




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

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

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (4.37 pm): I am very pleased to speak in support of this very strong budget. Last budget—our government's first—established a clear fiscal framework and a clear change of direction from the previous budget delivered by the member for Clayfield, now the opposition leader.

The last Nicholls budget, in 2014, was all about his values. It was about privatisation. It was about job cuts. It was about constructing every possible argument for—you guessed it—privatisation and job cuts. It certainly was not about the environment. He had already slashed environment programs to the bone. There were 20 per cent fewer jobs to protect the environment. That is 20 per cent less capacity to make sure we have a clean environment, on which our health and that of our agricultural and other industries rely. The Great Barrier Reef was left unprotected. Thirty-nine reef protection officers were sacked under then treasurer Nicholls' reign. In national parks he delivered 60 fewer rangers to manage our internationally renowned and iconic protected area estate—a key source of tourism income. On top of that, a 35 per cent reduction in the non-ranger workforce reduced the capacity of rangers to manage our parks even further.

Mr Nicholls' last budget planned to put the final nail in the environment's coffin. He scheduled the end of programs for crocodile management, reef protection, koala conservation, tenure resolution on the cape, NatureAssist and legal and illegal dumping programs, all of which would have led to further job losses and further reductions in the effort spent protecting and maintaining our environment for the benefit of all Queenslanders. Mr Nicholls is no friend of the environment or of Queensland workers.

By contrast, the Palaszczuk government's first budget stopped the final round of cuts and delivered our cornerstone election commitments, and this year we begin to rebuild environment programs in Queensland. This is not just a good budget for Queensland's environment; it is a great budget for our environment and a great budget for heritage protection, national parks and the Great Barrier Reef. I am proud to be a member of a government that prioritises real action on protecting the environment, which is needed now more than ever after the years of neglect under the LNP. The operating budget for the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection will increase \$23.5 million to enhance and protect our environment. Queenslanders know that we cannot take our incredible natural environment for granted. We are fortunate to be very environmentally blessed in this state. Our national parks are some of the best in the world—from the sandy beaches of North Stradbroke Island to the tropical rainforests around Cairns.

Our environment supports internationally recognised wildlife—little, and sometimes big, creatures that are ambassadors for Queensland like the koala and the cassowary. The koala is an icon for our south-east corner, but unfortunately we know it is not doing so well. A report by UniQuest found that,

despite our best efforts, numbers continue to decline. We have responded in the budget by delivering an additional \$12.1 million over four years and ongoing funding of \$2.6 million per annum for koala conservation and protection measures. Last year the Palaszczuk government accepted a recommendation by an independent scientific panel to list the koala as vulnerable across Queensland. We had to do that because the LNP would not. It was afraid it would look bad after it axed the jobs of koala specialists employed by EHP. We are also committing \$15.2 million over four years for wildlife management and protecting threatened species as well as \$5.8 million over three years for crocodile management, and we have provided \$2.7 million over three years for flying fox management and research. I will go into more detail about those commitments shortly.

Of course, our best known ecosystem is the Great Barrier Reef. Millions of people from around the world flock to see this treasure every year and even the handful of people who have visited outer space have said that the reef is one of the most incredible sights on the planet. Astronaut Kjell Lindgren tweeted photos of the reef from space recently, describing it as 'gorgeous'. In fact, I have invited him to come visit the reef when he gets back from his space travel because, believe me, it is even better up close. Having said that, there are threats to our precious reef and rapid action is required if we are going to protect it. Improvement towards water quality stalled under the previous government and rather than spending the money needed to address the issue those opposite wasted it on glossy ad campaigns to convince Queenslanders there was nothing to worry about.

The Palaszczuk government, however, is guided by the science. The reef is 2,300 kilometres long and different issues affect different parts of its expansive ecosystem. There has certainly been damage to the northern most parts of the reef recently due to the warmer oceans and the corresponding coral bleaching event, but we are starting to see some recovery and, fortunately, the tourist hotspots further south escaped the worst of the bleaching event. We are using the recommendations from the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce to deliver on our \$100 million commitment for cleaner water for a healthy reef. This budget delivers a record commitment from the Queensland government for the reef. This coming financial year we will spend \$57 million on reef water quality. At the same time, the federal government—the federal Liberal government—is cutting its share of reef funding to a record low and its election policy is a sad, sad con. After Ellen intervened to defend Dory, its polling obviously said it needed to do something for the reef. Instead of funding, it announced a loan. The reef does not need a mortgage; it needs a government willing to do what is required to save it. The Palaszczuk government has proven in this budget it is such a government. Sadly, the Turnbull government is not. It is just one front where the new Malcolm is very disappointing.

