




Speech By  
**Hon. Andrew Powell**

**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

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Record of Proceedings, 5 June 2014

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (10.11 pm): Tonight I have the pleasure of sharing with the people of Glass House the benefits of having a government with a strong plan for a brighter future; a government committed to better infrastructure through better planning, reducing the cost of living and restoring front-line services; and a government that listens to the people of Queensland and the people of Glass House. Whilst I have a number of budget wins for the wonderful people of Glass House and for the broader Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay regions, two sum up those benefits most. In the south of the electorate residents of Wamuran, D'Aguilar, Delaney's Creek, Mount Mee, Woodford and areas further west live daily with the challenges of the D'Aguilar Highway. Those challenges are nearly at an end. Tomorrow morning I will be beside the highway with my good friend and federal member for Longman, Wyatt Roy, to announce a program of upgrades to this notorious highway.

At the outset please let me thank profusely the federal government, especially Wyatt and the Deputy Prime Minister, Warren Truss, for their investment of \$16 million in these projects. Without that funding, this simply would not be possible. Through the value add of our state Department of Transport and Main Roads, through innovative alignment of project and maintenance funding, our communities will gain so much more than they would have under Labor governments. That is what comes from better planning: better infrastructure. Tomorrow, Wyatt and I will be announcing upgrades to the intersections with J Lindsay Road and Gamgee Road, partly funded by the state and partly funded by the federal government; upgrades to the intersections with R Williams Road and Gamgee Road, again, partly funded by both governments; and, thanks to Wyatt and the federal government, upgrades to the D'Aguilar Highway between the Gamgee Road intersections that will see a widening and rehabilitation of the road surface and, if detailed design work goes according to plan, most importantly, the addition of an overtaking lane heading east to Wamuran.

On top of this, we will also be announcing an intersection upgrade at Canando Street, Woodford and a visibility and safety improvement project along the length of the highway to Kilcoy. Detailed design work will commence immediately, tenders let around November and works to start soon after. To the fantastic families who live and work alongside the D'Aguilar Highway I say thank you for your patience and for your support; the wait is nearly over.

The other example I wanted to highlight is in the north of the electorate. Residents of the Blackall Range would well be acquainted with our fight to keep the Hinterland Connect bus service, a service that brings together Maleny, Montville, Flaxton, Mapleton and Nambour. We had 12 months to prove it was being used to the standards required by TransLink. We were close—tantalisingly close—but not close enough. But because Minister Emerson, the transport minister, has listened to the community through my representations, he has given us a further 12 months to demonstrate

Hinterland Connects' viability. Importantly, he has given us the chance to offer alterations to the timetable—not more services, but better use of the existing services. We do need the Sunshine Coast Regional Council to continue their 50-50 contribution to the route but, given the passionate advocacy and support of Division 5 Councillor, Jenny McKay, I am confident of this outcome. So I say to the people of the Blackall Range: get in contact with my electorate office to make your suggestions for timetable improvements. We have one more opportunity over the next 12 months to prove the pricelessness of this Hinterland Connect service. Again, I pass on my thanks to Minister Emerson and Councillor McKay.

All of this is ultimately only possible because of the efforts of the Treasurer and Minister for Trade, the Hon. Tim Nicholls. Under his stewardship, we have demonstrated that government can be fiscally responsible, can live within its means and yet continue to expand the services that Queenslanders want and need whilst not raising the taxes Queenslanders do not want. As a result, we have been able to stretch our funding to cover the shortfall created by the federal government unilaterally pulling out of the national partnership agreement on seniors' and pensioners' concessions. We have been able to put nearly \$370 million towards the construction of the Sunshine Coast Public University Hospital. We have been able to increase overall health funding by six per cent to \$13.6 billion, funding that will see even more improvements to the already staggering improvements in emergency department performances, surgery waiting lists and public dental waiting lists—down 98 per cent since coming to government. We have been able to increase the Education budget by seven per cent to \$11.8 billion, thanks in part again to our federal colleagues, including \$920,000 in additional funding to Glass House electorate schools and a new school at Pumicestone Road, Caboolture.

We have been able to provide another 267 front-line police officers in the coming financial year on top of the 750 already on the beat and, importantly, two new officers at Palmwoods Police Station. We have been able to put \$1.1 million towards upgrading the Charlie Moreland Camping Ground. Again, alongside our grown-up federal government, we have put some \$3.3 billion towards Bruce Highway improvements between the Pine River and Gympie, mostly in my electorate, including finalising the intersection upgrades at Pumicestone Road, Bells Creek/Roys Road, Caloundra Road, Sunshine Coast Motorway and working towards six-laning alongside Ettamogah Pub and the Cooroy to Curra stage A.

