




Speech By
Hon. Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Townsville, Resources Industry

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (10.02 am): If they were excited about that, Townsville is in the box seat to take advantage of the coming critical minerals boom. There is potentially \$500 billion worth of critical mineral deposits in the North West Minerals Province, which presents huge opportunities for Townsville and the region moving forward. That is why the Palaszczuk government is funding and building the \$5 billion CopperString 2032 project. We know that reliable power is key to opening new mines in the region.

Not only will CopperString support new resource projects; it will also create good direct jobs, which is great news for the people and businesses of Townsville. We are already seeing record amounts of exploration in the region as explorers look for new critical minerals deposits. As a government, we are supporting those efforts. We are doing this in a variety of ways, including by reducing the rent to zero for exploration permits for the next five years through our Critical Minerals Strategy and also through our Collaborative Exploration Initiative program. The program supports explorers to take on projects they could not potentially do on their own and, hopefully, this will lead to important discoveries. I can inform the House that applications for round 8 of the CEI program will open next month, with \$4.6 million in grants available to discover new critical minerals deposits throughout Queensland. Priority will be given to the discovery of those critical minerals that are required to help make solar panels, wind turbines, batteries and other technologies that the world needs as it decarbonises.

Another way that we are supporting Townsville and the resources industry is through our Queensland Resources Common User Facility to be built in Townsville. It will be the first of its kind anywhere in Australia. I want to see Townsville not just as an exporter of critical minerals but also as a manufacturer and producer of vanadium batteries, because if we do not manufacture our future then someone else will. We are seeing it already with Vecco building Australia's first commercial-sized vanadium flow battery electrolyte manufacturing facility in Townsville. I want to see more of this because it means good secure jobs for Townsville, for our kids and for the north's future in both resources and manufacturing.

Right now, Townsville is absolutely booming. There are 6,700 more jobs in Townsville than there were last year alone. We are seeing the lowest unemployment in Queensland at 2.7 per cent, which is more—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr STEWART: Mr Speaker, they are excited, just like me. Townsville has the lowest unemployment rate in Queensland at 2.7 per cent. That rate was at more than 13 per cent when Clive Palmer closed Queensland Nickle at Yabulu. We want to see more good jobs for Queensland and the city. We want to hear directly from people, which is why next week we are bringing community cabinet

to Townsville, the capital of North Australia. Townsville is a strong and resilient city with an amazing and diverse workforce that stands ready to drive this place forward well into the future. As the resources minister and local member, I am proud to be a part of the Palaszczuk government that will always back and invest in Townsville now and in the future.