




Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 July 2015

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (3.05 pm): In rising to speak to the appropriation bills, I congratulate the Treasurer for the work that he has put into the budget. Budgets are not easy things. They cover the whole of Queensland. A lot of work has been put into this budget. I am not saying this is the greatest budget I have ever seen, but it is a good budget, particularly for the first year of a new government. As governments come into power we are so used to being given a cut-smash type of budget. That is particularly what we see from a government in its first year. I commend the Treasurer because there are no cuts or smashing going on. We have seen an increase in the nurse-to-patient ratio. I believe that is a very good thing because nurses are the most trusted profession and the most needed. This definitely has to be commended.

I notice that there will be 13 extra teachers for the Dalrymple electorate. I know that will be very much appreciated. Over the years in Moranbah—and I am greatly honoured to have represented that area for the last 11½ years—we have been pushing for an upgrade in the air conditioning in the three schools. I think some were put in 30 to 40 years ago and are old evaporated air conditioners. I have visited those schools a number of times and have spoken to the students and all you could hear was noise but you would just get wind blowing and that was about it. We have received \$13½ million for those three Moranbah schools—Moranbah East, Moranbah State School and Moranbah State High School. I spoke to the mayor this morning, who has also made a number of submissions. I congratulate past P&Cs, present P&Cs, the local Isaac Regional Council and the community that has lobbied so hard. It is 40 degrees and sometimes 45 degrees in Moranbah. This will no doubt benefit this community, and the feedback is they are absolutely rapt. We are very appreciative.

In regard to the Gregory Developmental Road, I have been pushing this issue for a long time. We received \$150 million over five years. That first push came from me, the transport industry and the Charters Towers Regional Council—the Dalrymple Shire Council at the time. That money is spent. We were hoping to get more out of that budget. We received \$3 million for this upgrade but the \$3 million was for preparation work to upgrade Cape River Bridge. Cape River Bridge is a bridge that stops all the traffic travelling from Charters Towers right through to Clermont. This is probably a good sign. It is preparation work to finish off, I believe, the remaining 37 kilometres between Lyn Junction and Charters Towers. There are about 37 kilometres. This is a section that we really need to see upgraded. What that will do is secure the upgrade from Lyn Junction right through to Charters Towers. Once we upgrade Cape River Bridge, there will be virtually no stoppage from Charters Towers to Clermont. It is important that bridges such as Hann Creek, Snake Creek, Stockyard Creek, Basalt River and Clarke River are upgraded. We are looking for infrastructure development to drive the economy of Queensland. It is important that we upgrade the highway and relieve traffic congestion from the coast. This gives tourists an opportunity to use the back way, breathes life into country towns, there are fewer accidents and it creates jobs for the region.

Hopefully, out of that \$3 million we give the Charters Towers Regional Council, there is that opportunity to tender for the preparation of that bridge at Cape River—likewise for the sections that are about 25 kilometres south of Greenvale and likewise from the Bluff Downs turn-off to the Hervey Range turn-off. That is definitely much appreciated.

I also acknowledge the \$6.45 million for the disability and family support service at Charters Towers. That is big dollars well spent. Charters Towers has one of the highest number of people with disabilities per capita across Queensland. We have some wonderful service groups in Charters Towers, particularly the neighbourhood centre, and I know they would be rapt at the moment to receive that \$6.45 million of funding.

I also acknowledge the \$2.2 million of funding that goes to fire safety at Eventide. Fire safety is a big issue. We have clusters with independent living units in place, but many of those units have not been able to be occupied because of fire safety issues. We have people in the Charters Towers Hospital at this present time who are waiting to get in to Eventide, and one of the big issues is fire safety in regard to the clusters, so that is very, very important. There is also \$650,000 for drought preparedness at the Spyglass research station, and that is appreciated.

My electorate stretches from Moranbah, west of Mackay, to the Tablelands, west of Cairns. Since I was elected as the member for that area in 2009, I think it was—my seat was abolished in the previous redistribution—we have been pushing for that Upper Barron Road. It is an inland road that cuts across from Malanda to the Kennedy Highway and saves about 30 or 40 kilometres off the drive to Moranbah, and likewise sometimes to the Tablelands. That road is used by the timber industry, the milk industry and tourists going to the Bromfield Swamp. That is a beautiful swamp which was formed as a result of a volcanic eruption that occurred so many thousands of years ago. There are five kilometres of that road that need to be sealed. During the wet, it is virtually unusable and people have to travel an extra 30 or 40 kilometres around it because they just cannot drive it. I have to say that I very much appreciate the fact that that road will be sealed, at a cost of \$5 million or \$6 million over the next two years. That will seal and complete that section. The feedback I am getting is that the Tablelands people are very rapt about that funding, so I thank the Treasurer very much for that. I acknowledge that he has provided that support; it has been so welcomed and very appreciated.

The budget has \$1 million to support the Jumna Dam, which will be servicing the town of Irvinebank. There is no doubt that the dam is an important part of that Irvinebank community. The budget has nearly \$19 million for the disability and family support service on the Atherton Tablelands, and that is well appreciated too. We have had good feedback in regard to that funding. The Ravenshoe early childhood centre receives \$300,000 for the upgrade of that facility, and the Milla Milla early childhood centre receives funding too, and I know they are very appreciative of that.

We also very much appreciate the \$159,000 that is being provided to support the community centre at Ravenshoe. The House would be aware of the recent events in Ravenshoe which I brought up in parliament this week, and I pay tribute to all those who spoke on behalf of the Ravenshoe community this week. They are still recovering. A lot of people are in shock, so this funding will help the community in regard to counselling services, support services and ongoing support. I have received some good news because I have been provided with information in a letter from the Premier to say that they will be getting a community development officer, and that is something I have been pushing for as well. That person will help drive certain events and be available to support the community. They will get someone who is proactive in the community to hear their concerns, work with the community and coordinate events. I think this is a great thing that will continue for the next 12 months so that is much appreciated.

Jobs are very important in rural and regional Queensland. We have unemployment and we need every bit of support we can possibly get. Over the next few years, we will continue to push for infrastructure development and road funding. We do appreciate the \$60 million increase for the transport infrastructure development fund, and I know that will help the local councils. One of the main focuses is ensuring that we give local councils the opportunity to tender for local jobs because that is very, very important. I say that because we are sick of seeing Western Australian companies tender for local jobs and do the work that locals should be doing. It is important to look after your friends, look after the locals and support the people who are there. We really need to ensure that funding is going to the locals.

We will be pushing for other issues. There is a need for an upstream weir at Charters Towers to provide water so that landowners can irrigate and grow sorghum, grow crops, feed the cattle, fatten the cattle and keep them alive during drought. At the same time, the council is working on constructing a meatworks, so it is very important for that water infrastructure to be put in place.

As I said earlier, this is the government's first term. Most governments come in here and smash Queenslanders in the first term, so I have to give credit to the Treasurer and the government for the presentation of this budget. I do not want to say it is perfect, but I do say that it is a reasonably good budget.