




Speech By  
**Scott Stewart**

**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 July 2015

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL**

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (9.32 pm): It gives me great pleasure to rise tonight to support the Palaszczuk government's budget. This is a government that committed during the election campaign to be a government of Queensland and ensure that regional areas were looked after and not forgotten, and that is exactly what this government is doing—looking after regional Queensland. The Townsville region will be a significant winner under the Palaszczuk government's first budget as the city positions itself as a hub of Northern Australia.

The budget includes \$804.6 million for the Townsville Hospital and Health Service, \$43.3 million over the next four years for maintenance in Townsville schools and \$21.2 million for disaster relief in 2015-16 in partnership with the Australian government. But wait, there is more. The infrastructure improvement budget looks outstanding for Townsville with \$542.9 million budgeted for infrastructure improvements in 2015-16, including \$262 million for transport, \$51.3 million for health, \$60.3 million for energy and water and \$35.6 million for education and training, which includes \$10 million for the purchase of new land for a future school in the north-west area of the city.

But more specifically the big-ticket items for the Townsville electorate include \$18 million to construct a renewable energy ready power station on Palm Island and \$5 million to commence work on the new Townsville Stadium in South Townsville. This funding will go towards the business case, a quantity surveyor to determine project costs and a programmer.

There is \$10.2 million to commence the redevelopment of the berth 4 facility at the port of Townsville, \$9.1 million towards the commencement of the construction of an employment related accommodation program for NRL House and \$2 million to commence works on a crisis shelter in Townsville at a cost of \$4 million in direct response to the *Not now, not ever* report by Quentin Bryce.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr STEWART:** It is happening in Townsville, member for Nanango. It is happening in Townsville. Why is the Palaszczuk government investing so heavily in Townsville? I will tell members this: it is not for my good looks, that is for sure. It is not because we were forgotten about under the years of the former government either and it is not because Townsville suffered from the 'no public servant need fear me' saga either. It is because the Palaszczuk government gets it. It gets it. It is the Palaszczuk government that appointed the Minister Assisting the Premier for North Queensland as the only regional minister to do so.

In those five months, the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland has achieved the following for North Queensland. She has reopened the office of the Premier and cabinet which was closed by the former government. It just goes to show how much the Newman government considered and valued the north. It closed that office. But wait, there is more. What else has she done? She ensured the first community cabinet was also held in Townsville to listen to that community—and there is more.

She has worked with the Minister for Tourism to secure the DestinationQ conference in Townsville later this year. But wait—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr STEWART:** I know those opposite are loving every minute of it. There is more, too! The Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland also secured a new primary school and secondary school for north-west Townsville—something we heard the member for Hinchinbrook saying that he had been working on since 2011. This minister could do it in five months. Five months it took this minister to do it. The Premier selected the member for Mundingburra to be the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland because she is the best person for the job. She has proven this by achieving more than what the member for Hinchinbrook could achieve with those schools over those five years.

The Palaszczuk government gets it. For those in the opposition who still do not quite understand, I will explain it in a little bit more detail. With the recent release of the federal government's white paper on Northern Australia, the time is right to grow the north to ensure that it is able to accommodate the exponential growth. In the recent *State of the tropics* report, it highlights that the tropics emerges as a critical global region with a unique set of development challenges and opportunities. The tropics covers only 40 per cent of the world's surface area but hosts approximately 80 per cent of its terrestrial biodiversity and more than 95 per cent of its mangrove and coral reef based biodiversity. The tropical world's economy is growing 20 per cent faster than the rest of the world and many tropical nations are important contributors to world trade, politics and innovation. The tropics is home to 40 per cent of the world's population and 55 per cent of the world's children under the age of five. By 2050, some 50 per cent of the world's population and close to 60 per cent of the world's children are expected to reside in the tropics. This is why the Palaszczuk government gets it. The Premier understands where we are heading.

Advances in technology are providing a platform for expanding business opportunities, enhancing prospects to reduce poverty and improving education and health outcomes. Incomes are higher, infrastructure is more accessible and life expectancy is the highest it has ever been. The federal government recently released its much anticipated white paper on developing Northern Australia. The opening paragraph states—

The north has untapped promise, abundant resources and talented people. It is also Australia's closest connection with our key trading markets and the global scale changes occurring in Asia.

Northern Australia, as I said, encompasses 40 per cent of Australia's land mass and has approximately one million people living in that same area. The white paper cites how the federal government sees the way forward in developing trade and business opportunities for Northern Australia. Page 60 of that paper states—

... the Government can help protect people and industries from increased biosecurity and health threats as more people and goods navigate international borders. This means bringing together research bodies, institutions and individuals in the north and across Australia, and partnering with regional countries to develop new technologies and greater capacity to protect northern investment. This will also generate new commercial and employment opportunities in tropical agriculture and health sectors, positioning the north as a global leader.

While the federal government sees Northern Australia as Darwin, the Palaszczuk government sees an opportunity and a necessity to establish Townsville as the hub of Northern Australia. The opportunity is to harness the northern region of the state by creating synergy between Mackay and Cairns and west to Mount Isa. The idea of northern cities in competition with one another is 20th century thinking. This region has 21st century eyes and looks at ways that we can work together to create, develop, enhance, promote and maximise opportunities to meet the needs of a rapidly changing global network of trade, education, resources and knowledge.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*. It has been approved.

