



Speech By  
**Jennifer Howard**


**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

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**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Western Corridor NRL Bid**

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (2.33 pm): I rise to speak on the western corridor NRL bid. Members of this parliament are probably aware that my electorate of Ipswich is Rugby League mad. Whether it is the Brisbane Broncos running out onto Suncorp Stadium, the Ipswich Jets playing dynamic, exciting, running footy, or just a slew of local teams enjoying a quality Saturday morning, Ipswich loudly and proudly shows its force. We are a town that has produced some of Queensland's and Australia's greatest players, players like Alfie Langer and the Walters brothers to name a few. I can tell members with some confidence that when the Ipswich Jets won the inaugural Intrust Super Cup in 2015 there was a passion and a community spirit I have not seen equalled in my years in Ipswich, not since the Broncos won in 2006 at least. In fact, so impressive were the team's achievements that year that the *Queensland Times* dubbed 2015 the year of the jet.

To put it simply, Ipswich is Rugby League heartland. Our teams do so much for the community. For example, the Jets have done work with local disability support provider Alara, helping people with disability to get involved in rugby. I have seen firsthand just how successful this collaboration has been. All our Rugby League teams work in the community assisting local schools, charities and community service organisations, including Ipswich Hospice, the Queensland Cancer Council, the Leukaemia Foundation, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and Ipswich Special School. With the quality representation that my community puts forward, it continues to baffle me that Ipswich is unrepresented on the NRL stage.

As mentioned before, the wealth of young talent emerging from Ipswich and the western corridor, which includes Toowoomba, Roma and south Logan territory, is staggering. Yet at present the pathways presented to them are limited. Many of the best young players in Australia have no choice but to uproot themselves, many as young as 18, and move to cities like Melbourne and Sydney or other cities with teams to provide themselves the opportunity to advance in the game. There has to be a better way. As mentioned by the current bid boss for the western corridor, Steven Johnson, many of the current game's greats and emerging talents have been brought up and trained in Ipswich and the western corridor area, providing ample ground and massive support for a team basing itself here. I cannot emphasise enough the opportunity a team based here would present, not only to Ipswich and the surrounding areas but also to the entire state of Queensland.

Like anything, when we as a government see talent we should utilise it. Ipswich and the western corridor is not just brimming with talent it is bursting at the seams and overwhelming the country and the state with it. I believe that the time is now to see a strong team rise up in the western corridor, one that will be a beacon for generations of young footballers to come and one that my community and many others can be proud of.