




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

Record of Proceedings, 16 July 2015

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (4.25 pm): This is my first budget as the member for Mount Coot-tha. I echo the comments my colleagues have made previously in congratulating the Treasurer on a measured and responsible first budget that delivers on Labor's commitments. I am proud to highlight two major funding commitments for my local community in today's debate. However, I digress briefly to acknowledge my family in the gallery. Those are the lengths that they will go to to see me these days. It is great to have them here.

Firstly, the budget provides for the initial stages of a \$16 million upgrade at Auchenflower train station. Auchenflower station sees around 18,000 passenger movements each week and is a key station on the Ipswich line, especially for people who use the Wesley Hospital. Passengers have been asking for improvements to the accessibility of Auchenflower station for some time now. It is an issue that came up repeatedly when I was doorknocking and campaigning at the station. I am pleased that the Palaszczuk government is making this a reality. It is part of a substantial program worth \$212 million over five years for disability access upgrades across the rail network.

In addition to the \$1 million also delivered for local school improvement projects, as I promised during the election campaign in this budget I have also secured a \$200,000 boost for Red Hill Special School. This will be spent on major structural repairs for the school and will also allow for extra room for the children to play. In my role as a local member of parliament, one of my first meetings was with the Red Hill Special School P&C. They are a small but incredibly dedicated group of parents, as is the principal, Pamela Stack, and her team of teaching staff. They told me how they had a problem with a stormwater drain that threatened the structure of the building. I phoned the education minister on my way back to the office and met with her shortly after. Together we made sure that the budget included the necessary funds not just to fix the building but also to expand the play space for the kids. To see those funds allocated in the budget is exciting. There is no other way for me to describe it. For me, it was a moment that really reinforced the great thing about this job. I thank the education minister and the Treasurer for their support on this issue, and particularly Don Wilson in the education minister's office. I am dedicated to supporting my electorate by ensuring it receives the funds it needs. On top of those two initiatives, we also announced \$50,000 to upgrade the Paddington skate park.

Of course, I am also passionate about my ministerial portfolios and I want to point out the highlights in the budget for the areas of environment, the Great Barrier Reef and our national parks. My portfolio budget truly reflects our commitments as a government to ensure appropriate protection for the state's environment. My portfolio provides vital functions such as protecting the Great Barrier Reef, conserving nature and heritage, ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources, enabling responsible development and providing responsive and integrated government services. This funding will ensure that the necessary actions are in place to mitigate against unacceptable environmental impacts, including the impacts of climate change, improve water quality practices and the availability of

information, secure more land of significant conservation value, manage our protected estate, support wildlife conservation, create employment opportunities for Indigenous Queenslanders and continue our ongoing advances in best-practice regulatory strategies, including tailoring compliance and enforcement approaches to those areas of highest risk.

We have made big pledges for 2015-16 to ensure that we are delivering a better state for the Queensland community. For the Great Barrier Reef we have committed \$100 million over five years for reef water-quality initiatives, scientific research and tools to help business transition to better environmental practices. Some \$10 million of the \$100 million has been allocated to buy back net fishing licences in three zones—Cairns, Mackay and Yeppoon-Rockhampton. This will provide recreational fishers with exclusive access to prime inshore fishing spots.

Allocations from the \$100 million will support the work of the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce to deliver a final report by June 2016. This report will advise on the best policy and investment strategies so that we can meet our ambitious reef water-quality improvement targets. Our targets aim to reduce nitrogen run-off by up to 80 per cent and total suspended sediment run-off by up to 50 per cent in key catchment areas including the Wet Tropics and the Burdekin by 2025.

Another investment that I have already announced is an extra \$2 million over the next two years towards the cutting-edge eReefs project that will give people near real-time information about the quality of water in the Great Barrier Reef. The government takes reporting and public information seriously. We have allocated an additional \$6 million over four years to be put towards expanding the regional report cards program to include Cairns and Townsville in addition to Gladstone and Mackay-Whitsunday.

Over the next three years the Queensland government will spend \$15 million managing the impacts of climate change and helping coastal communities prepare for rising sea levels, storm tide and erosion. This is delivering on the government's commitment to work with councils to address climate change and coastal hazards.

The Queensland government is partnering with the Local Government Association of Queensland to deliver the Climate Change Adaptation Fund. This fund will support at-risk councils to address current and future coastal hazards. Coastal councils will be able to apply for a share of \$12 million from October this year to assist with the development of local plans and options to deal with their escalating climate risks. The remaining \$3 million will go towards developing and implementing a climate adaptation strategy in collaboration with industry and local government.

In keeping with our election commitment, the Queensland government is providing \$5 million in 2015-16 to continue the NatureAssist program. This commitment will expand the protected area estate and be used to incentivise private landholders to undertake conservation management on their land. This funding will secure nature refuges and provide financial support for leasehold and freehold lands of significant conservation and climate change resilience value.

Additional funding of \$1.8 million in 2015-16 will be provided to continue to support a range of wildlife management and conservation activities, including: regulating the use and trading of native plants and animals; responding to situations where wildlife present a risk to the public that needs specialist skills to manage; management of sick, injured and orphaned animals; and the protection of koalas.

We have also delivered on our election commitment to fund the continuation of joint management of the Naree Budjong Djarra National Park on North Stradbroke Island. The member for Algeester might assist with my pronunciation. Over four years we are providing \$12.4 million to support joint management with the traditional owners, the Quandamooka people, to employ a joint management coordinator and to deliver on commitments made in the Indigenous management agreement. The funding will ensure that the national park continues to be managed to preserve the outstanding natural and cultural values in collaboration with the Quandamooka people.

Over four years we are providing \$7.3 million to continue employment of Indigenous rangers to work across the protected area estate to ensure that parks are well managed and maintained. This includes protection from the threats of fire, pest and weed infestation and ensuring sustainable visitor access outcomes.

Over four years we are providing \$7.4 million to jointly manage with traditional owners approximately 2.6 million hectares of park estate on Cape York Peninsula. This funding will be part of Indigenous management agreements and will also include the employment of seven additional rangers.

A major upgrade of the Walkabout Creek Visitor Centre is on track to be completed this year, with the Queensland government committing \$1.5 million to finish construction. The precinct transformation will include a junior mountain bike skills park, trail network, events lawn and picnic areas. The first of its kind in Brisbane, this upgrade combines protection and enhancement of conservation values with open-space visitor experiences right on the border between my seat and that of the member for Ashgrove.

This government promised to tackle a number of key threats facing Queensland's environment and this funding demonstrates our commitment towards this. I commend the budget to the House.