




Speech By
Hon. Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (5.08 pm): Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we gather here in parliament and also the traditional owners and custodians of the land of my electorate—the Wulgurukaba and Bindal people. The Wulgurukaba people were the ‘canoe people’ who had travelled across to Yunbenun. About 250 years ago an English sailor called it Magnetic Island because the compass went nuts as he sailed past it. Other people call it Cowboys’ country. I call it God’s country.

I would also like to congratulate the Speaker of the House, the Hon. Curtis Pitt, on his reappointment to the position of Speaker. I know he will continue to do a superb job of keeping this House in order each and every single sitting.

I would also like to thank the people of Townsville for the faith and trust that they have again afforded me. Representing my community is truly an honour and I pay tribute to the people of Townsville who have elected me in my third term as their representative in the Queensland parliament.

Winning the seat of Townsville last October was a collective effort, and I would like to thank my support network for all the tireless work they did during the campaign. If time permits, I will mention specific people a little later at the risk of excluding one by sheer chance of course. Labor is the party of the people, and achieving success is always through the planning and commitment of grassroots volunteers throughout my electorate.

A big part of my election campaign was outlining the plans of the Palaszczuk government for a stronger and brighter future for Townsville, North Queensland and, indeed, the entire state. Townsville has been through some ups and downs in the last six years, but we are blessed with a community of both kind-hearted and resilient people who rally together to help each other during really tough times.

In 2019, we dealt with the devastating floods which ruined hundreds of homes and caused millions of dollars in damage. Before that, the city was still reeling from the closure of Queensland Nickel and the hundreds of jobs that were lost basically overnight from that decision. Townsville, like everywhere around the world, has had to deal with this destructive global pandemic as well.

The way forward is through job creation. The Palaszczuk government is committed to creating jobs and building infrastructure for North Queensland, and we have wasted no time delivering on those commitments. This year we are investing in Townsville Ring Road stage 5 and Riverway Drive stage 2—

Ms Farmer interjected.

Mr STEWART: Yes, who has heard of Riverway Drive! We are also continuing work on the Haughton River flood plain road project. This equates to jobs, jobs and more jobs, which Townsville, North Queensland and the entire state need.

As a proud North Queenslander, I know how much my community loves their motorsport. We see that every year when thousands of people turn out for the Townsville 500. That is why I am very excited by the Palaszczuk government’s commitment to the Drivelt NQ facility. By backing this

long-awaited project, not only are jobs being created during construction but secure jobs are being created to run the facility. The benefits for North Queensland tourism are very clear. Stage 2 of construction is now underway and, when finished, this facility will create 147 jobs for Townsville and inject \$1.4 billion into the Townsville economy over its 40-year lifespan. I was incredibly proud to work with the member for Thuringowa to advocate for this world-class project and secure its funding.

This is a government that backs Townsville and backs North Queensland with real investment and vital infrastructure. We have a laser focus on creating jobs for people in Townsville in many different ways. We are continuing to invest in the Townsville Hospital and Health Service. Townsville has world-class health facilities, and we are backing in the Townsville Hospital and Health Service with millions of dollars of investment for construction projects.

The Palaszczuk government has a clear vision for Townsville, and we are backing it with real investment into vital services like health. In the budget we announced \$17.8 million will be spent in the 2021-22 financial year out of a total \$54.4 million spend for construction projects to improve facilities at the Townsville University Hospital site. This includes the expansion of the outpatients department. This is about making sure North Queenslanders continue to have access to the best health services. With these construction projects comes construction jobs, and there will be ongoing jobs too as these new state-of-the-art facilities continue to grow.

As we know, the resources sector played a key role in keeping the Queensland economy running throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and it will continue to lead the way as we embark on our road to recovery. The Palaszczuk government understands the critical role industry will play throughout the recovery process—from the \$34 billion it brings to the Queensland economy to the 80,000 Queenslanders it employs, particularly in regional Queensland.

Our government is backing mining exploration with more than \$29 million invested in exploration grants, initiatives and COVID-19 support for explorers and miners. We are backing the hunt for in-demand new economy minerals. These are the minerals that power our batteries, phones, electric vehicles and renewable energy technology. We cannot have a renewable energy revolution without a strong resources sector.

