




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Queensland Country Bank Stadium

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (2.30 pm): I have great pleasure in rising today to update the House about the progress of North Queensland stadium. This is the North Queensland stadium built by locals for locals. Some 85 per cent of those involved in building that stadium were local contractors who shop locally, whose mums and dads were involved and whose children attend local schools. As the member for Thuringowa said, that \$290 million project has such a huge flow-on effect back into our city. We have seen shops open, businesses expand and smiles on traders' faces, because we are getting that flow-on effect. When we open for business with the greatest stadium in north Australia, we will see that flow-on effect again and again. There is no pressure whatsoever on the Cowboys to win the premiership.

Dairy Farmers Stadium was built by locals from an old trotting track. We heard stories of Cowboys players turning up for training in their very first season being given implements to go out and chip weeds. Their training program consisted of chipping weeds and levelling the playing field. If that is not a great investment in their own stadium, I do not know what is. In recognising that, the owner of Meridian Helicopters volunteered his helicopter, time and fuel to fly a square metre of turf from the old Dairy Farmers Stadium—the 1300SMILES Stadium—to the new stadium to be planted not on the playing pitch, the hallowed turf, but out in the stadium. This is really the connection of old and new. This is the connection of what this means to the people of Townsville, the people of North Queensland, to be a part of the old stadium and to be invested in the new stadium. This is absolutely brilliant. Some 25 years ago, Dairy Farmers Stadium welcomed our North Queensland Cowboys for their first game.

Queensland Country Bank Stadium has naming rights for our North Queensland stadium for the next six years. This is a company that started as the North Queensland Credit Union in Mount Isa in 1971. This is a great story. This is about North Queenslanders backing North Queenslanders. We are proud to say that the Queensland Country Bank Stadium will welcome each and every competitor, visitor and spectator to our great stadium.

Those who may have seen photos recently say that the seats, all depicting the Cowboys star, have been installed. The turf was laid just in time before the rains started falling. The combination of rain, fertiliser and our lovely humidity at this time of the year has really encouraged that turf to take, like a duck to water. The parking plan has been released, with 1,100 more car parks than the 1300 stadium had, plus the additional 3,000 car parks right throughout our CBD. Balfours Consulting has been running sessions with its CBD traders to ensure they maximise the opportunities available to them at each and every event.

We have a line-up of some great, outstanding events that we will see in our stadium. First, there is the contractors afternoon to celebrate their works. On 22 February we will invite every single contractor, every single person involved in building that stadium, to return to their stadium to celebrate

what they have built. They built this for North Queenslanders. Straight after that, we will welcome North Queensland Cowboys members to come and find their seats and to locate where they will sit to watch each and every one of those Cowboys home games.

We have an open day on 23 February, the very next day. This is where we are opening up the stadium for local people to come and see this jewel of the north. As the member for Thuringowa said, there is an Elton John concert on 29 February. The Cowboys versus Broncos first home game is on Friday the 13th, Black Friday. What a great game that will be! I am predicting a 10-point win to the Cowboys. We will also see the North Queensland Games in April. The North Queensland Games is a fantastic event held every two years in North Queensland. From memory, it has been operating for about 30 or 35 years. We will see an Aussie Rugby League test match as well as an Aussie Rugby Union test match played in North Queensland.

When in Townsville recently, many members commented about what a great stadium we have. If you are going to come up, book your tickets and book some accommodation because everything is starting to sell out quick.