




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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NATURAL RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (3.38 pm): I rise today to make a brief contribution to the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. I wish to focus on two aspects of the bill under debate this afternoon, and they are water and the exploration permits, as already highlighted by the minister in his second reading speech earlier today. Let us first look at water. We know that Australia is one of the driest countries on the planet. Water is an absolutely critical resource. We must do everything we can to protect this valuable resource.

As one of the members of the youth parliament said to me in a recent meeting we had, 'It all comes back to water.' I said, 'What do you mean?' She said, 'Everything we do comes back to water.' If you want to grow crops, it relies on water. If you want to run cattle, it relies on water. If you want to mine, it relies on water. If you want to establish towns and cities and infrastructure that go with that, it relies on water.

Mr McDonald: If you want a beer.

Mr STEWART: I take that interjection from the member for Lockyer. If you want a beer, it relies on water. The critical elements in this bill are around water. We need to make sure that we protect the multitude of users who access water. That is what this bill will do. A prime example is Townsville. As a growing city we were running out of water. As a growing city we needed to attract business and investment, and we needed to secure our water. That is why the Palaszczuk government committed \$225 million to increase the water supply in Townsville. It will secure our city's future. It will ensure that we can grow and become viable—and that we can continue to make great beer like Townsville Bitter.

We also need to ensure that graziers have access to the water that they need and that that is sustainable. We need to take on that responsibility as a government and as a community. That is exactly what this bill will do. It will ensure that there is fair and equitable access to every single drop of water in this great country of ours. As we have heard people say over many decades, future wars will be fought over water, not oil. With that sentiment, we need to protect our water assets and ensure that we keep water accessible by every means—to ensure that every drop is measured, that it is allocated in the right way, that we manage that water in the best way that we can. It is ironic that here I am talking about managing water and how precious it is considering that earlier this year we had that much rain in Townsville that we had water literally running through the streets and through our houses, but we know that we have to protect every single drop. That is exactly what this legislation will do.

The second part of the bill that I wish to speak about is the exploration permits. This will encourage more exploration specifically for future minerals. We have heard people stand up in this place and talk about lithium and what that will mean for batteries and energy storage. We know that Townsville is setting itself up to become one of the largest battery manufacturing plants in Australia, but that will rely on lithium, which will be mined just to the north of us in Greenvale. Exploration permits give the green light to those who wish to go out and look for other minerals and to speed things along. Like our water resources, we need to ensure that when any minerals are taken from our great land it is done

in the best way we can. It needs to stack up environmentally to protect that precious water that I talked about earlier in my speech, but it also needs to stack up financially. We will continue to make sure that every time there is an application round these things stack up.

Townsville is right on the eastern edge of the north-west minerals province. By encouraging more exploration through the north-west minerals province—in fact, all through the north part of our country—it will create more opportunities to open mines which will create more jobs for the people of Townsville. I have not seen recent data, but at one stage we were the second largest fly-in fly-out hub in Australia for the north-west minerals province. As a city, we rely on mining as part of our economy and to provide the incomes to continue to drive ourselves forward.

We also know that if we open up this country to exploration it will build our export trade, particularly with our Asian partners in China, Japan and Korea. That will mean that the product will go out through the Port of Townsville. That is why we are investing \$193 million to widen that channel. It will allow bigger ships to come in to our port to take the future mineral concentrate that is exported to other countries. It will mean that we can provide the jobs for our kids and for our grandkids knowing that it is being done in a safe manner, knowing that we are looking after our essential resources—the minerals that we are mining and every single drop of water that we are measuring. This is about making sure that we are protecting our future. It is about not only providing jobs and creating jobs but also making sure that our kids have a great future ahead of them. I commend the bill to the House.