




Speech By
Hon. Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 7 March 2024

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Townsville Electorate, Tourism

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources and Critical Minerals) (2.47 pm): I rise to speak about my favourite subject, and that is Townsville and the people of that great city. We know there were many impacts on tourism operators after Tropical Cyclone Kirrily, which is why we launched our Mates Rates campaign to help support our local businesses. This was also to help with the cost-of-living crisis. The campaign offered a 50 per cent discount off Townsville tourism experiences to help support that recovery. I have to tell you, it went off like a frog in a sock. It sold out within three days. I would like to thank Minister Healy for his exceptional work. He is not only a great tourism minister but also an outstanding local member. That is what we heard when we were in Cairns last week. He will be there for many terms to come.

I want to say thank you to the people of Townsville for supporting those local businesses with such enthusiasm. It sold out so fast. This was an excellent outcome for businesses right across the region. With several severe weather events hitting North Queensland recently, we heard from our local businesses loud and clear that they needed our support to bring visitors in the immediate and short term and we acted on that swiftly. We want to see Townsville grow and become more vibrant, which is why it is so important that we continue to support our tourism operators. This government's investment in infrastructure, like the Queensland Country Bank Stadium, which brings major events like Pink in two weeks time, along with works to build connecting boardwalks helps to activate our city centre and, in turn, our local businesses.

We are also supporting bringing supercars and the Australian Festival of Chamber Music to Townsville, because we know that it has a huge impact on our accommodation and our hospitality businesses, as well as our CBD businesses. We have done our part to rejuvenate the CBD and we will continue to invest in Townsville. What I want to know ahead of the local government elections is what Townsville City Council is doing to activate our city centre? It is not good enough that buildings have been left in a dilapidated or poor state of affairs. This has gone on for far too long and a new council—regardless of who is elected—needs to outline what it will do to help bring life back into our city.

I know they have tried in the past, but it is not good enough. My office has received direct feedback from people about the state of our CBD. As a government we are working with the Port of Townsville to bring in more cruise ships and passengers. It is embarrassing when those visitors walk through the city that they see parts of our city in such a poor state and see vacant shops outnumber occupied spaces and our pavements stained and dirty. There are fantastic parts of our CBD and amazing businesses around these parts as well. I am calling on council candidates to outline what they will do to help activate our CBD.