




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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ADJOURNMENT

Central Queensland, Jobs

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (11.20 pm): I rise in this House to talk about another blow to Central Queensland. We have learned today of more job losses in the Bowen Basin, with companies looking to restructure and having to let staff go because of the mining downturn. This of course is on top of the many job losses that have already occurred in the mining sector in Emerald, Blackwater and other Bowen Basin communities.

This is having a major impact not only on the families but also on the small businesses in these towns. For a family this is devastating—when a husband or a partner has to come home and say, ‘I’ve lost my job because of the downturn in the industry.’ Many of them have locked into mortgages because they have made their homes in those communities. They are also a part of the community. They might be the local junior Rugby League coach or hold an executive position in the club. Their children go to the local schools. Their wife or partner may be involved in the local P&F or P&C association, play a key role in the local dance production or be involved in the kindy fundraising community. The loss of a job not only impacts the person who has lost their job but also hugely impacts the family and the community they live in.

I call on the state government to act now. We need to invest in infrastructure into regional Queensland. We need to strengthen our regions so that we can avoid the boom-bust periods that occur. Mining will always go up and down. Agriculture will always be affected by a downturn in commodities or by weather, such as with the drought we are experiencing now.

Yesterday I spoke about the opportunity of a new meatworks and inland port in the Central Highlands. This will strengthen the economy. We also have a great opportunity for the central west, where we have a sophisticated and well-run outback tourism industry, something on which I commend the former minister for tourism, Jann Stuckey. She understood that outback tourism is one of our major commodities. We have wool, we have beef and we have tourism.

The tourism industry is a very important part of our community right now as we experience drought. To see this you only have to look at the Stockman’s Hall of Fame, which is currently upgrading its precinct. Also, the Qantas Founders Museum is looking to add to its fleet, with acquisition of what they call the Constellation. I am sure some members in here would know of the Constellation—it is a very favoured aircraft—or, as we like to nickname it, the ‘Connie’. It is coming from the Philippines. I call on the state government to help us try to get that Constellation to outback Queensland, to Longreach, so we can advance an opportunity for our tourism industry.

We also have the opportunity to rebirth the wool industry. We need to invest in fencing to protect our pastures from wild dogs and kangaroos. Wild dogs are having a devastating impact, but kangaroos pose just as big a threat by eating out any pastures we have while we endure the dry times. It is time for us to get behind a shire-wide barrier fence and cluster fencing off the barrier fence. We need the federal government and the state government, along with local government, to come together collectively to get this job done.

(Time expired)