




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2018

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; BETTING TAX BILL**

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (5.35 pm): Over the past two days in this chamber, I have heard comments made about the duration of the Treasurer's budget speech as those opposite loudly crowed that the Leader of the Opposition took the entire 60 minutes to deliver her reply. One of the most famous speeches of all time—a speech that changed the world—was the Gettysburg Address, delivered by Abraham Lincoln. It was 271 words long and lasted just over two minutes. Quality is not measured by how long you stand on your feet or how much you say; quality is measured by the lasting impact of your words, such as those of the Treasurer.

There is no doubt that Townsville has been doing it tough for the past five years, due to the impacts of the downturn in the mineral commodities market, the long-term drought and, of course, the mass sacking of Public Service workers by the former Newman LNP government. It is disgraceful to hear the Leader of the Opposition say that she is 'proud—very proud—of the LNP's record in government'. I suggest that she does not use those words when she is next in Townsville, particularly if she visits the Townsville Hospital from where the first nurse was sacked. Those devastating events, coupled with Clive Palmer's Queensland Nickel closure, where 800 workers lost their jobs in one day, have left Townsville reeling.

A report from BIS Oxford Economics has indicated the major project spend in the Townsville region since the 2010 financial year, from both government and non-government investment. The report showed that, under the Bligh government, spending was between \$400 million and \$600 million. Under the LNP government, spending on projects was at an all-time low. In fact, in the 2014-15 financial year, spending on major projects was at a paltry \$110 million.

I wonder whether the Leader of the Opposition is still proud—very proud—of those achievements. During the Labor Palaszczuk government, spending on major projects exceeded \$1.2 billion in the 2017-18 financial year. Is it any wonder the people of Townsville have put their faith in the Palaszczuk government that is spending record amounts on major projects to create jobs—jobs for locals, jobs like the Townsville stadium, jobs like the Townsville Port berth upgrade and jobs like the Accelerated Works Program when Queensland Nickel closed its doors on 800 workers. This is a budget where we want to create jobs in a strong economy.

As a former teacher and principal, I was very interested in hearing what the opposition leader's vision was for education. We heard their key driver is going back to the basics—the three Rs. I am absolutely positive that this strategic approach will more than adequately prepare our students for the 19th century. I would not have been surprised if they introduced the cane as their behaviour management breakthrough.

I also listened with intent to their plan to introduce air conditioners into every classroom across Queensland because the weather in Brisbane is too hot. My initial thoughts were reactionary, to say the least, but I thought with a \$2 billion investment this must be a major issue for the south-east corner. I did my research into Brisbane temperatures. I looked at weatherzone.com.au.

From my experience, my teachers did not turn on their air conditioners until the temperature reached 30 degrees. I researched how many days on average the temperatures in Brisbane equal or exceed 30 degrees. The result was 66.2 out of 365 days. Remove the average number of days students are on holidays in December and January in relation to high temperatures—remove 19.2 days. Remove the average number of weekend days during those months—remove 11 days. It will cost \$2 billion to air-condition classrooms for 36 school days a year—seven weeks in a school year. This is thought bubble policy with populist politics. It is not founded on any research but on reaction.

There is no doubt that all members of this House know how passionate I am—given the many speeches I have delivered—about the port of Townsville and its essential work that drives our local and regional economy. The port of Townsville was one of those assets that those opposite when they were in government wanted to sell. This is the jewel in the crown of North Australia's import and export trade across our oceans. This is the asset that those opposite wanted to sell to the highest bidder. It is worth around \$1 billion. In return, Townsville would get \$150 million to help build the stadium. We still own the port and we are building the stadium. It is the Palaszczuk government that is investing \$18.6 million of \$27.3 million to commence acquisition of berth 4 cranes and development of the associated cargo terminal areas to cater for future trade growth.

I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*. I can advise that the Speaker has reviewed and approved my speech for incorporation and an electronic copy of my speech has been made available to *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

But I'm worried the largest commercial port in North Australia will not reach its full potential if the Federal Government doesn't invest their fair share to widen the Port Channel, which will leave North Queenslanders left behind.

It's the Palaszczuk Government who understands the importance of our Port. 8000 direct jobs are associated with our Port. 800,000 people in North Queensland rely on our Port to export our minerals and produce and import fuel, cars and food. And that's why Mr Speaker, the Palaszczuk Government is investing \$44.3 million to continue preparatory and initial works to widen Townsville's shipping channel to allow larger vessels to access the Port of Townsville and supporting our region.

