



Speech By  
**Scott Stewart**


**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

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**MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Townsville, Business Advisory Council**

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (11.53 am): On Wednesday last week it was our pleasure to host the Premier and the Business Advisory Council in Townsville on their first ever regional meeting. Council members are from a diverse range of large, small and medium sized businesses. As the Premier has said, whether it is the resource sector, skills and training, property development or construction, or one of our emerging sectors like IT, these business leaders will bring to the table a variety of perspectives and ideas that can inform government policy. That is exactly what happened.

The Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland, the member for Thuringowa, and I had the ability to highlight the region's capabilities and potential to a very captive audience. We were able to focus on five major areas of the region's economy including our tourism, edutourism and ecotourism, our world renowned tropical science, the role of James Cook University and that developing area. We talked about the key importance the defence sector has in our city as well as the importance of the agricultural industry and in particular the sugar industry and the cattle industry. Finally, we talked about the impact that one of the most richly mineralised regions in Australia has on our economy.

The Business Advisory Council heard about the port of Townsville being the largest commercial port in Northern Australia, exporting over 30 different commodities with a growing containerisation handling facility by the expansion of berth 4 through the \$100 million investment by the Palaszczuk government. The port contributes \$635 million to Townsville's GRP and is quickly becoming the pivotal factor in the intermodal freight and storage system in North Queensland. This was one of the assets that the Leader of the Opposition was going to sell when they were in government. This jewel in the crown of North Queensland's assets was going to be sold to the highest bidder so that the money could be spent in Brisbane on who knows what.

The council also heard of the future potential of the defence industry in the region. Lavarack Barracks is the largest military base in the country and Townsville is considered Australia's largest military city. It is supported by air and port facilities critical for its defence operations. Additionally, Townsville has direct access to the high-range training facility located 40 minutes drive from Lavarack Barracks. With the Australia-Singapore comprehensive strategic partnership worth \$2 billion, this project will create hundreds of support and logistics jobs right across the north.

What the people of Townsville know is that we are on the cusp of recovery, and that was made abundantly clear to the Business Advisory Council. I can tell honourable members that the council were fully supportive of the Palaszczuk government's approach to reactivating North Queensland. They understood when we said that Townsville was the hub of North Australia. They could clearly see our strengths as a city. They saw firsthand the port which handles \$11 billion of trade annually. They understood that the Townsville region has significant mineral deposits and is home to two major mineral processors. They experienced Australia's largest tropical city and saw that it is the main government, health and education centre in the north.

The Business Advisory Council listened to the vision articulated to them about Townsville's rich renewable energy resources including bagasse, wind and solar power. They understood that the Townsville region has large areas of fertile land and globally significant raw sugarcane production. For one night they were among tourists who spend over \$1 billion annually in the region.

The council was very interested in the new Townsville stadium and the potential that that will generate within the city. It was great to see that Watpac were awarded the managing contractor position, and they have given us assurances that they will have a very strong local content focus.

Finally, the Business Advisory Council were in no doubt when they left Townsville that the Palaszczuk government is investing in Townsville, because we see the potential the city has as an economic powerhouse of North Australia. We might have been knocked down to the canvas by Queensland Nickel and the Newman government, but under the Palaszczuk government we are picking ourselves up and are ready to take on the fight.