




Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

Record of Proceedings, 24 March 2021

MOTION

Electricity Supply

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (5.26 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the amended motion. The Queensland government has a strong record in supporting the North West Minerals Province and we are committed to further developing the north-west's potential. On this side of the House we understand the valuable contribution that this region, its people and mineral mining and processing make to our state's economy. As one of the world's richest mineral-producing areas containing copper, lead and zinc as well as major silver and phosphate deposits and strong rare earth potential, we recognise these minerals are vital for the manufacture of everything from cars to computers to planes and technologies and devices that have yet to be created. Along with this world-class resource, what Queensland offers is regulatory certainty and stability of government that is attractive to potential investors.

However, we recognise that there are also challenges to investment in this region due to its isolated geography. There are challenges that require government to act and find solutions. We are proud of our record supporting the north-west through a range of measures that include \$39 million for the North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy, \$380 million of previous funding commitments for the Mount Isa rail line and \$80 million to reduce rail access charges on the Townsville to Mount Isa rail line. We also delivered a multimillion dollar deal to secure more than a thousand resource and manufacturing jobs by supporting operations at the Mount Isa smelter.

The North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy, developed in close consultation with key regional stakeholders, outlines initiatives across three critical themes for the north-west: one, to attract and support investment in the province; two, to strengthen the supply chains; and, three, to build sustainable communities across the 10 local government areas of the province. Through these themes, the strategy aligns with the government's plans to leverage the north-west's competitive advantages in resources, agriculture, tourism and other sectors to support employment and economic growth.

Although mineral resources will remain the primary industry for this region, the strategy aims to support the growth of other industries that can weather commodity cycle impacts to optimise local employment opportunities. This includes supporting long-term sustainable employment; strengthening the services, employment outcomes and business opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; identifying opportunities in new markets and through the supply chain; supporting innovative commercial methods; building business capacity and entrepreneurship in the area; setting a framework to enhance and optimise enabling infrastructure; strengthening industry and cross-government coordination; and encouraging investment in significant economic development and diversification projects. Much work has already been done at a local level to attract and retain workers and their families.

We also recognise that the north-west has a strategic relationship with surrounding areas. Critical supply chain and value-adding industries in Townsville rely on the commodities exported from the province. However, we acknowledge that one of the challenges faced by the region is the cost of electricity. This is an issue that our government is acting on.

As mentioned, we are of course providing \$14.8 million to support the development of the CopperString 2.0 project. On top of this, as the minister indicated, we have signed an implementation agreement that will underwrite further development costs that the project will incur. This agreement will assist the project as it pushes for its remaining approvals and to demonstrate that it stacks up financially. Members should not take my word for the support our government has given to the project. Joseph O'Brien, the managing director of CopperString, has congratulated the Queensland government for the collaborative approach our government has taken to the project. We have the runs on the board, but there is more to be done. The Palaszczuk government will do the work to ensure the north-west maintains its competitive advantage as a world-leading source of critical minerals.