



Speech By  
**Deb Frecklington**


**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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Record of Proceedings, 24 May 2016

**MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Liberal National Party**

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.38 am): It was wonderful to get out to Longreach with the local member, Lachlan Millar, and the opposition leader. It was a great overnight stay in Longreach. To say that the drought is making it tough out there would be an understatement.

Some places in the Longreach area are going into their fifth consecutive year of drought conditions. Extended dry periods have made it very tough. Most of these places are completely destocked and we really need to thank the people of Longreach for their resilience. They put on a great State Sheep Show despite the years of drought they have experienced and they really welcomed us to have a chat about the situation that they are facing. Whilst the leaders talked about droughts and dogs, it was disappointing that the Minister for Agriculture was not able to attend the State Sheep Show. Furthermore, there is a large problem in the outback, and that is unemployment and the lack of a plan for any development in these areas that could bring jobs to those communities like Longreach. As the Leader of the Opposition just said, the problem is that we have a government that is asleep at the wheel and it does not understand that many people are moving away from these towns to find other employment. This government has been at the wheel during this dramatic loss of business confidence, meaning people do not have the confidence to set up in areas like Longreach because there is just simply nothing out there for them.

We also travelled to Townsville—an area that has lost some 7,000 jobs in the past 12 months. Annual employment growth is negative 6.3 per cent and the participation rate has gone down a massive 5.2 per cent. When we were in Townsville it was incredible to hear the minister for North Queensland and also the local member, Scott Stewart, explain why they would be so against a project that is so obviously of great benefit to Townsville—and, of course, I refer to the eastern access corridor, a long awaited and much debated in this House since 2002 piece of state building infrastructure. The *Townsville Bulletin*—we picked it up the next day when we were there—stated in the editorial—

Regrettably, local Labor State MPs have put politics above the interests of Townsville by condemning ... \$150 million plan to supercharge the city's rail-port connection. In a dreary, scripted and wholly illogical attack on the Prime Minister and his plan, North Queensland Minister Coralee O'Rourke and Townsville MP Scott Stewart claimed the Townsville Eastern Access Rail Corridor funding would undermine job growth.

When we were on the ground talking and listening to those lovely locals in and around Townsville, we also went to the North Queensland Field Days with Dale Last, the new shadow minister for agriculture.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Farmer): Order! I remind the member—it has been happening a little bit—that you must refer to members by their title please rather than their name.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** The shadow minister for agriculture, Dale Last; thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It was very good to hear those people on the ground saying that a project such as the eastern access corridor would be of great benefit and that, of course, it would mean jobs.

**An opposition member:** Great boost for the north.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It would be a great boost for the north; I take that interjection. This project would mean that there could be longer trains. If this project were to go ahead, they could increase the length of freight trains by up to 1,400 metres. It also cuts out a number of level crossings. I do not know the exact number, but there are many. All of that means increased development in the town of Townsville. It is just ridiculous that those local members have unfortunately knocked such a wonderful project that is, to the middle of last week, the largest funding announcement by Malcolm Turnbull in his election campaign so far. This would be a wonderful boost to the people of Townsville. It would be a great piece of infrastructure. It would also be fantastic for the people as far out as Mount Isa because they would be able to get their product to port a lot quicker by utilising longer trains. Longer trains mean fewer people on the roads and fewer trucks on the roads. I think this is a fantastic piece of infrastructure for Queensland and one that this Palaszczuk government should be supporting and certainly not knocking.