




Speech By
Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 15 September 2016

MOTION: NORTH QUEENSLAND, SECESSION

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (6.21 pm): This evening I rise to speak against the member for Mount Isa's motion to divide Queensland into two separate states. When the member for Mount Isa has publicly spoken about this issue in the past, he cites reasons such as resource allocation, even going so far as to say that there will be a reckoning. I want to highlight that the constituents of my electorate of Gladstone have not been missing out on resource allocations since the Palaszczuk government came into office, and I do not support the presumption that all of the money is being spent in the south-east corner of Queensland. The people of the entire Central Queensland region have benefited from major infrastructure projects, with many in my electorate, including \$40 million for timber bridge upgrades, \$42 million for a new accident and emergency ward, a \$74 million upgrade to the terminal at the port of Gladstone, \$60 million for a new high school—and thanks to Minister Kate Jones for that—and \$22.7 million to expand and improve social housing, just to name a few.

Mr Katter interjected.

Mr BUTCHER: I will take that interjection: I do not want to be included, because I want to stay as Queensland. In fact, in the last state budget more than \$823 million was allocated to infrastructure projects in the Fitzroy region. This government has consistently shown that we are delivering for regions when it comes to things that matter the most. Our Enhancing Regional Hospitals package and the Back to Work program are supporting 8,000 jobs and actually exclude the south-east corner. This discussion about two separate states has been raised many times in this House before, but every Queenslanders knows that we are stronger together. What our government has shown is that it is possible to prioritise regional projects, jobs and infrastructure without separating the state of Queensland.

In terms of our capacity to influence things with our federal counterparts and our capacity to continue to unashamedly defeat New South Wales at every opportunity in every sporting code, especially the one that matters most—and we have heard about it tonight—Rugby League, we are stronger as a united Queensland team. The reasons for this issue being raised again today are because the member for Mount Isa and the member for Dalrymple believe that their communities do not get a fair go, but there is one major problem with this plan of theirs—that is, the member for Cairns joining their party with the Katters. We all know that he thinks Cairns will be the capital of the new state in Queensland that they are suggesting. In fact, he may even have a tilt at being the Premier of 'Van Pyne Land'. Well, do I have news for you: the city of Townsville has always believed that it is the Big Brother of the north. The end result will be that these two cities will be at war with each other when it comes to funding.

I hate to break it to you, member for Mount Isa, but in the words of Bachman-Turner Overdrive, 'You ain't seen nothing yet.' They will be so caught up with who is getting what that Mount Isa, Dalrymple and all other Western Queensland centres will be standing on the outside looking in. You can forget your hospital upgrades. You can forget your school upgrades. You can even forget your inland road

funding, because guess what? It will all be about Cairns and Townsville. The member for Mount Isa will be left crying in his schooner of 'Van Pyne Land Bitter'—'what about me, it isn't fair, I've had enough, I want my share!' I am sure that the four new members of parliament being introduced next term as a result of the crossbenches will have much more of an opportunity in their electorates to advance the region.

I refer to comments today that the member for Rockhampton, the Hon. Bill Byrne, made to the ABC. He said—

The north could not survive economically on its own.

...

It's a \$50 billion state budget. Let's just say all mining royalties for example went to the new northern state. That'd be \$2-3 billion

...

Significant, but it's still a modest component of how the state budget is put together.

In straight budgetary terms I would say that if you tried to split the state in half you're going to see a northern state that fundamentally does not have the financial wherewithal to sustain the level of service that's currently there.

So I think the real issue here is not one of passion or loyalty or parochialism ... the reality is that the state needs to stay together in order to ensure our collective economic wellbeing.

I think all Queenslanders know 'they can never tear us apart'.