Before turning to my portfolio, I do just want to share my excitement for our bright future as mapped out in the budget document *The Strongest and Smartest Choice*. There is more to do in Glass House. We want to see the north coast rail duplication, an intersection upgrade at Reed Street and Steve Irwin Way, Glass House Mountains and improvements to the Maleny-Kenilworth Road. To the people of Glass House I say: we can do this; with your support of our strong plan we will be able to reinvest some \$8.6 billion over the coming years in infrastructure projects such as these. I look forward to discussing these options with you over the coming months.

The Newman government is also continuing its commitment to protecting Queensland's environment in this year's state budget. Over the next 12 months, we will build on the success of the past two years. During this time, the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection has delivered a significant number of conservation and sustainability programs and implemented important regulatory reforms. In 2014-15, the department's operating budget of \$175 million and capital budget of \$29.9 million will ensure that this important work will continue. With a commitment of over \$78 million, almost half of EHP's total budget for the department's conservation programs, we will ensure that Queensland's unique biodiversity remains a priority for my department and the Newman government.

The Newman government is delivering practical environmentalism. Unlike Labor, we are focused on delivering green outcomes, not Greens preferences. Queensland's Great Barrier Reef remains one of the best managed marine ecosystems in the world and we are committed to ensuring that it is conserved to international standards for today, tomorrow and future generations to come. The Newman government continues this commitment, with a \$55 million injection for the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan over the next five years. Already this government has made significant gains to improve water quality by reducing run-off into reef catchments and we will do more to improve water quality for the Great Barrier Reef.

Through this budget's funding commitments, we will further develop and implement best management practice systems for graziers, canegrowers and other priority agricultural sectors. The Newman government works with farmers, not against them. It is this cooperative relationship that is producing productive outcomes. Already more than 800 farmers have joined our best management

practice programs, with more landholders soon to sign up and play their part in protecting our Great Barrier Reef. We will also continue our commitment to the Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership with further funding of \$1.5 million in 2014-15 to ensure open, honest and accountable management of the harbour through an annual report card. We will continue to repair Labor's mismanagement of Gladstone harbour by ensuring that information and open data on the health of the harbour—of water quality—is proactively made available to better reassure Gladstone and the wider community.

Before the last election we unveiled our Everyone's Environment grants program. Over the last two years we have awarded grants of \$7 million. Queenslanders understand the value of this program, and this year we have put \$5 million on the table to support grassroots projects that improve our local communities. We are about practical, tangible outcomes for this great state. The program provides funding opportunities for projects such as community and school gardens, wildlife habitat protection for threatened species, clean-up and weed control activities and restoration of degraded landscapes. Grants will also go to heritage projects that engage the community in conserving, understanding and appreciating Queensland's built heritage.

As we continue to encourage and support Queenslanders who want to improve their local environment, the Newman government is also helping to restore our state's most environmentally diverse areas. In the last two years, 41 nature refuges have been declared across an area of more than 986,000 hectares under our \$107 million Investing in Our Environment for the Future commitment. Very soon I will be able to announce the one millionth hectare of nature refuge that will be gazetted under the watch of this government—no small achievement indeed.

These initiatives will be further complemented by the introduction of Queensland's new environmental offsets legislation, which will establish a simplified and integrated environmental offsets framework. This government will deliver more strategic land corridors for habitat protection, unlike the random and patchwork-quilt approach of the Labor government. The Newman government is working smarter and harder to deliver strong outcomes for our environment and real benefits for our communities. At the same time, my department has been working to facilitate economic development. That's right: the environment and the economy can not only co-exist; they can complement each other. Long gone are the shackles of the former DERM. Officers from my department now ask 'How can we help you?', not 'How can we stop you?' We have adopted an innovative, outcomes based approach to regulation.

We have succeeded in cutting green tape without lowering environmental standards. Key reforms have included the green-tape reduction act reforms, the development of outcomes focused model conditions and the introduction of standard conditions for low-risk petroleum and gas operations. In the year ahead my department will continue to reduce the administrative and regulatory burdens on business and find further cost savings.

We take our role as an environmental regulator seriously, and we are constantly adopting new technologies and increasing our inspection rates to ensure we monitor the activities of industry. In particular, our innovative, outcomes based approach to regulation will receive a boost with a \$5.2 million commitment to coal seam gas industry regulation, the implementation of more cost-effective compliance monitoring programs and the further streamlining of assessment and approvals processes. We will also examine our financial assurance system to consider whether a risk based model could reduce costs for industry and free up balance sheets to enable further investment. We will continue to implement our regulatory strategy, further improving application processes to deliver outcomes focused conditions, giving businesses the flexibility to design their operations in cost effective and innovative ways.

In North Queensland we are providing a further \$2.3 million over two years to complete the three-year pilot crocodile management plans as well as \$9.1 million for the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger program, which provides activities to protect local species, land and waterways.

In summary, this budget is proof that we are delivering what we promised. We are going from strength to strength. Sustainable economic development and protecting Queensland's precious environment are not mutually exclusive, but can go hand in glove and we, the Newman government, have a strong plan for a brighter future.