




Speech By
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ADJOURNMENT

Toowoomba, Rail

 **Mr JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (10.39 pm): Toowoomba recently celebrated the Toowoomba Festival of Rail. This festival was held to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Toowoomba to Ipswich rail link. There were tours of the railway precinct, including the air-raid shelters. Two working steam trains arrived at the station, and the public enjoyed a range of railway themed tours and presentations. The festival was skilfully and thoughtfully organised by a number of volunteers, but I would like to pay special tribute to Paul Herbert. Paul had the audience in the palm of his hand during the gala dinner where he shared his encyclopedic knowledge of the railway and what it helped Toowoomba and the Darling Downs achieve throughout the last 150 years. Community groups involved included: the National Trust Toowoomba branch—and I know Paul's wife, Stephanie, is currently preparing for Toowoomba Open House on 29 May; DownsSteam; the Australian Railway Historical Society; the Toowoomba Historical Society; and the Toowoomba Model Railway Club.

The early Queensland colony was dirt poor, and the new government was keen to enhance development and immigration. Not unlike today, improved transport to the fertile Darling Downs was the top priority, and the line from Roma Street to Toowoomba was the first narrow gauge main line constructed in the world. Narrow gauge was controversial, but the decision to proceed with it was largely based on the government's determination to construct the railway quickly and cheaply. It took wool from stations across the Darling Downs. It drove Queensland's economic growth in the early days of the colony, and I believe rail will drive Queensland's economic growth into the 22nd century.

Not long after the Ipswich-Toowoomba railway was opened 150 years ago, there was the first mention of the Melbourne to Brisbane inland rail. It has taken a long time but we are now closer than ever. On federal budget night, the Turnbull government committed an additional \$8.4 billion investment in ARTC to deliver the inland rail project. Regional Australia now needs ARTC to step up and deliver.

This project is nation building at its finest and, let us face it, could only have been delivered by a conservative government with a strong rural voice at its heart. It will create jobs, it will save time and it will open up our nation's interior to development, like the US and Canada before us. In Toowoomba, it will grant us the connectivity that has only ever been dreamt about. InterLinkSQ and the Brisbane West Wellcamp airport—and many others—stand ready to invest and contribute to this connectivity. Indeed, InterLinkSQ CEO, Michelle Reynolds, recently turned the first sod for their inland port on the western fringe of Toowoomba. The 'Steel Mississippi' is coming, and there is nothing that will stop it now. I pay tribute to all those involved in this extraordinary and much needed piece of national and international infrastructure being built right on the western fringe of Toowoomba.