




Speech By  
**Hon. Andrew Powell**

**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE  
AMENDMENT AND TRADE AND INVESTMENT QUEENSLAND BILL**

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (11.10 am): The Newman government is unashamedly focused on economic growth, rebuilding Queensland and making our communities more resilient. By working together, we are ensuring that Queensland remains a great state with great opportunity. As the environment minister, my focus is on helping grow the economy by cutting burdensome green tape and making way for businesses to create jobs whilst ensuring the state's environment is protected and maintained not just for now but for well into the future. As I like to say, I am the father of five children. I want my kids to inherit a state that is better than the one I inherited. But I also want them to have a job and that is about maintaining a balance.

The Department of Environment and Heritage Protection has an operating budget in the coming year of \$171 million and a capital budget of \$30 million and we will continue to do more with less. How will we do that? Simply by redirecting funding to practical, common-sense programs that will improve the state's natural and built environment. We will continue to deliver front-line services and continue to act as a strong environmental regulator, supporting long-term economic growth. We will continue to uphold environmental standards by taking a hardline approach with those who fail to meet their responsibilities.

This coming financial year we will continue to encourage individuals and community groups to protect and enhance Queensland's environment through funding for grassroots projects. This year we have put an extra \$1 million on the table for the second round of the Everyone's Environment grants program, with a total of \$4 million set aside for these wonderful projects in communities across the state. Other important initiatives in this year's budget include the \$11.7 million that I spoke about this morning to increase our available koala habitat as part of our \$26.5 million commitment to protect the future of koalas; \$10.7 million for the protected land acquisitions program, which supports our Investing in Our Environment for the Future commitment; and \$3.7 million for the regulation of coal seam gas. In North Queensland we have committed \$1.5 million over four years for the development and implementation of a new crocodile management plan for the Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Townsville and Hinchinbrook local government areas. We have put \$2.5 million as part of \$4 million over the next two years towards the Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership to maintain and continuously improve the health of that harbour and its waterways. We have \$2 million per year for water quality improvement projects in South-East Queensland.

We also remain strongly committed to ensuring that the values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area are maintained and in 2013-14, the Newman government will fund a number of initiatives to ensure that that occurs. Funding of \$10 million is included for initiatives such as the Great Barrier Reef coastal zone strategic assessment, support for the cane and grazing industries in the development of their best management practice programs and a review of the reef plan and the Great Barrier Reef Ports Strategy. In particular, in this coming year the Department of Environment and

Heritage Protection is funding extension activities and scientific projects to support the development and uptake of those best management practice programs. Yes, from beef to reef, these practices will not only reduce the regulatory burden on the cane and grazing industries but also enhance agricultural productivity and deliver on important water-quality targets. It is just another way that the Newman government is working with business, and not against it, to get great environmental outcomes.

As I have said, we are also putting \$4 million on the table over the next two years for the Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership. I look to the other partners in that partnership, particularly industry, and the Gladstone Ports Corporation, to match that funding so that we can continue to ensure rigorous scientific monitoring of the harbour and communication of that information to the members of the community in a way that they will understand.

It is all about doing more with less. This year, my department will work to further streamline approvals of 19 licence activities and reduce the time taken to get a licence from months to weeks, even days. Model conditions will be developed for specific categories of activities, such as intensive animal feedlotting, poultry farming, chemical manufacturing, tyre manufacturing, bottling and canning, meat processing, surface coating and sewage treatment plants, which will further reduce the time taken to get those licences and increase certainty and consistency for our clients. By streamlining the application process, by cutting green tape, the administrative role of environmental officers has been reduced, allowing the department to focus more strongly on better compliance, to focus more strongly on front-line services to better ensure that high environmental standards are met. I liken that to the random breath testing approach that occurs with our police. You can take the risk that you will not get caught, but one day they will catch you. With my officers increasingly out from behind their desks and on the ground monitoring and checking for compliance against high environmental standards, we will continue to ensure that this state is protected well into the future.

In order to meet the state's financial challenge, this budget includes a number of cost-saving measures, including a \$4.5 million saving to our employee services. That will be managed primarily through vacancy management. There is also \$61,000 on ongoing procurement savings. That will see a further reduction in our full-time equivalent staff by about 30. I am not going to shy away from these facts because, as the Treasurer and I have said before, bloated government is not the answer. Changing how we do business is the answer and that is what my department has done. I think one of the most poignant pieces of information that the Treasurer shared with us earlier this week was this slide—and I am happy to table it, but I believe it has already been tabled—on expenses growth in 2012-13, the lowest since 1998-99. It looks at public sector growth over the decade from 2001 through to 2011-12. I might add that during that time I worked for the Queensland government—right up to my election in 2009—and I can attest for what that slide shows: growth in the public sector, on average, of nearly nine per cent. The solution of the government that I worked for during that period was to throw more money and more public servants at the problem, not to ask, 'What is the problem?' and, if indeed, there is a problem—'Should we be looking at the way we do business and improving that?' That is exactly what the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection is doing, which is why we are contributing to what we are seeing in the coming year of an average rate of growth over the forward years of 2.6 per cent.

