




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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BUILDING QUEENSLAND BILL

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (5.52 pm): I rise today to support the Building Queensland Bill, which will ensure the Palaszczuk government delivers the projects that have the greatest value and community benefits for all Queenslanders. This will occur by establishing an independent statutory body that will ensure a whole-of-government perspective to major infrastructure planning, prioritisation and investment.

On many occasions in this House I have highlighted the impacts of the recent release of the federal government's white paper on Northern Australia. The time is right to grow the north to ensure it is able to accommodate the exponential growth. A recent report known as the *State of the Tropics* highlights that the tropics is emerging 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 years. 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.

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. Building Queensland will be pivotal in the determination of the infrastructure requirements by the state to meet these future needs. But, more importantly, it will determine the infrastructure projects that will create jobs, provide training and skilling opportunities, increased productivity, and provide a diverse and sustainable economy. It will facilitate clear processes for prioritising infrastructure development across the state that will provide efficiency and effective, efficient returns on investment. I refer to page 11 of the state infrastructure plan, which highlights some of these things I have been talking about with regard to North Queensland.

Building Queensland will provide transparency and accountability into a rigorous process of analysing current and future needs and priorities. Independent expert advice will inform policies, pricing and regulatory issues. It identifies impediments to development and will highlight opportunities and reforms as well as needs for users. Advice will also take into account forecast growth, economic, social and environmental sustainability, cost benefits and community benefits including social return on investment.

In recognising that Building Queensland has considerable expertise and knowledge of infrastructure, it will assist during the preparation of business cases for infrastructure proposals valued between \$50 million and \$100 million. For projects estimated to exceed the \$100 million threshold,

Building Queensland will take a larger role in preparing the business case. This will ensure that the details of the expected productivity gains from the proposal, time frames for delivery of the project and the cost-benefit analysis of the projects align with the strategic priorities of the infrastructure plan for Queensland.

The Palaszczuk government has a plan for infrastructure that sets a clear vision for the future with a new approach to infrastructure planning and prioritisation that articulates how to address key opportunities and challenges facing Queensland. But it needs an independent authority that will ensure key investment on infrastructure meets the demands of the future like those of the *State of the Tropics* paper. I commend the bill to the House.