




Speech By
Hon. David Crisafulli

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

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

 **Hon. DF CRISAFULLI** (Mundingburra—LNP) (Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience) (2.38 pm): The Newman government is rebuilding Queensland. I am not just referring to the roads, water treatment plants and bridges that were wiped out earlier this year—in many cases for the second or third time in a couple of years—I am also talking about the urgent need for us to keep turning the state's ship from the rocks of debt, deficit and deceit. The budget handed down on Tuesday is a responsible and calculated one—the result of honest analysis about the economic realities we face today. Those realities have been shaped by the legacy of Labor debt, but that is not the only driver of this budget. It also addresses many of the urgent needs of regional Queensland, focusing on areas like health, education, law and order, and roads—issues that are very important to my electorate of Mundingburra.

More than two-thirds of the money set aside in the 2013-14 Queensland budget for capital expenditure will be spent outside of Brisbane. That includes the \$24 million for flood mitigation works that will fully fund the raising of Blakey's Crossing, a major traffic black hole in my city that floods after every heavy downfall and throws the surrounding network into chaos. It is delightful to have the Minister for Transport and Main Roads here today because he knows how important that road is as a major connector for my city. Whilst it is a council road, fully funded by the council, it would have been hypocritical of me to change my tune when I came into this place after campaigning for nearly a decade to have that road funded by the state. Why? Because when that road is cut it puts huge pressure on our state controlled roads, and what that means is that our network simply cannot handle it with that capacity gone. Nearly \$38 million has been flagged this year to realign the Bruce Highway between Ayr and Townsville, jointly funded with the federal government. Overall, over \$150 million has been allocated for the Bruce Highway, which meets the LNP election commitment.

I also want to talk about some of the local intersections that will be upgraded this calendar year, and they are very important intersections. I mentioned Blakey's Crossing. These are the roads that feel the pressure when Blakey's is out. I always say that when Blakey's Crossing is closed it gives us a snapshot of where we were headed under the previous government when you do not build infrastructure ahead of the game in regional Queensland. You must build infrastructure ahead of the game otherwise you are constantly chasing your tail and, quite frankly, you will never catch up. The Dalrymple Road and Banfield Drive intersection and the Woolcock Street and Mather Street intersection are key intersections, and the fact that that work will be conducted in the next 12 months makes me very, very pleased. There is some unfinished business in my electorate, and I intend to push very hard. Again, it is great to have the minister here. There is unfinished business and I intend to make sure that that gets done in the years ahead.

In the area of health, the Townsville Hospital will get nearly \$90 million to continue redevelopment work. The hard work of the local board—and I pay tribute to all on that board including its chairman, John Bearne—is starting to pay dividends, with money to be spent on front-line services

rather than back-of-house administration. As Townsville's population marches towards 200,000, it is essential that we have a hospital that is both physically capable and properly staffed to meet those challenges. I pay tribute to every employee and every volunteer at the hospital who helped transform a monolithic, centralised bureaucracy into a local, service focused organisation.

Law and order is a major concern for the people of Townsville—a major concern—and time and time again I hear that message loud and clear in my electorate. The \$2 billion allocated to the Queensland Police Service this financial year is another step in the right direction. There has already been about a 15 per cent increase in police numbers over the past 12 months in Townsville, and that is a great start. The budget provides for more record numbers to come out of the local academy, which we are very, very proud to have in our city. That is only one of the ways we are putting the public's money to work to make them and their families safer.

The amount of \$2.4 million has been provided for the Townsville boot camp for repeat juvenile offenders. I look forward to seeing the selection panel make a recommendation to the Attorney about where that boot camp should be held. Indeed, I have to pay tribute to the attentive members for Townsville and Thuringowa, currently hanging on every word I say about our local area because it means so much to them. They know that we have to get this right. They know that we have to get a boot camp site that enables good training to be conducted to turn people's lives around. We are not after hugs and kisses. We are not after a place where they can go out the back on to an 800-square metre lawn and hang out some washing. We want somewhere where they can get their fingers dirty, where they can actually hook in and do some good and turn their lives around.

We are also helping the kids who are doing the right thing to ensure that they can lead a fulfilling life and reach their full potential. This year the Newman government will spend \$100 million as part of our Fixing Our Schools Fund. As a preview of what is to come for Mundingburra students, in the past financial year schools in my electorate were allocated \$1.43 million to fix the maintenance backlog—yet another legacy we have inherited. It is not sexy to go and repair things. It is not sexy to go and do the hard yards and do the maintenance. It is always easier to take the approach of doing things that you can cut ribbons for. But if you are not doing the nuts and bolts, ultimately your assets run down and the quality of education you give kids suffers as a result.

I want to pay tribute to four principals in my city, and they are the principals of Currajong, Bluewater, Hermit Park and Rasmussen state schools. Those four principals got together and said, 'Not only will we take the opportunity to engage directly with the private sector'—that contestability word that sends shivers up the spine of some and gives opportunity to others—'but we are going to grasp this opportunity to see if we can deliver more value for money if we pool our resources.' The result has been fantastic. They engaged a local contractor, a local architect, and they have delivered value for money in a more timely fashion than they have ever been able to do before. I pay tribute to each and every one of them for the vision they have shown.

Mr Hathaway: A 20 per cent saving.

Mr CRISAFULLI: A 20 per cent saving, as the member for Townsville informs me and I know that he is a man who gets his facts and figures right.