In the case of my department, that means that, yes, we continue to look for savings. Consistent with the Commission of Audit, we will be looking for ways that we can test our business. Are we doing what needs to be done? Are there better ways that we could be doing it? Are there ways we could be looking at contestability to see how we do business? I commend my director-general, Andrew Chesterman, and his executive management team who are so on the ball with this. The other day we sat down and had a renewal meeting about what is on the table, what can we look at. It was inspiring to see some of the things being brought forward by the executive management. That is full testament to Andrew Chesterman and the great work that he is doing.

Unlike Labor, this government does not seek to bury business under bundles of bureaucratic processes. Instead, we are taking a customer focused approach. It is how we can help you, not how we can stop you, delay you, or frustrate you. But importantly, we have changed the way we process information, we process the applications. We have thrown off the shackles of the old department of environment and resource management. If we can help you, we will. If we cannot, we will let you know why. What we do not do is tie you up in green tape and leave you to sort through those complicated processes without assistance. That is how we do business. Not only are we customer focused, open and transparent but also we are empowering our public servants to work with, and not against, business and industry to get great environmental outcomes.

Last year, we saw a balance restored to environmental regulation in Queensland and decisions made by a government not with an eye to green preferences, but an eye to what is best for all

Queenslanders and for the Queensland environment. That is how we contribute to ensuring that this is a great state with great opportunity.

In the time remaining to me I want to turn to the fabulous electorate of Glass House. I again thank the wonderful people of Glass House for the honour of serving and representing them in this fine parliament and the decisions we make around the cabinet table. There has been an injection of funds to many vital services that will benefit all constituents in the electorate of Glass House, be it in health, education, public transport or road infrastructure. There is also extra funding for police. We will continue to improve our commitment to community services and safety: from the small-ticket items like ongoing funding for additional police officers, which after many years of lobbying by myself and the community has seen two well received additional officers for the wonderful community of Woodford—and I thank the Minister for Police and Community Safety for his support in that initiative and look forward to seeing the additional rollout of police in the coming year—to the big-ticket items like the millions of dollars that the member for Kawana mentioned going into the continuing work on the Sunshine Coast University Hospital and increased funding for the Sunshine Coast and the Metro North hospital and health services and the injection of spending in the Mums and Bubs initiative, general and orthopaedic surgery, general medicine and ear, nose and throat therapy. All of these funding commitments will see the members of the electorate of Glass House benefit.

Turning to education, a fantastic initiative of this government has been the Fixing Our Schools Fund. As the Premier and Treasurer said, that maintenance program is fixing the holes in the walls, the toilets that do not flush and the bubblers that do not work. Instead of building fancy new buildings that will not get used, we are fixing up what needs to be fixed up first. I commend the many principals who have been in touch with me to thank us not only for the money but for the flexibility to look for local solutions. They know, as we know, that by doing that we are stretching this money even further because we are getting the benefit of contestability and investing in our local economies. I mentioned the Elimbah State School principal Gary Austin who got in touch with me when we announced this additional funding. He is very grateful that we are making this effort to remove the backlog of maintenance in not only the electorate of Glass House but across the state.

I also want to draw attention to the massive investment of \$537 million in our Great Teachers = Great Results program. I applaud the Minister for Education, Training and Employment for the work he and his department have done on this initiative. I know that it will produce fantastic outcomes for the students of the Glass House electorate and I look forward to seeing that rolled out over the coming years. The housing sector throughout Glass House will continue to see a funding boost to upgrade public rental housing properties and community housing. The Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services has also increased funding for respite accommodation, emergency response, support for school leavers and community care programs.

I applaud the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and the Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience for their efforts in finally getting works done on the Maleny-Kenilworth Road after the floods in 2011. The community has been very patient waiting for its turn. I know it was compounded by what occurred in January of this year. A couple of weeks ago when I did my 35-kilometre fundraising walk for chaplaincy along the Maleny-Kenilworth Road—I was a bit sore at the end of it—it was great to see the roadworks occurring on the replacement bridge at Conondale. I know contracts have been let and roadworks will start shortly on the Maleny-Kenilworth Road.

This government continues to provide ongoing concessions to the constituents of Glass House and the people of Queensland. The biggest concession in the electorate of Glass House is the ongoing public transport savings. Under the Labor government commuters from places like Palmwoods would have been faced with 15 per cent on 15 per cent increases in their public transport fares. We have dropped that to 7.5 per cent. That is thousands of dollars of savings for those regular commuters from places like Palmwoods, Glass House Mountains and Elimbah who are travelling into the city each and every day.

This increased commitment to deliver better services through the health, disabilities and communities, law and order, education, transport and road sectors across Glass House will assist in delivering a stronger economy, not only for the local region in Glass House but across the entire state. I am proud to be a member of this government. I am proud to be a member of the cabinet. I am pleased to have worked alongside the Treasurer and I commend him and his team on bringing forward what is an extraordinarily good budget and one that will set us up for the future. I commend the bills to the House.