




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Townsville Electorate, Jobs

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (2.37 pm): Today I rise to speak about jobs in North Queensland. Some 800 jobs were lost in the city of Townsville in one day when Clive Palmer closed Queensland Nickel's doors in January 2016, creating utter chaos. An estimated 3,500 indirect jobs were also lost. I have met with several of these small business owners who did contract work or were part of the supply chain for those who supported the operations at Queensland Nickel. Many of those small businesses had to sack workers or even close their doors as a result of that work with Clive Palmer. All of those businesses are still owed money from that closure. Amounts between \$50,000 and \$28 million are owed supposedly to Townsville business owners, yet Clive Palmer still insists that he does not owe anybody anything in Townsville, such is the delusion of this man.

What we know is that a vote for Clive Palmer is a vote for the LNP and even more chaos. When Townsville was crippled by the closure of Queensland Nickel by Clive Palmer, it was the Palaszczuk government that immediately invested into Townsville. The Accelerated Works Program created hundreds of jobs. It kept some of those small businesses clinging to hope of recovery with investment into roads, bridges and rail infrastructure. Economic recovery is what is happening, but we still have a lot of work to do. The North Queensland Stadium, the new home for the North Queensland Cowboys, will be completed by the end of this year. There will be over 700 direct jobs on site, with another 3,000 indirect jobs from that project.

Eighteen months later, the Premier again backed one of the biggest infrastructure projects that will change the city for the future. The investment of \$225 million into the water pipeline from the Haughton Channel will see a sustainable water supply for the city. Prior to that monsoon event earlier this year, water was the No. 1 issue in my community. People were so concerned about the reliability of the water supply to the city that they would stop me in the street to talk to me about it or while I was out doorknocking.

I fought hard to win that funding for my community. With hundreds of local jobs being created through that project, it is the long-term industry and business outcomes that will lift Townsville to be the hub of north Australia. By providing an essential and secure water supply to the city well into the future, large investors are starting to line up. Currently, a lithium-ion battery company is building its case for a large battery manufacturing plant to the west of the city. This factory will employ over 1,000 full-time employees when the factory is at full production. Sun Metals, the zinc refinery in the south of the city, has also installed the largest solar farm in Australia. Late last year, the Premier was there for the official opening of that solar farm. The security of water supply has prompted the company to duplicate its facility at a cost of over \$300 million, which will employ around 850 local workers.

One of my favourite large infrastructure projects relates to the Port of Townsville—the largest commercial port in north Australia. The Palaszczuk government has committed \$750 million to widening the channel. The widening of the port channel is not sexy by any means, but it will increase the capacity

of the port and allow larger ships into the Townsville port. Currently, those ships sail past the port and on to Brisbane. Their cargo is unloaded and either put on the back of trucks or onto trains and then sent to Townsville, thereby increasing the cost of living for the people in the north. This project will generate around 250 local jobs over the five years of the build.

I fought hard to stop the sale of the port by those opposite and to keep those jobs local. I fought to stop the sale of Ergon by those opposite to keep the lid on electricity prices for the people of Townsville. I fought to stop the sale of the Townsville to Mount Isa rail line by those opposite to ensure that vital freight and mineral concentrate can be sent from the north-west minerals province. I fought for the stadium. I fought for water. I fought for a local procurement policy, because I knew that it was the right thing to do. I knew that that would create jobs for the people of Townsville and I will continue to fight for those local jobs.