



Speech by


**Jason Costigan**

**MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY**

Hansard Friday, 14 September 2012

---

## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; FISCAL REPAIR AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr COSTIGAN** (Whitsunday—LNP) (12.35 pm): I rise in the House in support of the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2012, Appropriation Bill 2012 and Fiscal Repair Amendment Bill 2012. I would like to begin by saying that this groundbreaking 2012-13 state budget is a win-win for regional communities—communities such as the Mackay-Whitsunday region that I represent; communities that were forgotten by successive Labor administrations underlined by the fact that the socialists now have just two North Queensland based MPs today.

Before I go any further, to all those hardworking public servants who have lost their jobs as part of this vital process to get Queensland back on track, I am sorry. I genuinely feel for those people and those who will be out of a job, but the fact remains that this state could not go on with the sheer size of the Public Service we had given the \$65 billion debt this government inherited when it came to office.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if you love regional Queensland like I do—and I have no doubt you would be of a similar view, and you are not alone—perhaps the greatest statistic to come out of this budget is the fact that 75 per cent of capital expenditure will be directed to communities outside Brisbane. Suffice to say my part of the north, home to the biggest regional economy of the north, gets our slice of the pie. From a very parochial point of view, I am pleased to see in the critical area of health \$84.7 million go towards the \$408.3 million redevelopment of the Mackay Base Hospital—a redevelopment that happened thanks to the sale of the Mackay airport by the former Labor government. I am also delighted to see \$1.5 million to enhance mental health services in the Mackay-Whitsunday region. Mental health is a subject that no-one seemed to speak about years ago, but clearly those days have changed. This government has drawn a line in the sand on this important area of public policy, and I commend the Minister for Health.

The doubling of the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme is a wonderful new initiative. Even in the contribution to the debate by 'Turncoat Toot', the member for Dalrymple, he thought it was a good idea. I personally know of many people in my electorate who have been battling for years and years driving up the Bruce Highway—or the battered and bruised highway as I sometimes call it—to regional cities like Mackay and Townsville for specialist treatment. Well, they are getting extra help now from this LNP government.

In education, Mackay and the Whitsundays have done well in this budget. My electorate is getting the only new state high school in Queensland next year outside of the south-east corner, some would say largely thanks to the pressure we put on the former member for Whitsunday, a schoolteacher in a previous life, who said right here in the parliament that this school would open its doors by 2003.

**Mr Ruthenberg:** Time stood still.

**Mr COSTIGAN:** I take the interjection from the member for Kallangur. For the people of the northern beaches, it was like waiting for an iceberg to turn up in Eimeo Creek. Labor is like the New South Wales State of Origin team: they talk a good game but they do not play one. I certainly hope the Cowboys do tonight.

For the record, \$34.5 million from this budget will go towards the completion of the Mackay Northern Beaches State High School in the city's premier growth corridor, home to some terrific people in suburbs

such as Shoal Point, Bucasia, Eimeo, Rural View and Blacks Beach. On that note, I congratulate Sian Burrows on her appointment as foundation principal and look forward to joining Ms Burrows on site in the coming months as we see this new school come to life.

The northernmost high school in my electorate is also in the money—\$1.5 million to complete electrical upgrades and replace air conditioners at Proserpine State High School. We should not forget funding that has also been allocated for teacher aide work at two wonderful country schools in my electorate, Calen District State College and Bloomsbury State School. And, speaking of government schools in my electorate, from Glenella in the south to Hayman Island in the north, they are all eligible for grants of up to \$160,000 to help address a backlog of maintenance issues—a tremendous new initiative on the part of the Newman LNP government that will come as music to the ears of the various P&Cs.

In terms of law and order, I am pleased to advise the House that since the election on 24 March we have already seen eight new police officers put on the beat across our region, specifically those officers assigned to the Mackay station on the south side of the river, the Northern Beaches station on the north side of the river and also Cannonvale in the Whitsundays. This 2012-13 budget commits \$34.7 million in funding for 300 extra police officers on the front line across Queensland. It goes without saying that I will be fighting for my fair share for Mackay and the Whitsundays.

I am also delighted to see in the 2012-13 budget \$833,000 in funding towards a new police boat for the Mackay-Whitsunday waters, from Percy Isles in the south to Cape Upstart in the north, a stretch of coastline that includes the biggest offshore population along our east coast, spread across the Whitsunday islands, plus the coal ports of Hay Point, Abbot Point, the sugar and grain port of Mackay—a great exporter of course of sugar and grain—the port of Bowen and tourist ports like Shute Harbour.

Remember how Labor ripped away—and I am sure the Minister for Local Government's ears will prick right on cue here—those subsidies for local government in relation to water and sewerage? We are helping our councils. We are empowering them and this government is coughing up. In the case of the Whitsunday Regional Council, we are giving them \$14 million for upgrades to sewerage treatment plants at Cannonvale and Proserpine, plus \$5.4 million for upgrades to water treatment plants at Proserpine and Bowen.

This budget will also help the environment—something that is very important, needless to say, given the electorate that I represent. The natural resources management body, Reef Catchments, will receive \$900,000 to help deliver strong environmental outcomes for Mackay and the Whitsundays. For those unaware, as I said a moment ago, the Mackay-Whitsunday region is the biggest regional economy of the north, and to help grow that economy even more—which in the eyes of many of my constituents helps keep the lights on here in Brisbane—the Newman LNP government has put \$11.9 million towards planning for additional coal export terminals, due for completion midway through 2013.