To help get into the new economy global supply chain faster, we have already fast-tracked a \$2 million investment to understand the potential of rare earth minerals. Furthermore, we have invested another \$11.7 million to keep explorers on the hunt for new economy minerals for the next three years and to deliver jobs and prosperity for the future.

Already we are starting to see the benefits of investment in exploration which will lead to jobs and investment for Queenslanders. This is seen in the latest ABS data, which reveals Queensland's exploration sector has continued to grow by an impressive 22.5 per cent to \$705 million in 12 months. Queensland's boost in exploration expenditure has come from strong growth in exploration for minerals—up 14.5 per cent—and exploration for oil and gas—up 53.1 per cent compared to the previous 12 months. Exploration investment is critical for finding new deposits and developing new projects—which means more royalties, more exports and more jobs for Queenslanders.

This year we approved Multicom's mining lease for the first vanadium mine in Queensland. This demonstrates the success of the Palaszczuk government's approach to enabling a prosperous resources sector that is ready for the future. Through our Strategic Resources Exploration Program, we have invested another \$3.3 million to help boost gas and mineral exploration. Another \$845,000 investment has also made data collected from exploration projects freely available via the government's geological database. Everything learned from exploration projects will be shared with the whole sector, helping to stimulate more mines, more exports and, most importantly, more jobs for Queensland.

One area that will play a big role in mining new economy minerals is the North West Minerals Province. That is why the Palaszczuk government is backing this sector with real investment. We have developed a strategic blueprint for Queensland's North West Minerals Province and we are implementing it right now. This blueprint is backed by our \$13 million New Economy Minerals Initiative, which was launched in late 2019. The works under this initiative include a strong focus on assessing the potential of former mine sites to test their potential for new supply. We also provided a \$10 million boost to collaborative exploration grants over four years, which will help explorers discover new economy minerals and support future jobs in Queensland's resources sector.

There are real jobs in the resources sector and the North West Minerals Province. When this part of North Queensland is strong, the rest of the state is strong. There are thousands of people already directly employed in the area, and it creates jobs in other parts of Queensland as well.

Through the Townsville Regional Recovery Action Plan the Palaszczuk government has supported the continued operation of the Mount Isa Mines copper smelter. This financial support underpins more than 1,000 manufacturing jobs in North Queensland including at the smelter itself, the Townsville copper refinery and at Incitec Pivot's sulphuric acid plant in Mount Isa.

In Townsville, the port is going through a \$193 million upgrade, which will help our resources sector to grow. We are also backing the Mount Isa to Townsville rail line, with major upgrades helping to get our valuable resources from the North West Minerals Province to market. This government is also supporting CopperString 2.0, a project that I and my colleagues are very passionate about. Not only will it create hundreds of jobs during construction, but it will provide cheaper and reliable power for miners in the North West Minerals Province. This will help new and smaller mines open in the future, along with those already operating, ensuring Queensland is getting the best out of the region.

The Palaszczuk government is backing regional Queensland and the resources sector, just as we always have. Our \$70 billion gas industry also continues to go from strength to strength. In this state we are doing the heavy lifting with gas production both domestically and for export.

We have always backed the LNG sector and we will continue to invest in the industry. The Palaszczuk government is also committed to ensuring there is adequate supply of affordable gas for the domestic market, which is critical for energy supply and advanced manufacturing. We have announced a concept study into new gas transmission pipelines which may assist in unlocking gas reserves in the Bowen Basin, examine the collection of fugitive emissions from coalmines, and bring new gas to domestic and export markets. The Palaszczuk government has invested \$5 million into this study. If the study finds the project stacks up, there are potentially 1,000 construction jobs available and countless opportunities for other industries. Not only would it boost development of new gas production in the Bowen Basin; it would make more gas available for Queensland and Australian manufacturers.

Despite the challenges of dealing with the global COVID pandemic, our gas industry has continued to perform. To support the development of future gas projects the Palaszczuk government has continued to make land available for gas exploration through competitive tendering. That is why since 2019 the Palaszczuk government has released 80,000 square kilometres of land for gas exploration and development, with 20,000 for the domestic market only under our innovative domestic gas policy. These land releases create new opportunities for more gas projects to come online and aid our economic recovery, supporting jobs in regional communities.

