



24 JUL, 2025

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Townsville Bulletin, Townsville

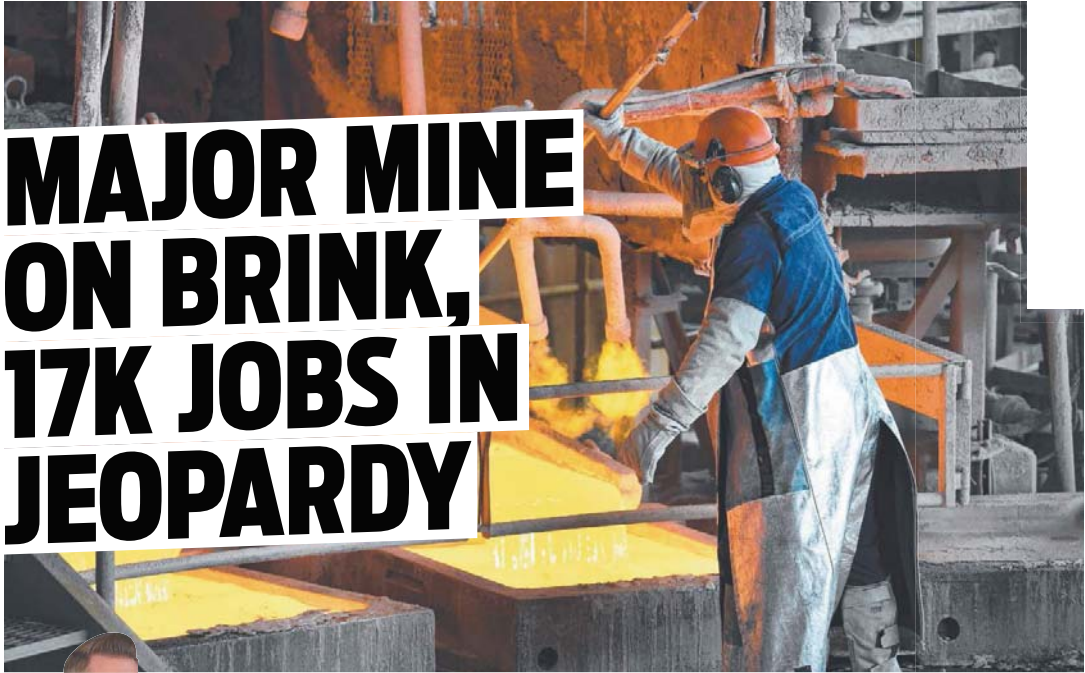


Glencore to shelve operations in Townsville and Mt Isa as politicians argue over who's to blame



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Caitlan Charles, Jill Poulsen, Hayden Johnson

Glencore is preparing to press pause on copper smelting and refining in North Queensland after the state government’s proposed “potential support” fell “well short”.

This comes after it was revealed that 17,000 jobs in North and North West Queensland

could be in jeopardy if the smelter and refinery closed down.

It is understood the state government offered several financial incentives, including payroll tax deferral, to stave off closure but it’s not enough to keep Glencore’s operations up and running.

The company is expecting to report a \$2.2bn loss from 2025-31 from the Townsville and Mount Isa operations.

In email to staff, Glencore revealed it had no choice but to start preparations to place the Townsville refinery and the Mount Isa smelter into care and maintenance until market conditions improved enough for operations to become viable.

“To date Glencore has been absorbing losses hopeful that a viable solution could be found,” interim chief operating officer Tony Wilson wrote.

“However, we are fast reaching the point at which Glencore cannot continue to absorb these losses.”

Deputy Premier Jarrod Bleijie said Glencore “owe it” to the people of Mount Isa and Townsville to look after its workers.

Mr Bleijie declined to say whether the state government would better its offer to provide direct financial support to the company, but instead directed those questions to the resources minister.

“Our priority is obviously

the workers but I would say this to multinational company Glencore; Mount Isa has been very good to Glencore and Glencore should return the favour to the workers in Mount Isa,” he said.

“We will continue to work with Glencore and the company in good faith as we have been.

“Glencore has a responsibility to the workers of Mount Isa who have been very good to Glencore and their shareholders and it is time for Glencore to return the favour to the people of Mount Isa and the central west.”

Mr Wilson said after five months, the Queensland government had “verbally briefed” Glencore on their “initial thinking” on support.

He said what was offered would not bridge the “economic gap for the copper smelter and refinery”.

“Glencore is now urgently seeking details from the federal government on their pro-



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posed national smelting/refining strategy,” Mr Wilson said.

State Mines Minister Dale Last previously said the government was “engaging closely” with the federal government and Glencore, but that he understood the importance of the operation to the region.

“The future of the Mount Isa copper smelter and Townsville refinery are among the most important issues on my desk, and we are doing everything we can to ensure their continued operations,” he said.

