




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 22 March 2018

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (5.54 pm): Before I start my contribution on the address-in-reply, I want to explain my reasons for making it from the Premier's seat. The microphones at my regular seat are not working and, as a consequence, I have been invited to speak from here. I just want to reassure both the Premier and everyone in the House that this is the first and only time that I will be speaking from this spot!

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Order!

Mr STEWART: With that many bites, I do not need to go fishing this weekend! Madam Deputy Speaker McMillan, I ask you to pass on my well wishes and regards to Mr Speaker for his election to his role. I am more than happy to serve with him in my role as Deputy Speaker with the honour and integrity that he has already brought to this House. I look forward to working with him over the full term with that same honour and integrity.

We had the good fortune to hear the Governor of Queensland, His Excellency Paul de Jersey, deliver his address and during that address he spoke of some really key priorities. They are job creation and they are restoring health and education services to all Queenslanders. This is about working in consultation and constructive partnerships with our local government, and in particular for me in Townsville that means working with the community of Townsville and Palm Island with their respective local governments. It is about cyberbullying. Today we have already heard about what is happening with regard to cyberbullying and the role that that plays. As a former teacher and principal yourself, Madam Deputy Speaker McMillan, you know the importance of addressing the issue of cyberbullying at this time. The last thing that each and every member on the Labor side of government is talking about is our fair share of GST for infrastructure, health and education.

When it comes to jobs in Townsville, I want to give members a bit of an insight into what has happened over the last three years whilst focusing more so on the last 12 months. There is no doubt that there have been some big impacts in Townsville with the downturn in the minerals commodity market. A number of mines in the north-west minerals province have started to close their doors and in fact reduce the number of fly-in fly-out workers, and that has had a huge impact on the city of Townsville. Queensland Nickel closed its doors and as a result that affected 800 workers directly and around 2,500 workers indirectly. Coupled with that is the impact that the drought has had on our Western Queensland farmers and graziers.

When we combine all of those factors, it was a tsunami of disaster coupled with the cuts from the former Newman LNP government. All of those factors had a dramatic impact on Townsville and as a result up to 10,000 people left our great city. That flow-on effect affects our economy. That flow-on effect affects local jobs. That flow-on effect affects things like our health and our schools, and as a result there was a huge impact on those services felt by our community. Twelve months ago Townsville's

unemployment level was 11.4 per cent. Through the work of the Palaszczuk government—through the investment of government funds into infrastructure projects, into the Back to Work program, into a whole range of job-creating activities and projects—that unemployment level has now dropped to 8.3 per cent some 12 months later.

In that time, I have also seen 8,500 jobs return to Townsville. We are seeing an upturn in the Townsville economy. That did not happen through sheer luck; that happened through investment by the Palaszczuk government and this Premier in particular, who sits in this chair, backing the three local members for the area and saying, 'We support you 100 per cent.' During the campaign and over the past three years, time and time again the Premier has turned up in Townsville in support of the three local members. A plethora of ministers have turned up in Townsville to show their support and to continue to make great announcements. We are now starting to see the fruits of that through growth in our economy and in local jobs. If there is any question about the support that the three local members have received, I would put that to the test. The three local members would be able to defend that each and every day.