These are just a few examples of this government looking after those issues that really matter to people in my part of the world and making sure that we get maximum value from each dollar spent. That is part of our covenant with the people of Queensland who were let down in the past. We are determined to make sure that our spending reflects the view that it is their money—the money belongs to the hardworking men and women of this state—and we must spend it wisely.

We have been entrusted to steer this state to a better future, maintain essential services and drive the best deals we can. And that is at the heart of how we are going about rebuilding the state after the devastating floods earlier this year. Fifty-seven of the state's 73 local government areas were impacted by flooding, and I saw more destruction and heartbreak than I ever want to see again.

The cost and task of rebuilding is enormous. The state is not rolling in cash. But we had to ask the question: do we spend your money rebuilding in the same way only for it to be knocked over again when it floods the next time or is this the time to try to find a way to build stronger, more resilient communities? Of course we would dearly love to choose the latter.

When some who knew about the complex conditions that applied to flood recovery funding by the federal government said that we were dreaming and that the way the state had rebuilt in the past was the only way to do it, the Newman government pushed even harder to find a new route. We asked for \$100 million from the federal government; we were given \$40 million. We have agreed to match that \$40 million. Undeterred we are now in the process of putting that money to work so that, if a water treatment plant needs to be relocated or a road needs to be built to different specifications or

a road needs to be moved or a culvert needs to be improved, we can help councils deliver what their communities deserve—smarter, long-term use of their money.

I acknowledge that \$80 million will not change the world. It will not change the way that we rebuild these communities and make them bulletproof for the future. But it is my intention to show such value for money with that \$80 million that the next time a flood or a cyclone or other act of Mother Nature occurs it will be the federal government coming to us demanding that this becomes business as usual in the way we recover, because it makes sense. The federal government funds predominantly 75 per cent of the recovery from disaster events. It is the one who benefits most from this. We are offering fifty-fifty to upgrade that infrastructure to the next level.

Overall, we have allocated \$4.2 billion in this year's budget to rebuild Queensland, and obviously over half of that is going to road reconstruction. We must work hard to deliver that money this financial year. It will be made available from the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, funded jointly with the federal government. We will be making every cent count, but particularly that \$80 million in betterment funding.

In this financial year we have allocated around \$150 million in grants and subsidies to enable councils to carry out new projects as well as major upgrades to water and sewerage infrastructure. This includes \$14.6 million for local government infrastructure grants and \$12.3 million for floods response to fulfil the recommendations of the Floods Commission of Inquiry. We will go out with other funding for floods through both the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Community Safety to make sure that councils get great value for their money.

For the first time this year I have tightened the time frames for councils to deliver these projects. Councils must now spend the money applied for in a 12-month period. The message is clear: we will do whatever it takes to help Queensland councils deliver the projects they have applied for. The flow-on effects of this quicker delivery will be enjoyed by every Queenslanders as they get the infrastructure they want and the prosperity that will evolve from that delivery.

Today I announce that applications for the local government grants and subsidies infrastructure component are now open and they will close on 28 June. The assessment period for infrastructure grants will be about two weeks. I contrast that with times gone by when local councils have waited months for the state government to make an assessment and often these announcements coincided with a state election. Then we wondered why local councils were not capable of spending that money in that financial year. There will be no excuses this year. We will turn those approvals around quickly, and in return we ask the councils to deliver for their communities in this financial year.

If a council is having trouble with their schedule because of unforeseen circumstances or it is a large project for which they want to put in a different bid, they can come and we will work out a solution. But this is an initiative to drive cultural change and we want that to be the exception rather than the norm. We want to help the most effective layer of government—the one closest to the people—be as efficient as possible and as productive as the state needs it to be.

This year we are also changing the way we fund Indigenous councils. This is something I am very passionate about. At the moment, and for more years than most of us can remember, governments have rewarded Indigenous councils with the weakest financial performance. The ones that were not prepared to do the hard yards have been rewarded. As someone who has visited each of Queensland's Indigenous communities, I want to put on record a truism that everyone who has spent some time in Indigenous townships knows. The problem is not the amount of government spending. The problem is not the number of public servants who fly in and out of these communities every day of every week. It is how we are spending the money. It is a culture of a generation of paternalism, lack of control and lack of self-empowerment. That is the problem with Indigenous councils that has been left to fester and fester.

In this year's Local Government budget I have changed the way the state government financial aid will work. The base grant of \$32 million will move from a quarterly payment with all the bureaucratic reporting guidelines that go with it to two 50 per cent incentive payments to the 12 councils that have achieved unqualified financial audit results in the year 2011-12—trust. In the year ahead the SGFA base grant will be 10 per cent lower, or \$29 million, spread between all of Queensland's Indigenous communities on traditional funding guidelines. But for the first time there will be \$3 million up for grabs for those who perform at a higher level. These incentive payments will be paid to councils that show improved generation of own-source revenue—for example, through appropriate fees and charges for municipal services or as support payments to councils that are pursuing business and economic development opportunities. We will be rewarding those who are prepared to do the hard yards and look after their community. Gone are the days of punishing

councils. We will reward councils and we will encourage other councils to step up to that level. We cannot continue to look after those who are not prepared to do the hard yards, because that comes at the expense of the ones who are.

In the future I hope to expand the incentive component of these payments as communities respond to the challenges in front of them. The change may only be small in amount, but I know that if we keep doing the same things we will keep getting the same results. If we start changing things now, we have an opportunity to change the results and improve life for everyone who lives in Indigenous communities. It is one of the few ambitions that I believe would be held unanimously by every member in this House today—that and seeing Queensland return to prosperity and opportunity, which is what this budget will achieve.