




Speech By
Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Toowoomba, Regional Settlement

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.02 am): It will be my pleasure to be in Toowoomba next week with my colleagues as part of our Governing from the Regions program. One thing that has struck me as I have visited the Garden City over many years is its transformation from a country town servicing the Downs to Australia's biggest inland city with a population knocking on 120,000. It is a city that has grown and matured, and this was recognised by the Commonwealth when it was given the status of being a primary settlement site for refugees in 2013.

It is the only city outside a capital city that has been bestowed with that status. This makes it a shining example of regional settlement done right. Much of the credit for this lies with the Toowoomba Regional Council under the leadership of Mayor Paul Antonio, whom I look forward to catching up with next week.

This success can be experienced by more communities. The Palaszczuk government is committed to supporting our rural and regional towns and councils in remaining vibrant and sustainable. Regional settlement is a win-win for Queensland. It gives refugee families the opportunity to start a new life outside of our busy and sometimes chaotic capital cities, but it can also breathe life into our small towns. More students mean more opportunities for our teachers and students in smaller schools, and there is more certainty for a reliable workforce in key industries such as agriculture.

The opportunities for growth in our regional towns and cities need to be actively encouraged and promoted. That is why we have commissioned Welcoming Cities to do research on the regional settlement opportunities here in Queensland. They have been tasked with creating a framework for our government to help support regional councils to best achieve this in a sustainable and inclusive way.

In August, Toowoomba hosted the first national regional resettlement conference to great success. Mayors from south-west Queensland councils have said that they are interested in the potential of such a program and they want more people to call their towns home. Toowoomba is a perfect example of the diversity and inclusion that is supported by the Palaszczuk government, and I look forward to seeing more regional communities opening their arms in the same way.