




Speech By
Hon. Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Record of Proceedings, 7 August 2014

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Health and Community Services Committee, Report

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (11.55 am): I rise to read into the record a contribution on behalf of the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing. I thank the Health and Community Services Committee for the examination of the budget estimates in relation to my portfolio. I enjoy talking about the achievements in the National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing portfolio and how this government's strong plan is delivering a bright future for all Queenslanders.

We remain focused on our front-line services and delivering real outcomes for Queenslanders. Over the past 12 months we have delivered valuable initiatives to better manage and protect our parks, forests and protected area estates, to support and encourage physical activity and to ensure the integrity of the racing industry.

I am pleased to inform members that the Newman government is getting racing back on track. Our new 30-year wagering agreement with the Tatts group is expected to provide \$4.5 billion to the racing industry over the life of the agreement. This is an increase of \$850 million on the current term. Let me repeat that because it appears that those opposite just are not getting the message—\$850 million—a solid platform to help deliver the investment needed for racing to grow and prosper in the long-term.

It is a fantastic outcome, especially given that in this day and age there are interstate and international wagering options available through the mobile devices we all carry around. Even in this competitive and complex environment, the racing industry is \$28 million better off year on year. I can assure members that this investment into the racing industry will bring bigger and better dividends through the independent board structures that this government has put in place.

Let us take a moment to reflect on the outcomes of the racing commission of inquiry which found the industry plagued with serious management failures and has seen a number of former board members and senior racing executives investigated by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. That is the legacy that Labor left for racing in this great state.

Unlike those opposite, the Newman government has been unwavering in its commitment to restore accountability and integrity to the state's racing industry. Now we have secured the financial platform to ensure the 30,000 people working in the Queensland racing industry can look to a brighter future.

The Newman government's flagship \$47.8 million Get in the Game initiative has helped thousands of Queenslanders to get active. The program is helping to lower the cost of living by providing affordable sport and recreation options. We have issued 54,000 Get Started vouchers to help children with the cost of club registrations, provided \$7 million to 960 clubs for equipment and training and paid \$18 million to 220 clubs for infrastructure projects.

The \$1.5 million Nature Play initiative is another practical way we are helping Queensland families to build the foundations for lifelong health and fitness. It is another way we are helping kids to get outdoors and active, more often at little or no cost.

This government also invests significantly to ensure Queensland has top level sports infrastructure for elite competitions and major events. This investment helps the Newman government to grow a four-pillar economy through sports tourism, with many of these major venues also supporting grassroots participation.

We have also continued our initiative to encourage ecotourism opportunities in our parks. We have conducted a state-wide expression of interest for ecotourism facilities on national parks and helped to secure major events and recreational opportunities including the UCI mountain biking world cup at Smithfield Conservation Park in Cairns, which attracted 300 competitors from 33 countries.

Our front-line rangers are custodians of more than 12 million hectares of protected parks and forests, working hard to ensure proper management and accessibility for Queenslanders and visitors alike. Cleaning up and reopening our parks after the devastation of Tropical Cyclone Ita was essential to keeping the tourism industry of Far North Queensland alive over the Easter holiday period, and I applaud our rangers for their selfless efforts. Their work will be complemented by a \$20 million-plus investment in infrastructure improvements—helping visitors to enjoy these world-class destinations.

Our marine parks will also benefit. The Reef Ranger, a new 24-metre long-range vessel, will better support field management operations in the Great Barrier Reef. The Newman government's strong plan is delivering great outcomes and a brighter future for the people of Queensland. Queensland is without doubt a better place to live now than it was three years ago.

I would like to thank the committee and, in particular, the chairman and member for Kallangur, who once again allowed for robust debate across my portfolio. I also thank the parliamentary staff, members and the staff of my office and the department for their work throughout the estimates process.