This government is committed to the resource sector. That is very clear, because we back all parts of it. We know the resource industry has played a key role in keeping people in work during the global pandemic. Now because of our health response we are also able to focus on our economic recovery, and the resource sector and gas have a major role to play in that. It is an honour to continue to be the member for Townsville in this parliament and a minister in the Palaszczuk Labor government as we work together to Advance Queensland.

If I had time left I would acknowledge a swag of people who have helped me, and of course I apologise in advance for those whom I may miss. It is completely unintentional. Firstly can I acknowledge Col Hegarty, who has been with me right from day one when I joined the Hermit Park branch. He tucked me under his wing. He has now seen me through three elections, and his guidance and support have been absolutely fantastic. Nikki Burnett and Gwen Casey are the rock stars in my electorate office. They continue to make sure that everything in my office continues to run and they look after me.

Ms Fentiman: They make you look good.

Mr STEWART: They make me look sensational, let me tell you. They are brilliant ladies, and I cannot say enough about how much I really appreciate their work.

During the campaign I had a raft of people who came and helped me. They are: David, Jane and Nelson, who just worked tirelessly. That young energy was infectious. Jonte, Alfred, Ulian, Tori and Will came from other parts of the state and interstate to work on my campaign and those young guys were just absolutely brilliant. Emma ran my campaign; she is an outstanding woman with huge potential. It was her first campaign, so she is saying she is one from one. I would also like to thank all of the ALP branch volunteers right across Townsville who came out and helped us in droves. To Ben, who joined me on my mobile offices, to all those who doorknocked, those who phone banked and those who letterbox dropped, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

From the ALP team I would like to thank Jules Campbell and Zac Beers for their great support during the campaign and of course Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, who did a sensational job. She came to Townsville on a regular basis and supported me. Being the most marginal seat, it certainly was very focused in the last election—

Mr Healy: A wonderful experience.

Mr STEWART: There was a lot of experience gained. I thank her for her support and guidance and my new team, Brett Murphy, and particularly Talbot Speechley. It is Talbot's last day today. He has been with me for 11 months. He leaves to go on to greener fields, but thank you to him.

I would also like to acknowledge my mum. I am going to reveal her age, and she is going to hate me for this, but mum is 85. She could not come up and hand out how-to-vote cards for me this time. She was suffering from a few health issues, but she was certainly there with me in spirit. More importantly—and this is a rarity—I agree with the member for Kawana when he talked about the importance of family. I would like to acknowledge my three kids, who have been with me through every one of my—

Mrs Frecklington: Hear, hear!

Mr STEWART: Thank you. I take the interjection from the member for Nanango. Our families are so important to us all. Quite often it comes at their expense, so I would certainly like to acknowledge my three kids, Lachlan, Jordan and Tyler, who were there for me day in, day out. They gave me phone calls of support and text messages the entire time.

I have an amazing wife in my life. This amazing woman would turn up to pre-poll with me each and every morning at six o'clock. She would hand out how-to-vote cards until four o'clock in the afternoon in that blazing hot Townsville sun, the heat bouncing off the concrete. I think the member for Nanango understands that; she was up there at one stage. It was terrible. My wife was there every single minute of those two weeks. She stood right beside me. There were times where we did not think that I would be here today, but because of her strong support and her commitment to me, here I am. I can never repay what I owe my wonderful wife; she is an amazing woman.

Having said that, I would like to dedicate this speech to my brother Peter, who passed away tragically only three months ago.

Honourable members: Oh!

Mr STEWART: I am not looking for sympathy. He was an amazing man. He supported me. He certainly did not vote our colour, and he told me that many times, but he was such a great man. We would ring each other every week and talk about how the campaign was going. Particularly in the lead-up he wanted to know how things were going. Then when I got this job I would ring him and we would talk. He worked in the resource industry for around 20 years, so I relied on him to give me information, just some guidance. It was an absolute tragedy to lose him very unexpectedly three months ago so, as I said, this speech is for him. I want to record him in Queensland's history because he just means so much to me and I will never get that time back with him ever again.

It also reminds me of how fortunate I am—how fortunate we are—to be here in this role. We are blessed and we should never take it for granted. I thank each and every member in this House for the role that you do keeping us honest or keeping me supported. We do an outstanding job. This is an amazing job that we should never take for granted.