



Speech by

**Mr TIM MULHERIN**

**MEMBER FOR MACKAY**

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Hansard 18 September 1998

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**  
**APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (3.05 p.m.): I congratulate the Treasurer on his excellent first Budget. This Budget is a Budget for all Queenslanders and is in keeping with our election commitment of creating jobs, rebuilding our communities and delivering a Budget surplus. The Budget has been delivered without any new taxes or increased taxes and charges and, as promised, we have delivered a Budget within the framework of the previous Government's May Budget document.

However, unlike the coalition's first Budget, we have not implemented a capital works freeze which wreaked havoc on local communities throughout Queensland causing massive job losses in the construction industry. The record capital works budget will provide more than 65,000 jobs, including 17,800 new jobs and ongoing employment for another 47,800 workers.

The Capital Works Program will stimulate domestic demand throughout Queensland, with 54% of the record Budget being spent on projects outside Brisbane. More than half a billion dollars will be spent on capital works in the Mackay region—up \$44m on the coalition's May Budget. This equates in spending to \$1,848 for every person in the Mackay and northern region and will contribute to the ongoing provision of nearly 8,000 full-time jobs in the region.

Major projects included in this Capital Works Program are \$22m to expand the Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal at Hay Point and \$28.7m for the Mackay Port Authority to continue the development of the marina wall, new sugar wharf and extensions to the Mackay Airport. In keeping with our election commitment of upgrading the Peak Downs Highway, \$3.2m will be spent on widening the highway from the Kerlong Range to Thirty Mile Creek.

This highway is the major artery to the Bowen Basin coalfields, which contribute substantially to Mackay's economy in providing jobs to our community. The traffic on this highway will increase dramatically as new mines like Hail Creek come on stream. It is anticipated that 15 new coalmines will be built over the next 20 years at the Mackay end of the Bowen Basin, creating many hundreds of jobs.

It is pleasing that the Beattie Labor Government is committed to accelerating the upgrade of this very important highway. In addition, \$13.4m has been allocated to the Ron Camm Bridge duplication and associated roadworks. When completed, the duplication will be welcomed by the people who live in the northern suburbs of Mackay.

Education, health, public housing and police have not been neglected by the Beattie Labor Government. Funding has been provided for ongoing construction of new schools at Marian and Beaconsfield as well as funding for airconditioning of schools under the \$42m Cool Schools program. The Mackay Base Hospital will receive \$11.8m towards the \$26m hospital redevelopment. The people of Mackay were pleased that the Health Minister, the Honourable Wendy Edmond, abolished the coalition's capital charge on the redevelopment, as this would have taken \$1m a year out of the district's health budget, which would have led to a reduction in services to the Mackay community.

Mackay has the highest rental market in the State, and the \$9.1m allocated for public housing will go some way towards alleviating this problem. Loutish behaviour at Slade Point has been an ongoing problem, and the residents of this beautiful seaside suburb should not have to tolerate this behaviour. During the election campaign, the now Police Minister, the Honourable Tom Barton, visited

the area and inspected first-hand the problems in this community and announced that a Police Beat would be established at Slade Point to tackle the problems in the community. I congratulate the Minister on keeping his promise and delivering funding for the beat in this Budget.

The Slade Point community has recently established a Neighbourhood Watch under the chair of Mr Tony McGrath. As well, youth agencies are doing an excellent job in working with young people who are at risk. I congratulate Tony and the youth workers on the excellent work that they are doing to make Slade Point one of the most livable suburbs in Mackay. No doubt they are looking forward to meeting the police officer who will be stationed at the Slade Point beat.

As well as providing infrastructure, I welcome the announcement of an extra 400 police, 685 teachers and 905 health workers to be employed this financial year to provide services across the State. I am sure that the Mackay region will get its fair share.

Another major issue in the election campaign was the inadequate funding in the disability area for unmet needs. The now Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services, the Honourable Anna Bligh, was a regular visitor to Mackay, where she met regularly with families and carers who told her of their plight. The Minister recognised that Mackay and central Queensland had been historically under-funded in this area, and no doubt the additional record \$30m in funding will go some way towards addressing the unmet needs of my constituents.

The biggest issue confronting our community is that of long-term unemployment and providing jobs to our youth. The record capital works budget will assist in providing ongoing employment and new jobs for people. However, the real challenge for Government is to break the long-term unemployment cycle by providing apprenticeships, traineeships and job placements.

I welcome the initiative by the Beattie Government of the \$283m four-year Breaking the Unemployment Cycle package and a new industry training fund. This package will create 27,000 apprenticeships, traineeships and job placements over the next four years. \$109m will be spent in creating 9,000 job placements for the long-term unemployed, who will work on essential public and community works, giving them the opportunity to gain valuable skills while working on worthwhile community projects. This package is a partnership between Government, the private sector and the community in attacking unemployment at all levels. The private sector has the potential to create up to 9,000 apprenticeships and traineeships, and Government across all sectors can create 6,500 apprenticeships and traineeships. There will be a \$2,000 cash incentive for employers on group training schemes who take on additional apprentices.

The Beattie Labor Government has not forgotten communities in need. The town of Bowen has copped its fair share of set-backs in the last few years, with the closure of the meatworks and coke plant, resulting in the loss of many hundreds of jobs directly and indirectly. The coalition Government wiped its hands of Bowen. However, the Beattie Government has listened to the concerns of the Bowen community through strong representation by the mayor, Councillor Mike Brunner, and the former member for Whitsunday, Lorraine Bird, and has delivered in this Budget a \$10.5m package over four years to address the high unemployment and associated problems in Bowen.

There is a limit to how much a Government can do in creating jobs. It must set the right economic parameters so that the private sector can create the investment opportunities and business growth to create jobs. The funding of the Mackay/Whitsunday Regional Economic Development Corporation will assist the private sector in identifying new investment opportunities, new projects and business growth opportunities to create new jobs.

The State Development Centre in Mackay will work closely with this organisation to maximise the benefits of development, such as the proposed Chevron gas pipeline, which will run close to Mackay. This project has the potential to give us an environmentally friendly and relatively cheap source of power in the district, and this would considerably help further industrial development. That, of course, means jobs for the whole district. This Budget provides a strong foundation for future economic growth and job creation and is in keeping with our election commitment of creating jobs and rebuilding communities.

Finally, I thank the electorate of Mackay for re-electing me as their member. They have placed a great deal of trust in me and I will work hard to repay their trust. It is an honour to represent the people of Mackay in this Chamber.

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