




Speech By
Hon. Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 19 May 2020

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Coronavirus, Regional Queensland

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing) (2.50 pm): The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted Queensland's social and economic fabric. Regional Queensland in particular has felt the full force of the virus's economic effect. While the impacts of the virus have been devastating, under the leadership of the Premier we have flattened the curve and strongly positioned our state to emerge from this crisis. Since being appointed as the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing, I have been working with stakeholders and the Premier to develop a recovery strategy. Today the Premier and the Treasurer outlined the first stage of that recovery road map for Queensland workers, businesses and industry. We are a government that governs for all of Queensland.

The support for regional Queensland in the Queensland economic recovery strategy announced today further delivers on that commitment. The strategy includes maintaining infrastructure investment at more than \$50 billion over the next four years despite the financial challenges of COVID-19; a \$400 million accelerated works program to deliver new road, bridge and pavement sealing works right across the state—and I am sure that those mayors in regional Queensland appreciated the news today from the minister in relation to the sealing of those roads; a further \$200 million in 2020-21 for a Works for Queensland program to fund job-creating projects—and we know that every mayor right throughout Queensland, including regional Queensland, loves this program and loves the fact that they can get local jobs with local funding from the Queensland government; and an \$11.25 million expansion of the Household Resilience Program in cyclone affected areas, and we know that that makes a big difference in those regions that are prone to cyclones.

Industries across Queensland have been hit hard by this pandemic. I have seen it in my own electorate. That is why initiatives to support regional tourism, manufacturing and industry are fundamental to our economic strategy. This support includes \$50 million for tourism infrastructure and further funding for a domestic tourism campaign. The Gladstone port in my electorate has engaged with that tourism funding for a new cruise ship terminal at the East Shores development, which is looking absolutely amazing and ready to open in the next month or so. We have redirected \$50 million of industry funding attraction to further expand manufacturing capacity for PPE, hand sanitisers and medical supplies to respond to COVID-19.

In a further boost for the resource sector, in regional Queensland the Palaszczuk government will also fast-track support for the massive CopperString 2.0 high-voltage transmission line to the North West Minerals Province, and those in that area will have certainly welcomed that announcement today. Today's announcement of \$14.8 million towards the CopperString project to continue its important development and prepare for construction in 2021 is a huge win for regional Queensland. Extending the national electricity grid from Townsville across the north to Mount Isa, CopperString is expected to help create thousands of jobs in mineral mining and also in industrial manufacturing. It will also stimulate

large-scale renewable energy investment. It also means lowering energy costs for the North West Minerals Province, something that people in that area have been screaming out for for years. I am advised that the wider economic benefits from unlocked private investment are modelled at over 3,500 jobs in North Queensland and a \$79 billion economic uplift over 30 years.

Today's announcement also included a \$50 million boost to the Making it for Queensland initiative to support expansion of Queensland's vital manufacturing sector and production capacity. As I have said, this pandemic has shown that Queensland needs to be self-reliant when it comes to manufacturing key products in a time of need. We have already seen innovative Queensland companies retool to help supply the critical products our healthcare and frontline workers need while they put themselves on the line to keep Queenslanders safe. This includes Saleyards Distillery, a Rockhampton rum and gin distillery, manufacturing hand sanitiser to help local emergency services, schools and nursing homes. Other manufacturers have also modified their production to 3D printed face shields to support our frontline workers, both now and into the future. The Palaszczuk government will continue to step up and invest. Our recovery strategy makes this clear. Our regions and our manufacturers deserve nothing less.