




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Townsville Electorate, Federal Election

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (11.43 am): You would have to be living under a rock to not know that there is a federal election looming on the horizon. Last week it was our turn in Townsville, as we have already heard, when the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, came to spruik his promise of jobs and growth. This much anticipated visit brought with it the typical media scrum and the hope of funding promises that would help lift Townsville's economy, which is ailing under a massive downturn in mineral and commodity prices coupled with Queensland Nickel going under, resulting in a further 700 direct jobs being lost in the city and a further 1,500 indirect jobs also being lost through its closure. It was hoped that the Prime Minister would match Bill Shorten's stadium commitment of \$100 million.

On Tuesday of last week, Malcolm Turnbull announced that if re-elected the federal government would contribute \$150 million to the development of the eastern rail corridor through the Townsville state development area and adjacent to the very successful Port Access Road. City leaders welcomed the announcement of the part funding of this vital project. The Palaszczuk government had been seeking a commitment from the Turnbull government to a business plan for this project. It would create opportunities for longer trains to access the port of Townsville, bringing greater productivity to the city. It would also open the TSDA as a vital warehouse precinct that would enable the city to become the North Australia distribution centre. The Palaszczuk government also recognises the importance of this project as it is listed as a priority project in the area. Townsville Enterprise also sees that this project has great significance to the region and would help build and grow a stronger region.

This project would create around 300 jobs during the construction phase. Initial estimates show that the cost of building the eastern rail corridor would be in excess of \$500 million, with the member for Herbert calling on the state government to fund the remainder of the project. How ironic is that? The member for Herbert is calling on the state government to fund the remainder of the project without a plan. This is the same man who openly chastised the state government about seeing a business plan for the Townsville stadium before making any approach to the Prime Minister or the Treasurer to seek co-funding for the stadium. The member for Herbert has openly said that the federal government does not fund stadiums. There are several stadiums and sportsgrounds that have received federal funding under both Labor and coalition governments in recent years. These include \$55 million towards two upgrades of Adelaide Oval, \$50 million to the Sydney Cricket Ground, \$36 million to Carrara Stadium on the Gold Coast, a \$20 million upgrade to the Parramatta Stadium announced under the Abbott government and \$10 million towards Brookvale Oval in Tony Abbott's North Sydney electorate.

Unlike the eastern rail corridor, which will take several years to be fully funded before construction begins, the stadium project will create over 1,000 direct and indirect jobs during the 18-month build phase. A study conducted by Townsville Enterprise shows that \$85 million in wages would be paid to employees during the construction build and \$440 million in economic outputs into the city alone. This

is a shovel-ready project that can start now and bring jobs to Townsville. By locating the Townsville stadium in the CBD, it will revitalise the small businesses, the restaurants and the cafes throughout the CBD area in much the same way that the MCG does as well as Adelaide stadium and, of course, Suncorp Stadium. While the people of Townsville appreciate and thank the federal government for its proposed funding, the \$150 million could have been committed to the stadium and completed in full to deliver on its mantra of jobs and growth. What we now have is two part funded projects that are not creating any jobs or building growth in a city that is desperate for work and opportunities. It is about time that the Prime Minister sees the potential for the Townsville stadium and what it will bring to the city and I will continue to push the Turnbull government to reconsider co-funding the stadium to grow jobs in my city.