In tourism, the lifeblood of the Whitsundays, we have something now to smile about—and not before time—with the doubling of funding for our regional tourism organisations. To quantify that, funding is increasing from \$3.1 million to \$7 million. RTOs will keep their existing funding levels but they will now have the capacity to seek additional funding—a share of \$3.9 million for localised initiatives to draw more visitors to their respective areas, including the Whitsundays, therefore growing our tourism industry and providing more jobs for local people.

It is good news for RTOs like Tourism Whitsundays and is in stark contrast to what happened under Labor when my predecessor presided over a disaster in tourism as the then minister for tourism. That is right; she had stewardship of this industry, an industry that is part of our four-pillar approach to get the Queensland economy back on track. Let us not forget her Labor comrade the former local mayor. He even cut funding to Tourism Whitsundays. We have \$20 million extra for tourism marketing across the state. I believe there will be a renaissance of this industry and that includes my beloved Whitsundays.

We have also unveiled \$50 million over four years for the Marine Infrastructure Fund and, given the appalling standard of boat launching facilities in the Whitsundays, particularly in light of boat registration numbers in our region of Mackay and the Whitsundays, I will be backing any local submission to address this—in particular, a much improved local launch facility at VMR Cannonvale.

To our sugar industry—

**Mr Cripps:** Hear, hear!

**Mr COSTIGAN:** I take the interjection from the member for Hinchinbrook, the honourable minister. Hasn't it been a great mainstay of the Queensland economy for so long? It is one of Queensland's best known industries and of course has underpinned the economy of the Mackay-Whitsunday region since the early days of European settlement way back in the 1860s. In this budget we want to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. We have to invest locally to ensure that our industry is competitive in the global marketplace. That is why we have committed \$4.6 million for sugar research and development and extension services to increase the productivity of Queensland's \$1.2 billion sugar industry. This investment in sugar industry research and development is part of our commitment to grow a four-pillar economy and double agricultural

food production by 2040. This commitment will support critical research and development in the industry by providing much needed money to the BSES and eventually to Sugar Research Australia, the new body the sugar industry has recently voted overwhelmingly to become the principal provider of research and development to the sugar industry.

The Mackay-Whitsunday region benefits in many other ways from this groundbreaking and historic budget. Other highlights include: \$8.8 million for the Burdekin to Moranbah pipeline duplication project, a vital project of significance in our hinterland; \$5.7 million to reinforce electricity supply to Jubilee Pocket and Riordanvale in the Whitsundays; \$4 million towards the upgrade of the main street of Airlie Beach, a project that I believe will pave the way for an economic revival in this iconic tourism town; \$1.9 million for Mackay's Pioneer water supply; \$3.8 million for the Mackay North State High School, many of whose students reside in my electorate of Whitsunday; \$1.1 million for the Whitsundays' regional cyclone shelter at Proserpine State School; \$24.1 million for the Mackay campus of CQ Institute of TAFE to develop a major trade and technical skills centre, a wonderful initiative that will assist in addressing our region's skills shortage; \$10.2 million to continue the development of the master plan for the port of Hay Point and an environmental activity statement.

The two local governments that fall within my electorate—the Mackay Regional Council and the Whitsunday Regional Council—stand to benefit from the Newman LNP government's Royalties for the Regions program. I remind honourable members and the people of Whitsunday and those areas that rely on the resources industries that that is worth \$495 million over four years.

For the Bruce Highway, the lifeblood of so many Queensland communities, linking more than a dozen cities up and down the coast, including my home town of Mackay, there is \$1 billion on the table over the next decade, subject to a cost-sharing arrangement with the government. And, on that note, I call on Labor MPs such as the federal member for Capricornia to lift their game, to put some pressure on the likes of the federal Treasurer to provide some funding for our bruised and battered Bruce.

I am delighted to see this Newman LNP government allocating funding for 16 new overtaking lanes between Sarina and Bowen, a distance of about 230 kilometres. I remind members that right now, thanks to the neglect by the former Labor government, we do not have a single northbound overtaking lane between Mount Ossa and the Burdekin, a distance of about 250 kilometres. The Premier has been with me in my own car and has seen some of this highway before he became Premier. Put simply, we are moving to fix that.

Of course this budget is more than just line items for communities around Queensland; it is about sorting out our state's finances to get our AAA credit rating back and a \$652 million fiscal surplus in 2014-15. I am confident the Treasurer has us on the way.

Interest is the biggest expense incurred by this government. However, by attacking the fiscal repair work with courage, we will be saving taxpayers \$1.3 billion in interest payments over the forward estimates. That \$1.3 billion could pay, if you like, for a dual carriageway on the Bruce all the way from Sarina to the Abbot Point turn-off north of Bowen. As I said a moment ago, there is not one single northbound overtaking lane between Mount Ossa and the Burdekin.

This budget provides rock-solid cost-of-living assistance—freezing car rego in our first term in office, freezing tariff 11 power prices for 12 months and the reintroduction of the principal place of residence stamp duty concession. That move will save Queenslanders more than \$7,000, and let me tell you that in an expensive property market like Mackay every dollar counts. I particularly welcome the \$15,000 first home owner construction grant. It is perfect for young families starting out and perfect for tradies in communities like Airlie Beach who head up and down the Bruce Highway every day to make a quid, especially to places like Mackay and even further afield to the Bowen Basin. Thanks to this initiative, we can hope that localised work for them will be just around the corner.

In building a four-pillar economy based on agriculture, construction, resources and tourism, this government is delivering on its election commitments and, critically, without any new taxes on Queensland families. This is the most important budget in a generation—let there be no doubt. In decades to come, people will look back on this 2012-13 budget and say, 'Thank goodness the LNP came to power to save Queensland from going down the tube.' I commend the bills to the House.