




Speech By
Hon. Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2022

ADJOURNMENT

North Queensland, Coronavirus Vaccination

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (7.10 pm): I rise to talk about the importance of vaccinations in North Queensland. Right now Townsville sits at about 90 per cent double vaxxed, which is absolutely fantastic. Unfortunately, the capital of North Australia lost the race to 80 per cent double vaxxed to its little brother Cairns which means I lost my bet with my good mate and member for Cairns Michael Healy. As a result I am stuck wearing a Northern Pride jersey under my jacket today, something that I am not particularly thrilled about. I assure members I have the permission of Mr Speaker, who is also from North Queensland.

Mr Watts: Take the jacket off!

Mr Minnikin: Table it!

Mr STEWART: I am not going to table this body with it, let me tell you, member for Chatsworth. I take the interjection from the member for Toowoomba North. I cannot reveal the rest of it because it does have sponsorship on it. That was the agreement with Mr Speaker. I am thrilled about the vaccination rates not just in North Queensland but right throughout our state. While the member for Cairns and I had some pretty good fun around this on social media, it seems the member for Burdekin lost his sense of humour because he threw a jab and three weeks later he threw another jab and then a couple of months later he threw in a booster. Bad dad joke, I know. The battle between the member for Cairns and I through social media was absolutely fantastic. The real winner from this is the community. These high vaccination rates mean that we can get on with the real job of our economic recovery and Townsville is certainly leading the race when it comes to this.

In the *Townsville Bulletin* today it was revealed that home building approvals have soared by 40 per cent. This demonstrates that more people want to call Townsville home and it shows the Palaszczuk government's commitment to economic recovery is strong and is working in North Queensland as we emerge from the Omicron wave. Projects like the \$232 million upgrade of the Port of Townsville are creating hundreds of jobs for local people and creating a multitude of opportunities for our city. This project will help grow our resource industry, particularly in the North West Minerals Province, abundant in new economy minerals that will power our future and create even more jobs in the north of the state as we recover from this global pandemic. The Queensland Country Bank Stadium, which the Palaszczuk government built, has been a key part of growing Townsville's economy. It has hosted 31 events since opening, including the State of Origin last year. What a great event that was—until they ran out onto the field. More than 440,000 have walked through the stadium gates since it opened, injecting millions of dollars into our economy.

The only reason Townsville can get on with growing its economy is because people have rolled up their sleeves and been vaccinated. I might have lost the bet to the member for Cairns, but it has certainly helped encourage a few people to go out and get vaxxed. Well done, member for Cairns.