It is the Palaszczuk Government who will keep the cost of living down for regional Queenslanders because we know that the Turnbull Government has turned its back on those in the North. The Turnbull LNP Federal Government won't fund the widening of the Port channel and there was no mention of this in their budget reply speech. The Turnbull LNP Government won't support the 8000 jobs linked to the Port. The Turnbull LNP Government won't support the farmers who rely on the Port to export their sugar or cattle from the Port. The Turnbull LNP Government has set regional Queensland adrift, but it is the Palaszczuk Government who is lowering the life-rafts and sending the rescue ships because it is the Palaszczuk Government who is investing in regional jobs. Containerisation is up by 65% at the Port of Townsville. Jobs are returning and Townsville is ready to boom again as the powerhouse of North Australia.

Mr Speaker, when I talk to workers on the stadium, they tell me that they are proud to work on a project that is being built by locals for locals. And I can tell you Mr Speaker that come the kick off to the 2020 NRL stadium, Cowboys supporters from far and wide will flood into that stadium and watch the Cowboys knowing that that project is what kick started the Townsville economy and brought investment back into the city. They will know that local tradies and contractors put that little extra into the stadium which will give it that extra special North Queensland feel. And I invite every member of this House to come to Townsville for that first NRL game and watch the Cowboys play in that stadium. The stadium that North Queenslanders built.

But the Palaszczuk Government is not just hanging our hats on one project in Townsville. One of the cornerstones of the ALP is providing a world standard health service that serves its community. In this budget Mr Speaker, \$4.7 million will be spent on a second MRI machine that will help doctors pinpoint with miniscule accuracy, medical ailments in patients and therefore enable correct diagnosis and more importantly the right treatment. That's because we're keeping Queenslanders healthy.

The allocation of \$16.5 million for the Palm Island Primary Health Care Centre and, Mr Speaker, I was once again at Palm Island on Friday for their 100th year celebrations with Mayor Alf Lacey and I took a quick look at the new facility under construction. I can tell you that the locals on Palm Island are very excited about the new facility and what it will mean for health care for them on Palm Island.

In fact Mr Speaker, an additional \$50 million will flow to the Townsville Hospital and Health Service taking the annual budget to \$983 million, to ensure it is staffed and resourced to meet the growing health care needs of not only the largest city in North Australia, but to provide vital support for those communities that rely on the tertiary hospital in Townsville. This will mean more doctors and more nurses will be employed in our local hospital. This is great news for those students studying medicine related courses at James Cook University right next door to the hospital.

The Palaszczuk Government's commitment to a world class education continues to be delivered in spades Mr Speaker. Pimlico State High School will receive a total of \$3.4 million for additional classrooms and two purpose built music studios. Pimlico State High is an instrumental music and performance school of excellence that attracts students from right across the Townsville area and this announcement will be no doubt met with great enthusiasm. I am sure that Principal Joel Buckholtz will be very appreciative of this outcome as the school continues to deliver quality learning outcomes for every student.

Mr Speaker, at a recent Townsville Industry Breakfast hosted by the Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning, there was much discussion and anticipation about the Bruce Highway (Ayr to Townsville) project. Work will start construction of bridges, cane tramway overpasses and intersection upgrades as well as 13.5km of the highway across the Haughton River floodplain for a total cost of \$514.3 million of which \$37.7 million will come from the Palaszczuk Government. The Member for Burdekin will no doubt applaud with me as he knows probably better than most in this House, how important that project is in creating local jobs, but more importantly, flood proofing that part of the highway. There have been countless times where the flooding Haughton River has cut the major arterial road north and south rendering food supplies and vital necessities at the mercy of the elements.

It is the Palaszczuk Government who has been doing the heavy lifting to create jobs in the region. It is the Palaszczuk Government who is invested in the infrastructure build that will ensure Townsville is the powerhouse of North Australia. I commend the Treasurer for her budget in investing in jobs, infrastructure and services unlike those opposite who, when they were in government, failed to invest in jobs, failed to invest in infrastructure and failed to have vision for Townsville.

The Palaszczuk Government is driving the new wave of jobs and economic growth in Townsville. This is a government who believes in Townsville and its future.

I commend the Bill to the House.