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**MEDIA RELEASE**

# Building a future for youth

Shadow Minister for Northern Queensland, Dale Last, said the youth jobs crisis was yet another reason his requests to fast-track infrastructure projects in the North should be acted on.

With a 7% increase in youth unemployment in Townsville during 2019, Mr Last said it was obvious the current approach was not working and that major projects would provide opportunities for young people to learn skills that could lead to long term employment.

“It’s no point beating around the bush pretending this isn’t a crisis in the making,” he said. “Nearly a quarter of our youth in Townsville are unemployed and that number is increasing, not decreasing.”

“I fully support young people taking part in training but, in order to secure long term employment, they need to be able to put their skills to practical use.”

“If you look at major projects that take years to build, projects like dams and roads, you can create opportunities for young people to really establish themselves in a profession with practical experience that will stand them in good stead well into the future.”

In recent weeks Mr Last has called for projects like the raising of the Burdekin Falls Dam and the construction of the Southern Access Corridor to be fast tracked and he said the youth unemployment rate was “another tick in the box” for the government to act.

“We have sections of road that are confirmed crash zones, we have almost unlimited potential at the Burdekin Falls Dam and we have all of these young people looking for opportunities,” Mr Last said. “The thing we don’t have is action.”

“It’s great to identify opportunities for new industries and new projects but identifying them doesn’t create jobs for unemployed people, it just generates reports, business cases and feasibility studies.”

“Yes, we need to plan those projects, we need to do due diligence, but we also need to actually act instead of doing the groundwork and then letting projects and opportunities gather dust.”

“The sad fact is that, while the youth unemployment number grows, over \$1 Billion has been wasted and that is money that could fund projects and create jobs.”

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