



Speech By  
**Scott Stewart**


**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

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## **MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

### **Port of Townsville**

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (2.40 pm): The Port of Townsville is the largest commercial port in north Australia and supplies a population of nearly 800,000 people in North Queensland with essential things like cars, fuel, gas, food, furniture, electrical goods, clothing, cement and bitumen. Local farmers export their produce like sugar, frozen meat, cattle, fruit and vegetables. Mining companies ship out their commodities like copper, zinc, silver, lead and fertiliser. More importantly, in excess of 8,000 jobs are connected to the Townsville port.

However, there is a growing problem that is limiting jobs and economic growth in Townsville. Over the past 40 years ship sizes have grown significantly and are continuing to get bigger. Townsville's channel has not kept up with this growth and is approximately half the width of channels in other major ports. Larger ships are already bypassing Townsville to pick up and drop off freight for North Queensland at capital city ports that they can access. This is dramatically increasing the cost of living for North Queenslanders as goods sail past us and are then driven up from Brisbane.

Trade forecasts show a potential trebling of trade over the next 30 years. Motor vehicle imports will increase from 15,000 units to more than 45,000 units. Fuel imports will increase from one million tonnes to two million tonnes. Cruise ship tourism will grow to 30 ships within the next five years and 60 ships by 2030.

However, all of this is at risk. Trade through the port is being limited by the capacity of the access channel. Should this limitation continue there is a real risk that trade will decline as larger vessels more frequently used to achieve economies of scale in shipping will be unable to access the port. This also means that larger cruise ships are bypassing Townsville and our small businesses are missing out. It is through our commitment to the Townsville City Deal and the understanding of the strategic and economic benefit to regional North Queensland that the Palaszczuk government has committed \$75 million to widening Platypus Channel to allow those much larger ships to berth at the port, but, more importantly, remain a key focus and driver for the economy for North Queensland and create 120 full-time-equivalent jobs during construction.

Where is the federal government's investment into the Port of Townsville? The Palaszczuk government has put its fair share up already. The Palaszczuk government has asked Malcolm Turnbull to match state government funding of \$75 million. What have the feds done about it? Absolutely nothing. NAIF—that is what we keep hearing from Senator Canavan. What about the NAIF? What has it achieved in the last two years? It has achieved null, zero, zip, the big donut. However we want to say it, it means the same. There has been no commitment to North Queensland by Malcolm Turnbull.

Would members not think that Senator Ian Macdonald, who is based in Townsville, would push the case for increasing job opportunities in Townsville, would fight for a lower cost of living for North Queenslanders and would support large infrastructure projects like this in North Queensland? What

have we heard from Senator Macdonald? We have heard nothing. He is happy to stand for politicians' gold cards and entitlements, but not for increased trade, jobs and economic growth in Townsville. In fact, according to today's newspapers, the only time we hear from Senator Macdonald is during election time when he spends 85 per cent of his communications allowance in the electorate.

What about the member for Nanango, the Leader of the Opposition? Surely the self-proclaimed voice of regional Queensland would have something to say about this. She has the same thing to say about Senator Macdonald—zero, the big donut, absolutely nothing. Remember that it was the former Newman government that wanted to sell the Port of Townsville. Who was in that cabinet? It was the Leader of the Opposition.

It is about time the Turnbull federal government stopped treating North Queenslanders as second-class citizens and it matched state government funding of \$75 million to widen the port channel. Next week the federal government will hand down its budget. That is the opportunity for Malcolm Turnbull to invest in the Port of Townsville and North Queensland. This is about jobs and lowering the cost of living for North Queenslanders. It is that simple.

I will take the opportunity to launch my petition online today for federal government funding for what Townsville deserves. It is about time those opposite decided whose team they are on—North Queensland or Malcolm Turnbull and Canberra.