Leave granted.

Mr Speaker, this is why the Palaszczuk government is investing in Townsville. But it comes with its challenges.

The greater Townsville area has a total population of approximately 237,000 which is expected to reach 362,000 by 2036. Around 30,000 will live in the inner CBD. The top 5 industries by numbers of workers in the area are:

- Health care and social assistance at 16.6%
- Retail trade at 11.6%
- Accommodation and food services at 9.2% which I might add were in very high demand over the week-end due to the very successful V8 Supercars in Townsville
- Construction at 9%, and
- Education and training at 8.3%

As you can see Mr Speaker, the Townsville region is a very diverse area indeed. In fact:

- Our agricultural production consisting largely of sugar and beef cattle is worth around \$657 million
- In the 12 months ending 31 March this year, 1,626 residential buildings were approved for construction
- 3,841 residential dwellings were sold in the last calendar year, and
- 16,680 businesses were in operation in the 2013-14 financial year

Our major private sector investment projects currently under construction include:

- \$24 million in the stage 2 development of Fairfield Central Shopping Centre by Lancini Group and Fairfield Land Pty Ltd
- \$80 million for the Science Place, a research and education centre at James Cook University (which is partly funded by the Australian Government and the CSIRO)

Mr Speaker, during the election campaign, Labor continued to say that we were committed to being fiscally responsible, that we would kick start the ailing Townsville economy. All this we inherited from an LNP Government who was hell bent on slashing jobs to reduce costs as their solution for repaying the debt. Well Mr Speaker, some three years later and we know what happened with that strategy. The slash and burn approach coupled with the downturn of the minerals sector was the perfect storm to send the Townsville economy into a flatline. Currently we have unemployment at 8.7% and youth unemployment around 17% with a 22% commercial vacancy rate.

The Queensland Government is a major employer in the region providing employment opportunities for 14, 013 people supporting:

- 3,331.4 km<sup>2</sup> of national and regional parks
- 150 state heritage sites
- 8 hospitals and health facilities
- 4 customer service centres
- 1,764 km of roads
- 1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnership regional office
- 1 Office of the Premier and Cabinet
- 12 fire stations
- 633 police officers, and
- 5 courthouses

Easy to throw stones, but how does Labor plan to reinvigorate confidence and breathe life back into the Townsville economy. How does Townsville plan to provide the necessary services and position itself as the hub of northern Australia as we prepare for a future in the tropics?

Mr Speaker, it started just over 5 months ago and today will be enhanced through the first budget handed down by the Palaszczuk Government. One that is focused on growing jobs and one that is focused on a very bright future for this state and for Townsville.

This budget will provide specifically for the Townsville electorate:

- \$14.753 million to complete construction of 28 new social housing dwellings on Palm Island in response to the increasing numbers of families living on the island.
- \$16.765 million to assist people with a disability and their families to access support services
- \$1 million to upgrade the wastewater treatment on Palm Island and support healthier environmental conditions on the island.
- \$617,000 to continue the construction of 1 house and 1 unit in Townsville in 2015/16 at a total cost of \$771,000 as part of the Elderly Parent Carer Innovation Trial
- \$4.946 million to ensure children in need of protection have a safe place to stay
- \$1.765 million to support the needs of children in out of home care
- \$109,000 for individuals and community groups in Townsville to improve access to individual support services
- \$1.842 million to respond to domestic violence and family violence
- \$5.782 million to local organisations to support families to safely care for their children
- \$5.053 million to deliver support to vulnerable individuals and assist them to get their lives back
- \$796,000 for services to support young people in Townsville including information, advice and referral services
- \$120,619 for refurbishment of the Hermit Park State School Music Room
- Townsville State High School will be allocated a full time equivalent Guidance Officer in 2016, up from their current part-time allocation
- \$2 million for Jezzine Barracks Community Amenities including a playground, picnic shelters and park furnishings
- \$3.4 million over two years (2014-15, and 2015-16) to upgrade the perimeter security system at Cleveland Detention Centre including modifications to physical security barriers to prevent access to roof tops.
- \$380,000 to complete the upgrade of CCTV cameras in the Townsville Watchhouse
- \$199,000 to upgrade one tennis court surface to an international standard including fencing to support tennis in Townsville
- \$50,000 per annum for 3 consecutive years to support the operations of the North Queensland Conservation Council
- \$444,000 to complete land acquisitions by the Coordinator-General in the Townsville Eastern Port Access corridor within the Townsville State Development Area to facilitate an infrastructure corridor of regional, state and national significance

- \$2 million towards a drop-off zone for the Pimlico State High School
- \$20 million towards the upgrade of the Townsville sewerage Treatment Plant
- \$5 million towards the Dalrymple Road Bridge in the Townsville City Council
- \$78,000 towards the Mike Reynolds Early Childhood Centre for refurbishment
- An additional 8 full time teachers across state, state high schools and specialist schools over the next three years

Mr Speaker, I have spent a great deal of time highlighting the investment the Palaszczuk government is doing in the Townsville region and specifically in the Townsville electorate. But more importantly Mr Speaker, this government is investing in a future in Townsville where innovation is incubated and harnessed. It is a place where business and trade will be done on a global scale. Where the quality of life will be envied by every other lead nation in the world. A place where education and knowledge is relished and celebrated.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Bill before the House today.