




Speech By  
**Scott Stewart**

**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

---

Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2016

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; DUTIES AND  
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (9.05 pm): I live in and represent a very diverse electorate with a very diverse community. With a current population of around 200,000 people and an expected population of around 330,000 people by 2035, Townsville is the largest city in northern Australia.

I rise to speak in support of the Appropriation Bill before the House which for the people of Townsville signals investment into the region that is vital to reactivating the local economy. The region has suffered from the perfect storm of economic disaster, the downturn in the mineral resource sector, the devastating impact of the drought and the closure of Queensland Nickel, which has all led to unemployment figures above the state average. Who can forget the sackings of all the teachers, nurses and doctors? Sack, sack, sack. They were all got rid of under the former LNP government. That had led to the perfect storm for Townsville.

This budget provides opportunities for the people of Townsville to get back to work. A further commitment of \$40 million towards the Townsville stadium, on top of the existing \$100 million, will create hundreds of jobs for local workers. However, the big carrot for local business is the ability to access the \$100 million Back to Work jobs package for regional Queenslanders including payments of up to \$15,000 to employers. Further to this is the restoration of front-line services. The city will see extra nurses, doctors, health professionals, teachers, teacher aides, police, paramedics and fire-fighting staff who live and work in Townsville. This will get Townsville back on its feet.

The cornerstones of Labor's values—health and education—continue to be supported through this budget, with an additional \$700,000 on top of the existing school maintenance funding for infrastructure enhancement programs in several Townsville schools. Palm Island will receive an additional \$8.5 million for a new primary healthcare facility as well as \$4.4 million towards water storage solutions on the island. Further to that, there is \$7.1 million to commence construction of new social housing units funded from the State Infrastructure Fund, and \$21 million to complete stage 2 of the upgrade of the Garbutt Depot and Logistics Centre in Townsville.

The Treasurer handed down the budget earlier this week with a 5.9 per cent increase, in comparison to the previous year's budget, to the Education and Training budget. The most significant budget item in this area is the allocation of \$102 million over four years to school administrative and support staff. While I recognise that this is merely a drop in the bucket in comparison to the overall big picture, it does recognise the significant amount of work these people do in our schools every single day—the BSMs who keep our schools going. It makes me proud, as a former teacher and high school principal, to have worked with and beside several of these people. I see them being recognised in this

budget for the work they do quietly, behind the scenes of the school, every single day. I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*. I have previously had it checked by the Deputy Speaker.

Leave granted.

Industry and businesses will have the incentive to establish themselves in Townsville through the Advance Queensland Industry Attraction Fund and via the road, rail, sea and air transport network infrastructure, have quicker and more direct access to the Asia Pacific area. This will dovetail nicely with access to up to \$33.5 million in the Advance Queensland Connecting with Asia Strategy.

The \$25.3 million for the International Education and Training Strategy over five years will help Central Queensland and James Cook Universities to enhance and grow greater international education and training opportunities that will lead to heightened trade and investment opportunities in the long term.

Small businesses will also be able to capitalise on the Building Digital Capabilities Grants of up to \$10,000 matched funding to help small businesses enter the digital economy or build their digital capabilities. For Townsville small businesses this is timely as it comes directly after the Townsville Bulletin conducted a series of economic stimulus forums including the power of the digital futures for the city.

In addition to this, the sugar industry particularly will have access to \$19.7 million to further develop alternative fuel sources through the Queensland Biofuels 10 year Roadmap and Action Plan to develop and attract the US South Pacific Fleet to take on 'green' fuel solutions in Townsville.

Mr Speaker, over the last 12 months, Townsville has seen a 30% increase in the Tourism sector which delivers millions of additional dollars into the local economy. Townsville too has access to \$49.9 million to promote and deliver the city as a tourism destination.

Building our Regions funding to the value of \$175 million will be another funding source can assist Townsville City Council to fund projects for critical infrastructure. The city council has several projects that they will submit applications in an endeavour to secure this vital funding.

We know that the building and construction industry is struggling at the moment. What the Queensland first home owners' grant increase to \$20,000 will do is incentivise first time home owners looking at entering the market to build a new home and thereby creating jobs for local builders.

Mr Speaker, I applaud the Palaszczuk Government's \$6 million state wide commitment to tackling the ICE epidemic including a Drug and Alcohol Brief Intervention Team in Townsville. This will complement the existing \$1 million commitment made by the Government to the Salvation Army's Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Facility in Townsville.

But Mr Speaker, I live in God's country and walk among the people who you would describe as being the salt of the Earth. I live in Townsville and we are people of North Queensland. We get knocked to the ground and we get back up, dust ourselves off and get started again. We look for opportunity from the assets that we have. And Mr Speaker, Townsville has an abundance of assets that it will capitalise on to get itself moving again.

This is a budget that is underpinned by growing innovation, attracting investment and building infrastructure. Perhaps the biggest investment in infrastructure that Townsville will see in a generation, is the stadium. This is a game changer for the city. The additional \$40 million announced in this budget along with the existing \$100 million signals that the Palaszczuk Government is serious about investing in regional Queensland and in particular my city. This \$140 million investment along with \$10 million for the NRL and NQ Cowboys has also attracted the commitment of \$100 million by both Federal Labor and now the Federal Government. This will fully fund the stadium. But this project is more than just a stadium.

