




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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ADJOURNMENT

Cairns Regional Trade Distribution Centre

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (7.16 pm): On Wednesday, 8 March I had the pleasure of accompanying the Treasurer, Cameron Dick, when he officially opened the Cairns Regional Trade Distribution Centre at its site at Cairns Airport. Whether it is avocados from the Atherton Tablelands, lobsters from the Torres Strait or any other of our world-class products, the trade distribution centre will get far more Far North product up into the markets of South-East Asia and Asia. It will contribute to more international flights into Cairns, because every box of produce that flies out of Cairns helps create an economically viable environment for international flights. As we do not have the critical mass and the population in Cairns, being able to fill the bottom of the plane provides another stream of revenue for these airlines, which is fantastic. More cargo under the floor should create opportunities for more tourists in the seats above. This will help sustain farming and fishing jobs throughout the Far North and create more export opportunities for the many great companies around Cairns that export.

The trade distribution centre was an election commitment of the Palaszczuk Labor government in 2017, intended to boost fresh produce export capacity. It has generated jobs and it has improved productivity throughout not just the agriculture but also the aquaculture supply chain. The export industry is rebuilding itself after the ravages of COVID. It is also worth noting that the international freight assistance mechanism of the federal government has assisted a lot of those businesses. They were subsidising flights that were coming into various parts of Queensland. We are certainly seeing that Cairns is now well positioned to respond quickly to future growth in international demand. We know that the No. 1 priority of governments in the Asia-Pacific is food security. We have it in spades in the Tropical North.

During construction, the project supported over 200 workers in a range of local trades across more than 40 companies, with further operational jobs and business opportunities to be generated now that the facility is up and running. The new facility is approximately 2,400 square metres in gross floor area comprising over 200 square metres of state-of-the-art refrigerated storage, approximately 1,100 square metres of controlled climate transit areas and additional undercover loading areas.

It must be noted that the aviation industry is recovering. At Alice Springs at the moment, there are still over 100 aircraft sitting on the ground. As we rebuild, we are ensuring that key parts of our economy, particularly in Cairns, have the facilities to ensure we continue to grow and continue to contribute to our economy not just from an agriculture and aquaculture perspective but also from a tourism perspective. It is really good work and it shows the great commitment of the government. I am pleased to be talking about it.