




Speech By
Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2016

MOTION: NORTHERN AUSTRALIA INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITY

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (6.05 pm): I rise to support the motion. Let us go back through a little bit of history, shall we? First of all, the Northern Australia infrastructure fund is a federal government initiative—a federal government initiative—and the last time I looked Malcolm Turnbull was the Prime Minister. Well, who knows? Maybe that is changing in the near future. It is up to the federal government to decide where the headquarters are. When I caught up with Senator Matt Canavan on Saturday—and the minister was there as well—he said very clearly to us, ‘I’m trying to get it moved from Sydney.’

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Hinchinbrook, you have had a good go. It is not appropriate with the interjections. I call the Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The LNP federal government wanted it based in Sydney or Canberra and its own senator—it does not even know what its own senator said—said that he would like it moved out of Sydney into Queensland. Why was there a discussion around Brisbane? Because it was thought from the federal government’s point of view that it wanted it to be near the financial business centres like the banks and the markets.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, a federal government initiative.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: My government is more than happy to have the headquarters located in either Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville, Cairns—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Whitsunday, you are warned under standing order 253A for your interjections. I note you are on the speaking list. You need to be careful or otherwise you may not have a chance to speak. Member for Hinchinbrook, you are warned under standing order 253A in relation to your interjections.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Let us not forget, too, that not only did the federal government want it headquartered in Sydney; it also had a minister responsible for Northern Australia from Melbourne! If you want to talk about geography, it had a federal minister from Melbourne looking after Northern Australia. I am very pleased that I have a minister supporting me on matters regarding North Queensland, because one of the first things my government did was restore the office of the Premier in North Queensland in Townsville with three staff. What did those opposite do? They liked Townsville so much they axed the position and they axed the office. So how hypocritical is it for the member for Hinchinbrook, who was a minister at the time, to not even set up the office of the Premier in North Queensland? Those opposite should hang their heads in shame.

We proudly support Queensland. We proudly support the northern parts of our state. Tonight I say this to those opposite and to Malcolm Turnbull: pick any part of Northern Queensland and we are happy to support it. Locate it there tomorrow. My government offers its full support. But your federal government wanted it in Sydney! Those opposite have egg on their face today. I think we need the member for Callide and the member for Toowoomba South to head down to Canberra as soon as possible so they can put it in perspective that Sydney is not part of Queensland. I even go back to 20 May when I wrote to Tony Abbott about this very issue. I wrote—

In closing, I am pleased to note that my department is opening a new office in Townsville to better serve North Queensland. I would be pleased if this office was used for placements and secondments by Australian Government officials.

What have we heard from the federal government? Absolutely nothing. We know how important it is to get the Northern Australia infrastructure fund out. On Saturday, I said very clearly to Senator Matt Canavan, 'Bring the legislation forward. Let's get the money out the door. Let's create the jobs. Let's create employment in North Queensland.' What have we heard from those opposite? Has there been any lobbying by them of the federal government? Not to my knowledge. Have there been any letters to the Prime Minister? Not to my knowledge—absolutely nothing. They come in here, they think that they have a win, but they have a complete loss because they have failed to deliver for North Queensland. They could not even base their own office of the Premier up there. They could not even do that.

In closing, we will proudly support North Queensland. Unlike those opposite who want to have the office located in Sydney, I do not care if the office is in Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville or Cairns. My government will continue to support all parts of regional Queensland.