



Speech By  
**Scott Stewart**


**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

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Record of Proceedings, 1 May 2018

**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

Resumed from 22 March (see p. 736).

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (2.56 pm), continuing: It is great to be on my feet again on the address-in-reply talking about my favourite thing in the world, and that is my electorate of Townsville. When I last spoke I talked about jobs and what jobs mean to Townsville. Everyone in this House is no doubt aware of how tough we have been doing it in Townsville. Earlier this year I had the opportunity to talk about jobs at the UDIA breakfast. I was joined by the member for Thuringowa and the member for Mundingburra. We spoke with passion about what was happening in our electorates. When it came to jobs, the realisation was that in January 12 months ago our unemployment level was 11.4 per cent; now 12 months later it is 8.3 per cent. Why is that? It is about investment by the Palaszczuk government in jobs—jobs in Townsville, jobs in our region, jobs that make a real difference for families.

What does that investment look like? The Back to Work program was one of the most successful programs that we have seen driving our economy and pushing down unemployment levels. I have had countless conversations with employers telling me how great this was. The Back to Work program gave them an extra set of hands in their workplace so that they could go out and grow their business. That is exactly what is happening. They are finding that employers who are running small businesses now have the opportunity to grow their business.

What was the LNP's answer to growing jobs? 'Let's give tools to tradies after they have done their four years of training, after they had been an apprentice.' This was going to be the big factor that would get employment happening—'Four years into the job let's give the tradies the tools that they need.' We all knew on this side that that was never going to work. In fact, that is the conversation I had with people in the streets as well.

The Palaszczuk government has also put on additional nurses and midwives, put additional teachers in our classrooms and additional firefighters and police are walking our streets. Spread across the front page of the *Townsville Bulletin* on 10 March this year was '5,600 jobs on the horizon for Townsville over the next 12 to 18 months'. That will be through a range of projects. They call it a jobs bonanza, and that is exactly what it is. Why is that happening? It is about bringing investment back into the region. It is about investing in infrastructure projects to get jobs happening and to get our economy moving again.

We also saw the Buy Queensland local procurement policy announced in Townsville. What does that mean for us? It means that locals can now start to build local projects. In the past we had seagulls who used to fly in, do the job and fly back out and leave us to clean up the mess. Now locals are building our local infrastructure which means local jobs. Locals are building the Townsville stadium. When the first game is played in the stadium when it opens in 2020, I want to see every single person who contributed to building that stadium walk into that stadium with their families, sit down and say to their

kids, 'I helped build this because I am a local.' We will see the Cowboys win that game and the premiership that year as well. Another example is Watpac working with Thomas Steel. Six million dollars worth of local work is going to a local contractor to supply that steel. That is great news for us.

Recently the minister announced the success of the Land 400 deal, and the member for Thuringowa has very clearly articulated in the House what that means for Townsville. It means jobs and a very clear jobs pathway for our defence people. Who can forget—because this is really important for us—the collapse of Queensland Nickel? It was the Palaszczuk government which accelerated over \$400 million worth of work to create job opportunities for people in Townsville. We were left reeling after Queensland Nickel closed its doors.

Health and education are the cornerstones of the Palaszczuk government. In my electorate I note that the primary healthcare facility on Palm Island is worth \$16 million. That is a game changer for the people on the island. Last week when I was on Palm Island we launched the health strategy which is about Palm Islanders determining the health strategy and the health direction for the people of Palm Island. That is a huge step—people determining their own health needs. It is a great step, and I congratulate the Palaszczuk government and the minister for allowing us to do that. An unrelenting determination on closing the gap on health priorities will always be part of our approach to health.

When it comes to education we heard the member for Thuringowa today talk about the opening of the new school in Burdell. The three Townsville members have worked hard to get that happening. The Newman government sold the site where the Mount Louisa school was going to be built. We had to buy it back and build that school. We see extra teachers coming into our school. We see improvements through NAPLAN, and early intervention means we can start to put together an individual learning plan for our children. It is about using that information to get the best out of each and every one of our kids.

I talk to teachers in my electorate, and there is one who is driving the science agenda by the name of Sarah Chapman. She is the head of department at Townsville State High School. She is an absolute champion when it comes to science and driving the science agenda in our schools. We have made changes to the senior assessment and tertiary entrance, and we debated that bill at the beginning of this year. That will be a huge change—a huge step in the right direction—for our seniors leaving school.

When it comes to the Queensland Certificate of Education, for the last two years the northern region in my electorate has led the outcomes for seniors here—99.25 per cent of all seniors who finished year 12 exited with a QCE. That is an absolutely amazing achievement, beating everyone in Brisbane and everyone else across the state. This is the dedication that teachers in my electorate have.

