



Speech By  
**Scott Stewart**


**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 March 2016

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Queensland Nickel**

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (10.01 pm): The name Clive Palmer is a name taken in vain in Townsville at the moment. Locals sometimes use a colourful expletive before mumbling the name through gritted teeth. Every member of this House will be very aware of the Queensland Nickel situation, as we heard from the Treasurer this morning when he outlined the time line of this unfortunate event.

On 15 February, 237 workers were sacked, plunging those workers and their families into a world of hurt. Townsville received a body blow that it was not ready for, but within six days the Palaszczuk government had announced its accelerated works program worth \$187 million, creating 430 jobs. Following a jobs workshop with affected workers, the Defence Force and Queensland Police Service commented that their jobs applications had never seen such a good response with several applicants progressing on to the next step, which is a positive. Blindsiding the government and the administrators, Clive Palmer announced that Queensland Nickel Sales would take ownership of the Yabulu refinery effective Monday, 7 March. By Friday of the same week the remaining 550 workers were sacked, effectively crippling approximately 1,200 direct and indirect jobs in Townsville. Once again rapid response teams from state and federal agencies swung into operation on the day the workers were sacked and again offered them a raft of services. Mr Palmer is now saying that the plants could be closed for as long as four months.

It seems that this man has been obsessed with the drama series *Game of Thrones* and is playing with the very lives of the people of Townsville like a modern-day Joffrey Baratheon. Not only will this decision have a huge impact on the many small and medium sized businesses in the city; the impact on the environment this closure could have is immeasurable at this stage. I therefore congratulate the Hon. Steven Miles, Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection, for the introduction of the Environmental Protection (Chain of Responsibility) Amendment Bill, which will actively enhance environmental protection for sites and avoid the state bearing the cost for managing and rehabilitating sites in financial difficulties.

Finally, the *Townsville Bulletin* has invited Mr Clive Palmer to fly to Townsville at the newspaper's expense to address the sacked workers. I support this call from the newspaper and demand that Mr Palmer come to Townsville, face his sacked workers and their families, and explain what and why he has done what he was done with their lives.