




Speech By
Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2016

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; DUTIES AND
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (12.22 pm): The member for Clayfield's budget reply speech was bereft of any compassion for Queensland, particularly regional Queensland. We heard of the member's plan for expenditure but not for generating income. No matter how much the member for Clayfield tries, he cannot distance himself from his recipe for Queensland. As treasurer, the member for Clayfield's recipe was, according to Stronger Choices, significantly increasing taxes, reducing services or selling and leasing some assets. His reply speech and the plan he just described did not address his position on asset sales or asset leasing.

The member for Clayfield's cuts had an impact in the Far North when he was treasurer. For example, in relation to his first budget, in March 2013, some 12 months into the term of the former government, the *Cairns Post* reported that the number of health jobs to be cut in the Far North had almost reached 300 with the announcement that the Cape York service would be restructured. An article states—

More than 27 full-time equivalent positions in the district, which covers a 156,000sq km area including Cooktown and Weipa, are to be made redundant under the \$2.5 million cost-cutting project. The position of three nursing directors, a women's health nurse and a mental health nurse are among the jobs that will be axed. The remainder will be administrative or operational positions.

Then the *Port Douglas & Mossman Gazette* reported in March 2013 that at least four administration jobs at Mossman Hospital had been made redundant due to the state government cuts to the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service.

Then in his second budget the former treasurer increased taxes. There was a massive increase to cost of living for families, with increased duty on car, home and contents insurance and the introduction of an emergency services levy. The member oversaw an increase in electricity charges of a massive 22.6 per cent, or \$268 a year, and it was even worse for elderly people living alone, with bills rising by a whopping 27.9 per cent. There were massive increases in taxes per person. Within 18 months of the LNP's election, the average family of four paid more than \$1,000 a year in extra taxes. I congratulate our Treasurer on a great budget—a great Labor budget, one well received in my region of tropical North Queensland and Barron River.

My electorate is a tourism engine room for Queensland, be it the international airport at Cairns, the area of Palm Cove, the Kuranda railway or the Skyrail. The electorate welcomes the government's statewide \$33.5 million package over four years to increase visitation from Asia and to drive tourism. Tourism and Events Queensland and the aviation attraction fund are vital to Cairns. For the first time ever in any 12-month period, last week our airport saw five million passengers. Our proximity to Asia and the booming tourism market are exciting. This budget will allow growth, will allow tourism employers in tropical North Queensland to increase numbers and will increase infrastructure and confidently employ new staff. Last weekend, Cairns hosted the Cairns Ironman for the sixth consecutive year. There

was a complete sell-out, with 3,500 worldwide competitors and their families in three days injecting over \$10 million into the Cairns economy. It is through the government's Tourism and Events Queensland that Cairns continues to attract worldwide sports events.

A key challenge for my electorate is roads. There are many growth issues in Barron River, and I recognise the Minister for Main Roads for his assistance in implementing our plan to tackle those issues. After winning the 2015 election, I set my sights on a 500-metre section of the Cairns Western Arterial Road called the Bill Fulton Bridge—a bottleneck which resulted in frustrated motorists, traffic jams and road rage. It had to be fixed. In office the LNP had three years to address the matter and they failed. In the 2015-16 budget I reported on receiving the planning money to get the project moving. Like thousands of my constituents, I am delighted, through the \$180 million Significant Regional Infrastructure Plan, led by the Deputy Premier with the strong support of the Minister for Main Roads, the Treasurer and the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland—they all accepted my requests to visit the site and experience the delays—to see that this bridge will now be constructed, at a cost of \$34.2 million. I thank the Premier for listening to my pleas in the working cabinet subcommittee.

This is what Labor does. Labor builds bridges, fire stations, hospitals and schools. This bridge could not be delivered or even planned by the LNP in its three years in government from 2012 to 2015. In fact, on 13 January 2015, two weeks before the 2015 state election, the *Cairns Post* ran an article titled 'Upgrade of Redlynch's Bill Fulton Bridge on the cards with an LNP vote'. The article shows the member for Clayfield on the site and describes how a re-elected LNP government would commit to planning the bridge by possibly using the government's Strong Choices Fund. Holding the public to ransom by selling assets so that in return they can get a picture of a bridge is not right. There was no construction, just a picture and, of course, this relates to asset sales. By the next election, the Bill Fulton Bridge should be well underway, if not completed. This is what Queenslanders want to see: construction and jobs—no hollow promises, no threats of asset sales. The public wants a bridge, and it is Labor that will deliver it in its completeness.

The Smithfield Fire Station in my electorate is being rebuilt. It is a vital infrastructure project servicing over 50,000 residents on the northern beaches. Currently operating out of an old station which they have outgrown, a new site already in the possession of QFES beckoned but, again, three years of LNP rule failed to deliver or even to promise it. Our fires were ignored, cast aside and forgotten. Labor is building the \$3.8 million Smithfield Fire Station. Labor values our firefighters, our hardworking public servants, and does not turn its back on emergency services staff.

The Cairns region wins from this budget, through tourism funding, construction funding, social service funding, domestic violence funding, Great Barrier Reef funding, incentives to help business recruit new staff, funding for education, funding for health—and I could go on all day. This is a good Labor budget about which I am proud to walk the streets and talk to my constituents.