




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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MOTION

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Infrastructure

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (5.36 pm): I rise to support the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the motion. It is quite obvious, if one comes to Toowoomba, that there is really only one thing you could conclude and that is that the ministers sitting opposite are more than happy to hand over someone else's homework. There is not an original thought amongst them. They stand here and criticise the innovative approach to releasing up Queen's Wharf and criticise 1 William Street. Where would everybody be if it had not been built? This catalytic piece of infrastructure had to be built so the whole of Queen's Wharf can go ahead.

Anybody can see that the Toowoomba second range crossing was a project languishing in the never-never under Labor. I note that the minister will be following me. I hope that the minister announces that I am allowed back on site to shoot some video so the people of Toowoomba can actually see the great work that is going on with their hard-earned taxpayer dollars. This was a project that was languishing and not going anywhere. It will release the productivity of the entire Darling Downs. We all know that the agricultural base of Queensland has bailed Queensland out many, many times. Without decent infrastructure to get to the port all of that languishes. To move a container from the Darling Downs down to the port is nearly half the cost of moving it all the rest of the way around the other side of the world and having it delivered to someone's doorstep because we have some of the most inefficient infrastructure available.

We need the inland rail because it will add productivity, jobs and make sure that businesses can compete on the international market going forward. That is exactly what the second range crossing will do. I am concerned about the second range crossing. I am hearing that if you want a job on the second range crossing you need to apply in Brisbane. That is not local employment. I am also hearing that they are pushing really hard and it is potentially causing some safety issues. I am very concerned about that. More than that, in the first year of the budget that this government put forward they underspent by \$100 million on the second range crossing. It is unbelievable that they could announce they are going to do it and then almost spend nothing.

The existing rail tunnels that run down from Toowoomba need to be lowered. That project is underway and I thank the minister for making sure that the project is underway. However, I do not think anybody will thank him for removing the sidings that were a part of that project. The trains cannot pass each other without sidings, so not having them will slow down the whole network. That funding was ripped out of the budget. It was in their first budget, but not in their second budget. All of a sudden they decided to put a couple of million dollars into their pocket, so \$20 million was taken from the project.

What else did we do for Toowoomba? We spent \$74 million on a CDB substation upgrade, which released land so that the QIC's Grand Central project could go ahead. That investment was worth half a million dollars. I ask any of the ministers to come to Toowoomba to look at our thriving CBD and at

what is happening in the city. If you stand at the cafe at the half-a-billion-dollar Grand Central centre, you will look straight out at the rail yards. We had those rail yards turned over from Queensland Rail to the local council so that we could redevelop 10 hectares of land in the middle of the city.

A sum of \$50 million was required for a bridge to complete the Outer Circulating Road. I thank the former deputy premier for the Royalties for the Regions program, of which we were a beneficiary for that project and also for the flood works that were done at the same time. We allocated millions of dollars to flood works, which included upgrading a rail bridge to stop the water from collecting in the CBD. That was seen in action just recently when we had a big downpour. That was a \$5 million project. We spent another \$2 million on waterworks.

With the high school at Highfields, what did we see from these guys? They talked about a high school. In 2008 Lawrence Springborg announced that we were going to buy the land. By 2011 they finally bought a block of land, but what happened? All we saw were weeds growing everywhere.

They have always been a do-nothing government and everybody in Toowoomba knows it. We know that they have not been able to deliver critical pieces of infrastructure. This week there are billions of dollars on the table for inland rail, which will make Queensland and our nation wealthier by allowing our farmers and businesses to be more productive. We are an export state and an export nation. What do we hear from them? Crickets! Nothing! No corridor has been secured. There is no opportunity to be able to get the job done.

The minister is about to jump to his feet. I ask him: please let me back on the Toowoomba second range crossing site, because I would love to shoot a video and show everyone what the LNP government has been able to achieve.