



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

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Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (11.40 a.m.): As the Premier's parliamentary secretary in north Queensland, I welcome the opportunity to also represent Premier Peter Beattie in his capacity as Minister for Trade. It has been estimated that one in four jobs in regional Queensland and one in five jobs on a statewide basis are dependent on exports. The Premier has spent a considerable amount of time this year advocating to Queensland companies that they should either start exporting or look for new export markets because of the major part that exports play in reducing unemployment.

North Queensland businesses have some real success stories in the field of export, as evidenced in this year's Townsville Region Export Awards, but there is still obvious potential for greater involvement in export development and delivery. There are approximately 270 companies in the Townsville region that are exporting. The Townsville region takes in the Burdekin, Charters Towers, Hinchinbrook and Cardwell shires.

The State Development and Innovation Centre in Townsville—SDIC—works closely with trade ally Austrade to assist potential and existing exporters with a range of services, including market intelligence and opportunities, trade missions and contacts and program support. Earlier this year the Townsville centre conducted an Export Passport seminar that attracted over 30 business operators interested in entering export markets. In early 2005 this organisation will contract export specialists to deliver selected modules of the Export Pathways program. Two months ago the department made possible a visit by Queensland government trade commissioners from Indonesia and Hong Kong. They addressed a business breakfast before touring the port of Townsville and conducting one-on-one meetings with a range of exporters and potential exporters. SDIC Townsville also works closely with Austrade to facilitate and promote visits by export market specialists. Most recently this included Austrade's business development manager in Peru, Carlos Coll, who met with north Queensland engineering companies regarding opportunities in the South American mining industry.

The port of Townsville is north Queensland's key trade gateway. Total tonnages exported through the port have increased consistently over the past 10 years from 2,537,154 tonnes in 1994 to 4,318,733 tonnes in 2003. Goods exported from Townsville embrace refined metals, concentrates, ingots and mineral ores including copper, nickel, zinc and lead. Sugar, fertiliser, cattle and meat products, timber and sulphuric acid are other principal exports.

The Townsville region has some flourishing, innovative exporters as well. For example, Bestlan Bananas is a Tully based family company that manufactures formulated dried fruit products for use in a range of food items such as muesli and breakfast bars, breakfast cereals and prepackaged bakery goods. Winner of the 2004 Townsville region exporter of the year award and the regional agribusiness exporter award, Bestlan Bananas has recorded strong growth and now supplies some of Europe's largest food manufacturers such as Nestle. Further growth in the European market is anticipated. The company prides itself on being highly responsive to customer needs and providing problem-solving solutions.

Powerplay Catamarans won the 2004 Townsville Region Export Awards emerging exporter award. It is a family owned company that has manufactured and sold two luxury powered catamarans to charter

operators in the Dominican Republic from its South Townsville base. A third catamaran is currently under construction.

Townsville company Greencross Veterinarians has established a presence in the expanding Chinese market through a joint venture with a local Shanghai based veterinary business. It is actively engaged in raising the skills of Chinese veterinarians through training support for its joint venture partner and introducing western veterinarian practices. Greencross Veterinarians targets expatriate and local pet owning clients through email and web sites and has developed a high-profile brand name—PAW—that it intends using to establish veterinary practices in other Chinese cities and expand into a bulk pet warehouse supplies retail chain.

In the intellectual market, James Cook University has achieved strong growth in international student numbers in recent years. International students increased by 10 per cent in 2003 with similar growth expected this year following a concerted overseas marketing effort. JCU has established an offshore campus in Singapore known as JCU Singapore and has created strong linkages, including articulation agreements, with overseas colleges and universities, particularly in China. Through these agreements students can complete two years of study in their home country before completing their degree in JCU's Singapore, Townsville or Cairns campuses.

Winner of the 2004 Townsville Region Export Awards large advanced manufacturer category, Queensland Nickel's Yabulu Refinery produces and exports high-grade nickel and cobalt products from ore sourced from a number of mines world wide, including New Caledonia.

North Queensland has proven its worth as a highly significant player in Australia's export economy and will continue to enhance its position. I commend State Development and Innovation Centre Townsville Director Peter Mellor and his team on their excellent work in promoting the region's export industry. They are doing a wonderful job in helping to raise export awareness amongst local companies. There is no looking back for the Townsville region in the all-important field of export. To this end, it is essential that more and more members of trade groups from other countries witness north Queensland's great trading potential first-hand. They may be surprised, but I know they will not be disappointed.