




Speech By  
**Dale Last**

**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2016

**MOTION: NORTHERN AUSTRALIA INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITY**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (6.21 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion. The Northern Australia infrastructure fund was set up by the federal government to promote infrastructure investment across Northern Australia. Imagine my dismay when I opened the *Townsville Bulletin* today and found this on the front page: the Premier of Queensland has asked that the office of the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility be based in Brisbane.

Whilst Johnathan Thurston was in England kicking goals for the Cowboys, our own Premier was back here kicking North Queenslanders in the guts. I have been waiting all day for the outcry from the northern members of this government. The fact that we have not heard a whimper from them is nothing short of a disgrace. The Premier uses every opportunity to claim that her government is a government for all Queenslanders. Let me remind the Premier that Queensland does not stop at the Tropic of Capricorn and that actions speak louder than words. North Queenslanders are sick and tired of being treated like second-class citizens. The Northern Australia infrastructure fund is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build the infrastructure that will not only take North Queensland forward but also deliver for all the people living in this state.

Never underestimate a North Queenslander. Never underestimate the passion that North Queenslanders have for that area of the state. We have battled diversity, from cyclones and floods and droughts through to a massive downturn in the resources sector, but we do not look for handouts and we certainly do not take no for an answer. We have fought above our weight for years and this latest comment from the Premier reiterates what we have had to live with for decades. It makes perfect sense to base the office of the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility in North Queensland. As the editor of the *Townsville Bulletin* so eloquently put it in today's paper—

Let's build the new Cowboys stadium on the Gold Coast. Better still, let's pipe our water directly from the upper reaches of the Brisbane River. After all, they're also in North Queensland, aren't they?

For the benefit of those on the other side of the House who are unfamiliar with the area of land that we are talking about, I have taken the liberty of producing this map, which shows the area of Queensland that we are talking about. The map shows the land to the north of the Tropic of Capricorn and shows that 54 per cent of Queensland is north of the Tropic of Capricorn. It is an area that contributes a massive revenue windfall to the coffers of this state. In short, without the produce, energy, tourism and minerals that this area produces Queensland would go belly up.

As North Queenslanders this is our opportunity to capitalise on the funding that will construct the infrastructure we so desperately need. We have talent to burn in North Queensland. We have the resources, we have the staff and we know more than adequately how to run the office of the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility. After all, who better to operate an office centred on the Northern Australia infrastructure fund than those who live and work in North Australia? Townsville has been devastated in recent weeks with job losses, and if ever there was a time for those opposite to stand up and fight to have this office based in North Queensland it is now.

This fixation with basing the decision-making process in the south-east corner of the state must stop. We need the jobs, and as North Queenslanders we deserve to have this office in the north of the state. It would be a mockery and a slap in the face for all North Queenslanders for the office of the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility not to be based in North Queensland. For the Premier to indicate her preference for this office to be based in Brisbane is hypocritical and flies the face of her commitment to lead a government for all of Queensland.

I have stood in this place on a number of occasions and spoken at length about the projects that could be delivered in my electorate, projects that would generate hundreds of jobs and economic development in North Queensland. I have communities that are on their knees, desperate for the projects that this funding will deliver. We are talking about large-scale water infrastructure projects like the Urannah Dam, the raising of the Burdekin Falls Dam and the Hells Gate Dam that have the potential to change the face of Queensland and contribute hundreds of millions of dollars to our economy. We do not want to be close to the action; we want to be the centre of the action. We want to drive this to ensure Northern Australia is developed to its full potential, and that means the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility needs to be in its rightful place in North Queensland, not Brisbane. If the Premier wants to truly represent all Queenslanders she will take up this fight on our behalf and ensure that the facility is based in the north, where it belongs.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Burdekin, I think in your contribution you used words to the effect of 'a kick in the guts'. Those words are unparliamentary. Will you kindly withdraw.

**Mr LAST:** I withdraw, Mr Speaker.