I turn to water infrastructure. We all know that over the last four years Townsville has gone through drought and it has really impacted on our community. It was the Palaszczuk government which committed \$225 million for the first stage of that water infrastructure. Where are we at now with the federal government? Queue the crickets again because they still have not committed to water infrastructure. It is the No. 1 priority for us. Where is the money for that water infrastructure? The federal government signed the Townsville City Deal which highlighted water as the key priority. Where is the federal government? It has gone missing yet again. It continues to ignore Queensland and the needs of North Queenslanders.

Defence is huge in our city. We have 6½ thousand serving members in the Defence Force who do an outstanding job day in and day out. When our serving members come back they come back with a burden, and quite often it is PTSD. We need to do something about this. We need to address the black dog that continues to walk amongst our troops who have served our country. That is the first step that we are taking. The Palaszczuk government has committed to provide an oasis hub in North Queensland to ensure defence personnel get the help they need when they need it and with the support of their family and every single person in our community. That is our commitment to defence. That is our commitment to Townsville. I stand with the other two members of Townsville who stand by our defence troops every single day. We thank them every single day for the work they do.

In speaking about defence, last week each and every one of us attended Anzac ceremonies in our communities. Every single one of us laid a wreath. Every single one of us paid our respects. This year is the 100th commemoration of when the guns fell silent and we will recognise that on 11 November this year. For a city like Townsville, defence plays a major role in our community. Over 20,000 people are directly connected to defence, either themselves or through their families. This is the time we need to show our respect for when our diggers laid down their lives. Our diggers continue to do the job day in and day out. When our diggers go to Afghanistan they continue to do the job, allowing us to sleep in our beds at night and to enjoy the freedoms that each and every one of us enjoyed on Anzac Day when

we laid those wreaths. We respect our diggers. It is because of them that we enjoy the lives we lead now and forevermore. I thank them again for the work that they do and that they will continue to do in the future.

Each and every one of us in this House would not be here without a range of great people who support us. I will no doubt forget to name someone and I will no doubt receive that email, but I will attempt to acknowledge the key people who helped me and supported me through my campaign. I particularly thank my campaign manager, Nikki Burnett, who worked 30 hours a day. If she could give more, she certainly would. She is an absolute trooper and she is my right arm. She continued to support me, walk beside me, doorknock with me and give me the chocolate I needed to keep me going each and every day. It is very important to have at least one of the five food groups represented.

Col Hegarty is a long-time Labor mentor for me and a long-time motivator for me. There were times I needed a kick in the tail and it was at those times that he gave me a kick in the tail, and if he did not I would not be here. People like Col Hegarty are the salt of the earth and our true Labor people. I have a number of wise owls in my corner and they include former members like Mike Reynolds, who spent some time in the Speaker's chair. Mike Reynolds spent a lot of time tucking me under his wing and telling me what I should and should not be doing. I also thank Tony Mooney, who worked with me just about every day on my campaign. I also acknowledge the support from the LNP—sorry, the ALP.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr STEWART:** Thanks for all the LNP's help! I appreciate all the support from the LNP for the way they continued to call me a Labor thug. That actually worked in my favour and I really appreciate that. I will continue to stand by my unions—the QTU and the AWU—which continue to support me in doing my job. I thank those opposite for reminding people that I have those unions behind me. I would also like to thank the ALP for their support, particularly Evan Moorhead and Jon Pursley.

I have talked about the AWU—Bede Harding and his entire family. His kids came and handed out how-to-vote cards for me. I thank Rod Harding for his unwavering support and acknowledge David Moyle, Peter, Luke and all the many members who supported me. I thank Jim White from the Plumbers Union, Tom Pfund from the TWU who came out and helped me, Barry Thompson from the QTU and every single teacher who worked on booths, made phone calls, handed out how-to-vote cards or rang me and supported me every single day. Without their support I would not be here.

The people closest to us are our families. I would like to thank my mum. She continues to tell everyone that she is 27 years old. I would like to question that, but I am not prepared to say her age. Mum lives in Brisbane but flew up again—the member for Broadwater met my mum at the previous election—and handed out how-to-vote cards every day in pre-poll, from when it opened to when it closed. That is the dedication my family has. My kids from Brisbane came up, handed out how-to-vote cards and supported me during the two weeks after the election when votes were still being counted. Finally, I need to mention my wife, who is my rock. Each and every one of us in this chamber has a significant other. Without their support and encouragement we would all not be here. I think we should all take a little time to reflect on that significant other who helps us each and every day. In my family, we say we draw strength from family.