



PRAISE ... Simon Crean says other regions should copy Townsville *Photo: TROY RODGERS*

# Townsville 'a model centre'

REGIONAL Australia Minister Simon Crean yesterday praised Townsville's development and encouraged other regions to copy the city.

Mr Crean told a Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia conference Townsville should be used as a model for regional development.

"Townsville is an interesting example of a city that has understood the importance of economic development," Mr Crean said.

"It has such a range of economic activity and that's what makes it so attractive.

"It's the reason its unemployment rate is low."

Unemployment in the Townsville region is estimated to be 4.5 per cent - almost

**TONY RAGGATT**



one percentage point below the national average.

Mr Crean said he believed Townsville would continue to prosper because it had understood the importance of economic diversity and had a strategy to chase investment and build its amenity and liveability.

"Townsville should be seen as something of a model for other regions to embrace," Mr Crean said.

Asked if the city could expect to see more of him, Mr Crean said he would travel

extensively around Australia.

Asked if the position of independent MPs such as Kennedy's Bob Katter in holding the balance of power had enlivened major parties to the needs of regional areas, Mr Crean said he believed it had given him more leverage in the portfolio.

He said that as a unionist he had always understood the importance of leverage.

"I think the agreement with the independents has given us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to entrench regionalism in the way in which we govern ourselves," he said.

"I think that's a good thing. I have always believed it."

Mr Crean said governments at all levels

needed to embrace more with regions and their regional development bodies.

He said he was keen for governments to break down their portfolio spending by region so regions would have a better sense of spending in areas such as health, education and infrastructure.

"It's not a question that we haven't be spending (in the regions)," Mr Crean said.

"The challenge is how we spend it more efficiently."

Mr Crean encouraged regions to devise local solutions to their problems.

He said the prospects, not just of jobs and security, but also liveability, was the real attractor for regional growth.

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