

Kuranda Range closed 130 times by crashes and debris during 2018/19

Shocking new figures have revealed how many times the Kuranda Range road was closed in the past year.

Grace Mason, The Cairns Post

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MOTORISTS, business owners and civic leaders have renewed calls for action on the Kuranda Range after new figures showed it has been closed 130 times in the past year.

The data revealed crashes, road hazards such as debris and stationary vehicles had forced either the full or partial closure of the contentious road more than once every three days.

Barron River MP Craig Crawford reiterated his stance that upgrades to the Captain Cook Highway and Cairns Western Arterial Rd were higher priorities and any major upgrade to the range road would need to stack up economically.



John Doney has been running John's Kuranda Bus for 20 years and reckons one solution to the traffic issues on the range would be to re-open the railway line for transporting produce to take the trucks off the range. PICTURE: STEWART MCLEAN

The *Weekend Post* understands the Department of Transport and Main Roads has estimated the cost of a full upgrade at more than \$750 million.

But Tropic Wings general manager David Gardiner, whose company operated daily charters from Cairns to the Tablelands, estimated their company alone faced tens of thousands of dollars in lost revenue each year due to range road closures.

“From an economic perspective, it stretches far and wide,” he said.



Jane Danford took this photo of a car crash on the Kuranda Range about 3.20pm on December 9, 2018.

“There’s not a single business that you talk to that couldn’t claim it wasn’t a significant issue for them.

“There is no way on this planet that if a range was closed 130 times a year in the Greater Brisbane area they would just sit back and say ‘that’s a shame’,” Mr Gardiner said.

“It goes without saying that in every area, including roads, we miss out.”

The proponents of the \$650 million KUR-World integrated eco-resort spoke out earlier this week, saying the project could be axed after being told by TMR they could not support it due to the added strain on the already overloaded road.



Traffic travels up and down the Kuranda Range. BRENDAN RADKE

Options previously mooted included upgrading the road to dual carriageway, building a tunnel or finding an alternate route.

A TMR spokeswoman said previous investigations into upgrade options were all found to be “unfeasible”.

Mr Gardiner conceded he did not know what the answer was.

“Obviously, there is one, but it would be horrendous, the cost of it,” he said.

John Doney, who operated twice-daily John’s Kuranda Bus, suggested reopening the railway to carry freight up the range would mean fewer large trucks using the road.

“The Queensland Government have got to be the most hopeless people I’ve ever come across,” he said.

“The only time we hear about (potential upgrades) is just before elections.”