration program put in place by the former Liberal government has continued and, combined with the impetus from China's requirements for minerals, has seen some exploration companies actually begin mining, or assess the feasibility of doing so, despite road, rail, port, power and water infrastructure issues.

The Wirrulla to Kingoonya track upgrade presents a wonderful opportunity to provide a road and possibly a rail link to suitable ports and the corridor, for power lines and water pipelines to provide green power and water to the mines and communities that require them, including BHP's Roxby Downs expansion.

The Eyre Regional Development Board Annual Report 2007-08 stated that expenditure by companies on mineral exploration in South Australia during 2006-07 was \$188.9 million, with \$152.2 million in the Gawler Craton; that is, 80.57 per cent of the money expended on exploration was spent within the geological province alone. Many of our

mining interests in South Australia are associated with companies operating in Western Australia. Road access for machinery and other transport currently is through Port Augusta, because the Wirrulla-Kingoonya Road can be impassable. This adds up to 600 kilometres (just over 300 kilometres from Wirrulla to Port Augusta and then back again to the mine) and, when adding up the cost of developing a particular mine, it is a strong deterrent to add this significant cost of transport to the mining expenditure.

Also, significant greenhouse gas from the additional diesel used, combined with road wear and tear and danger of large and often very heavy loads, should be considered when assessing the unnecessary use of Highway 1 and the need for the alternative Wirrulla to Glendambo Road upgrade. The upgrade to an all-weather road will enhance the safety of local people and travellers, including passengers on the transcontinental railway.

On Friday 16 January this year, Chief Inspector Brad Flaherty, who is the person responsible for the huge north and west region of South Australia held Exercise Barton, which was a hypothetical disaster scenario that involved the Indian Pacific being derailed with 205 passengers somewhere along the South Australian Outback section of the 4,352 kilometres it traverses. He assembled all 32 known stakeholders to review their action plans and work out who will do what, where, when and why, using various scenarios.