But when pressed about Glencore’s decision to begin preparations for a shut down, Mr Last said the government would not be signing a blank cheque and suggested the company was not operating in the best interests of the region.

“The Crisafulli government continues to negotiate in good faith but will not be writing a blank cheque for a multinational company that returned \$2.2bn USD to its shareholders just months ago, and continues to act only on its global commercial priorities rather than in the interests of the Mount Isa and Townsville communities,” he said.

“The Queensland government has put a genuine and responsible offer on the table to help secure the future of the Mount Isa copper smelter and Townsville refinery because the Crisafulli government backs our resources and minerals processing sectors and

the hardworking families who rely on them, and we’re asking Glencore to do the same.

“Our advocacy with the federal government continues because the competitiveness of smelters in Australia is a national issue, and it demands a national response.”

Earlier this month, the federal government offered a lifeline to Nyrstar’s Hobart zinc refinery and its smelter in Port Pirie, South Australia.

It fed hopes that the federal government could step in to assist Glencore, with the closest smelter and refinery outside of North

Queensland in South Australia.

Mr Wilson said the company was “running out of time” for a solution.

“We need to know in the coming weeks whether there is a viable solution on the table from governments,” he said.

In his email, Mr Wilson said he was “aware” of the impact this news might have on staff and offered them confidential support.

Traeger MP, Robbie Katter, who lives in Mount Isa, said he did not believe all hope was lost, but added that this was one of the biggest mistakes the LNP had made since forming government.

He said the government was

warned that a “bureaucratic decision” was never going to work. Mr Katter added that the government could solve problems with the Olympics, but not with an industry that was supporting 17,000 jobs in the North.

“I get the strong sense that government departments feel they know better than the industry and that is a hallmark of poor govern-

ment,” he said.

Mr Katter said governments needed to be willing to override departments and treasury to get results.

He said he hoped the federal government would step in.

Opposition treasury spokeswoman Shannon Fentiman said she believed the state had let down the region.

“I don’t think they have done anything ... this will potentially lead to unemployment up to 18 per cent across North Queensland,” she said.

“This is devastating ... What has David Crisafulli done? He’s travelling on his jet here, there and everywhere, has been up to Mt Isa? “Do something David Crisafulli because so far we’ve seen nothing.”

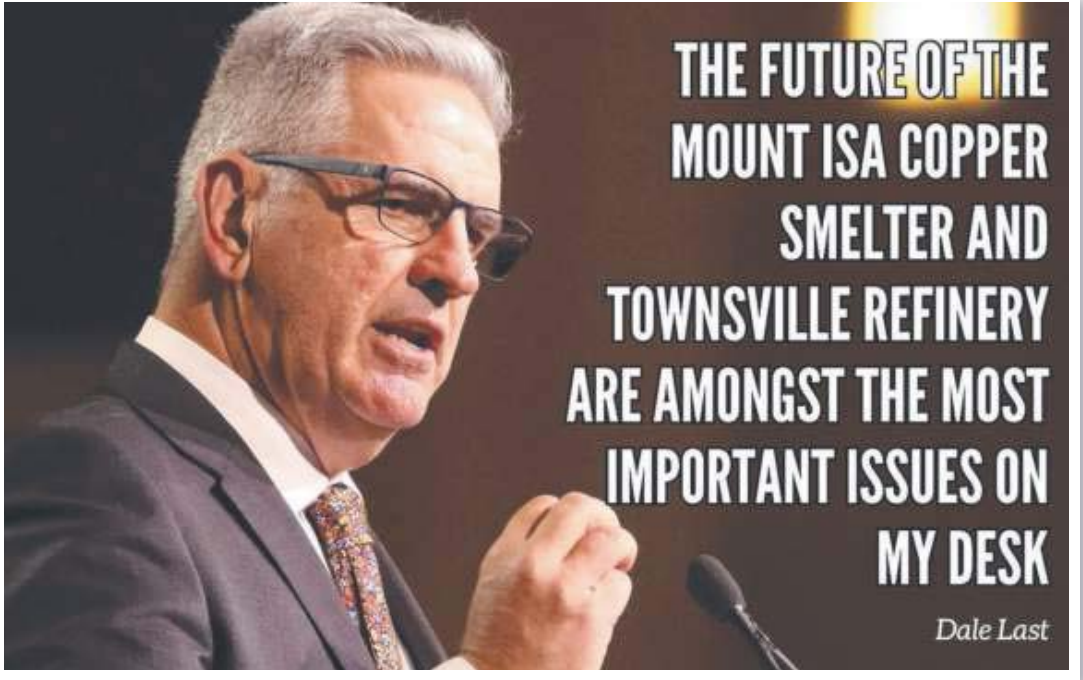
The federal government was contacted for com-



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MP Dale Last says the government will not sign a blank cheque to the multi-billion company. Below, right, Traeger MP Robbie Katter blasts Jarrod Bleijie (left) and the LNP Queensland government.





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