



30 JUL, 2025

It's our turn to get help

Townsville Bulletin, Townsville

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With Queensland's copper industry on its knees, Ms MacRae has issued her most direct plea yet to both levels of governments: get the deal done now to save the Mount Isa Copper Smelter and Townsville Refinery – and the 17,000 jobs that depend on them.

It comes as Federal MP Philip Thompson has blasted Labor saying the pleas from North Queensland were falling on “deaf ears”.

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Time to 'return \$15bn favour'

Jill Poulsen

The North West resources sector has delivered a whopping \$15bn to state and federal coffers in the past decade alone – and it is now time to return the favour, says Mount Isa Mayor Peta MacRae.

With Queensland's copper industry on its knees, Ms MacRae has issued her most direct plea yet to both levels of governments: get the deal done now to save the Mount Isa Copper Smelter and Townsville Refinery – and the 17,000 jobs that depend on them.

The Townsville Bulletin reported last week that after months of warnings, Glencore told staff that preparations were under way to place both assets into care and maintenance. Ms MacRae said she had grown tired of the state's response that the company "needs to be good to Queensland".

"This region has been good – no, great – to Queensland for generations," she said. "Mount Isa has quietly powered the state and national economy."

The Queensland Resources Council Economic Report shows that Mount Isa had contributed almost \$15bn in economic value over the past

decade. "In return, this region has asked for very little," Ms MacRae said.

"Mount Isa has been good to Queensland. Now it's time for Queensland and Australia to be good to Mount Isa."

In the wake of its proposed Senate inquiry into Australia's metals manufacturing industry decision being blocked, the Coalition called on Labor to tap into the billions available in the Future Made in Australia, northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, Critical Minerals Facility or National Reconstruction Fund programs to save the facilities.

Speaking in Canberra on Tuesday, federal Herbert MP Phillip Thompson said the pleas for help from North Queensland had fallen on deaf ears. "But not everywhere has it fallen on deaf ears," he said in parliament.

"Because in Tasmania, the Prime Minister (Anthony Albanese) was happy to support the smelter down there. But that was only because there was a state election happening."

"The Prime Minister is happy to bail out his Labor mates down in Tassie, but

won't support the people of North Queensland."

For more than 60 years, Mount Isa copper smelter and Townsville refinery have underpinned the state's manufacturing capability and built the infrastructure, services, and communities that many now take for granted.

Ms MacRae said: "Queensland has funded hospitals, stadiums, and public services from the wealth of this region. Now it's time for Queensland – and Australia – to return the favour. This is our moment of need. We need leadership. We need a deal."

"And we need it now."

Ms MacRae said the copper supply chain was being undermined not by mismanagement, but by global market manipulation. "This is not just a Mount Isa issue – it's a national issue," she said. "Copper is essential for our clean energy future. If Australia walks away from refining and processing it here, we are handing over control to others who do not share our values or strategic interests."