




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Townsville, Small Business Week

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (2.15 pm): During Small Business Week, Minister Shannon Fentiman, the minister for small business, came to Townsville to announce an extra \$10 million to build small business resilience across North Queensland following the flood event that we have all heard about in this chamber. That \$10 million will assist businesses to plan for the future and increase resilience by providing assistance in things such as vital flood-proofing measures, resistance business planning and building-plant and equipment repairs, as well as other professional assistance.

The minister visited the Fairfield Central Shopping Centre, which many people would have seen on the news as it was where the tinny flotilla was based. People were picked up from their homes and brought back to the centre, where there was a lot of devastation. It was great to see that a lot of those businesses have reopened. People were able to meet the minister and were very happy to talk about the flood of support they received from the government, which helped them to get their businesses back up and running.

There is one thing that I keep coming back to in relation to the people of Townsville and it is that, no matter what was happening, every time you went to help someone they would say, 'Don't worry about me. There are people worse off than me. Go and help them.' Even people who had the entire contents of their homes laid out on their lawns would say that to us. I attended the Ronald McDonald House charity ball, which about 400 people attended given the dire straits that we had been in with the floods. We listened to a speech by 15-year-old Mackealie Twidale, who has an untreatable disease. Mackealie spoke about the Saturday night of the flooding event.

When the rain was falling and Townsville was starting to drown, Mackealie was in surgery. Twice during that surgery she almost died. Her parents were at the hospital, waiting and praying, as we can all imagine. Their home was inundated with floodwater, so their 18-year-old son had to evacuate their other children aged three, four, and six years old. Those children are Danny and Leonie Twidale's foster kids. Even though their 15-year-old daughter was in surgery and almost died twice, and their 18-year-old son had to evacuate their home, such is the resolve of those people that on the night of the charity ball they said to us, 'You know what, don't worry about us. There are people out there worse off than us.'

Such is the resolve of the people of Townsville. Such is the resolve of our community, which bonds together and works hard to look after one another. It was great to have Minister Fentiman in town, looking after small business.