By building this infrastructure in the Townsville Waterfront Priority Development Area, it will generate 100's of jobs. Local jobs. Local Townsville jobs. It will generate approximately \$85 million in wages for local people. It will inject \$440 million into the local Townsville economy all this during the construction phase.

Mr Speaker, what we are seeing and hearing since this announcement is the use of the word confidence back into the vocabulary of business owners and locals. There is an air of confidence that is growing in the city already. In fact Mr Speaker, there is another 'C' word to describe the stadium and that is catalyst.

The stadium is a catalyst project that will get construction happening in the Waterfront Priority Development Area and will encourage the private sector to build and invest in that same area. The exact intention that the PDA had for Townsville's city waterfront area.

In today's Townsville Bulletin the article by Charlie Peel starts with 'Cashed up investors buoyed by the news of construction of the inner city stadium will go ahead have flooded Townsville City Council's Development Department with calls expressing interest in being involved in the CBD's transformation'.

The Townsville Bulletin newspaper has run the good news story on the front page almost every day since the Treasurer announced the additional funding on Friday last week. Tuesday's paper ran the feature article by journalist Victoria Nugent who said 'Townsville is already fielding interest from property developers, accommodation providers and construction companies in the wake of confirmation of the long awaited CBD stadium will be built'. The article goes on to say that 'Hotel chains setting up in the Townsville CBD, a reinvigorated night-life and more people choosing to live in the city are tipped as flow-on effects.' Mr Speaker, investors have the money. They were just searching for another 'C' word themselves. Certainty. And now we have certainty.

Mr Speaker, I live and represent a very diverse region with a very diverse community. In the Eastern part of the electorate is the Port of Townsville. The Port, established in 1864, is one of Queensland's most strategic assets and plays a significant role in driving the economic growth of our region, state and nation. It is ideally located in close proximity to world-renowned minerals provinces that contain copper, zinc, lead, phosphate, magnetite and coal, as well as vast agriculturally-rich areas.

The Port's strength lies in its diversity, geographic locations and excellent transport connectivity, and the business capitalises on these to create premier transport supply chains providing fast, reliable and competitive services. The Port has a solid history of servicing the world's appetite for products, commodities and services; notably food and agriculture, resources and energy, and tourism (cruise ships).

The Townsville Port continues to grow and develop as the port hub of northern Australia and is reflected by funding from the budget for the Berth 4 upgrades worth \$26 million and the pile encapsulation project worth \$1.2 million as well as \$1.7 million to replace the pilot vessel Petrel II.

With the release of the federal government's white paper on Northern Australia, the time is right to grow the north to ensure that it is able to accommodate the exponential growth. In the State of the tropics report, highlights that the tropics emerges as a critical global region with a unique set of development challenges and opportunities.

The tropics covers only 40 per cent of the world's surface area but hosts approximately 80 per cent of its terrestrial biodiversity and more than 95 per cent of its mangrove and coral reef based biodiversity. The tropical world's economy is growing 20 per cent faster than the rest of the world and many tropical nations are important contributors to world trade, politics and innovation. The tropics is home to 40 per cent of the world's population and 55 per cent of the world's children under the age of five. By 2050, some 50 per cent of the world's population and close to 60 per cent of the world's children are expected to reside in the tropics.

Advances in technology are providing a platform for expanding business opportunities, enhancing prospects to reduce poverty and improving education and health outcomes. Incomes are higher, infrastructure is more accessible and life expectancy is the highest it has ever been. The federal government released its much anticipated white paper on developing Northern Australia. The opening paragraph states—

The north has untapped promise, abundant resources and talented people. It is also Australia's closest connection with our key trading markets and the global scale changes occurring in Asia.

Northern Australia, as I said, encompasses 40 per cent of Australia's land mass and has approximately one million people living in that same area. The white paper cites how the federal government sees the way forward in developing trade and business opportunities for Northern Australia. Page 60 of that paper states—

... the Government can help protect people and industries from increased biosecurity and health threats as more people and goods navigate international borders. This means bringing together research bodies, institutions and individuals in the north and across Australia, and partnering with regional countries to develop new technologies and greater capacity to protect northern investment. This will also generate new commercial and employment opportunities in tropical agriculture and health sectors, positioning the north as a global leader.

Mr Speaker, what this Budget does, is commit to Townsville. Commit to re-engaging the local economy with infrastructure spend like the stadium and like the hospital upgrade. For Palm Island people, this Budget strengthens the essential services like secure water storage, like water treatment facilities and like a new Health Services Centre.

For workers, this is a great budget that provides incentives to employ new workers. It provides incentives to expand and grow small and medium businesses. This Budget prepares the city to position itself as the hub of North Australia to meet the challenges of a globally growing middle class that is well connected. This is a great budget for the city of Townsville. I commend the Bill to the House.