With regard to climate change, the biggest long-term threat to the reef is climate change and I am very pleased to say that the Palaszczuk government has put climate change back on the agenda and provided an additional \$6.8 million over four years to develop a new Queensland climate change agenda. The Treasurer's speech very well outlined how important it was that we act on climate change. That contrasts with the budget speeches—every budget speech—delivered by the opposition leader. He delivered three budgets and there was not one mention of climate change, not one mention of the biggest long-term threat to our reef. There was not one mention of the economic transition coming for Queensland and no plan for making sure Queensland gets its fair share of the clean energy jobs of the future, and nothing has changed today—not one mention of the reef, climate change, koalas. Nothing about the environment made it into the opposition leader's speech.

Outside of this place, away from the head-in-the-sand denialists of those opposite—out there in the real world—there is no debate: the climate is changing and it is due to human activities. Queensland, like almost 200 countries and many cities and regions around the globe, is committed to stepping up and harnessing the opportunity of global economic and environmental change. This new funding will support work to understand how we can change, adapt and transition to a low carbon future. This funding also repairs the gaping hole and huge exposure that the LNP left us with. I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

I'm pleased that we have extra funding for wildlife in our state.

As I said earlier we know the koala needs our help.

A panel of experts will advise us on the most effective ways to utilize the \$12.1 million boost including on best practice refuges and hospitals for this iconic and at risk species.

We will be guided by the science as we always have.

We will support wildlife management and conservation activities for a range of other species as well. And we have increased funding of \$15.2 million over four years for this purpose.

This will include on the ground operations, wildlife licensing and inspections, and the continued development of wildlife management regulations.

There is increased funding of \$5.8 million over three years for crocodile management, that will also safeguard the jobs of the ten staff based in regional Queensland.

This money will also be used to improve our knowledge of crocodile populations and engage with local communities on how to manage crocodiles in their local areas—as guided by the science.

For example, we will conduct the most comprehensive crocodile population survey ever in Queensland and the data will be compared to figures going back as far as 1979.

We will also act on improving how we manage interactions between people and flying foxes. With \$2.7 million over the next four years we will investigate best practice in roost management and identify ways that we can assist flying foxes and people to coexist in the landscape.

Waste management is another area with a renewed focus, with the Budget providing an additional \$1.9 million for improved waste management and resource recovery initiatives.

Enhanced recycling and waste diversion will reduce landfill and reuse of materials, while creating jobs.

And this supports the Palaszczuk Government's commitment to innovation, particularly the biofutures agenda which allow us to turn waste streams into resources.

This Budget also supports local innovation by providing \$12 million over four years for a Community Sustainability Action Grants program, targeted at community groups.

The grants will support volunteer and community groups to develop new ideas to improve wildlife protection and environmental rehabilitation.

It also will give community organisations access to funding for heritage maintenance.

Maintaining heritage sites can be costly, and the Members for Ipswich West, Maryborough, Dalrymple and others have impressed upon me how important it is that government step in and help.

Our work to protect pristine rivers is also being supported with \$1.5 million over the next two years. We are custodians of some of the last remaining untouched rivers in the world and we should protect them.

There is also a further \$5.1 million in the budget to investigate the contamination and serious environmental harm associated with underground coal gasification.

The National Parks budget will see an additional \$35 million investment to deliver better outcomes for our protected area estate.

It will support up to 31 new park rangers over the next four years across Queensland for the ongoing management of current parks and new areas.

The State's protected area estate has undergone significant growth under this government with three new national parks and six regional parks.

Queensland's protected area estate has now grown from 7.7% to 7.9% and there are plans to grow it even further with \$5 million in the budget for new acquisitions.

Excitingly, the Government is investing \$29.6 million in the Cape York Tenure Resolution Program with \$11.5 million of that being used to support an implementation team of up to 10 officers that will be recruited by 2020 to support the transition of national parks on Cape York Peninsula to jointly managed parks with traditional owners.

A number of parks are also in the process of being transferred to joint management arrangements, requiring increased investment in partnership with traditional owners.

New funding will create additional ranger and technical support positions and support new and improved infrastructure in national and regional parks such as camping grounds, amenities and parking.

We will also build Fences, roads and ranger accommodation creating regional jobs and contributing to local economic growth.

With 700,000 hectares of land being added to the protected areas estate and further national park dedications in the planning phase across Cape York Peninsula, the Budget ensures these parks can be appropriately established and managed.

In order to attract visitors to the State's network of protected areas, rangers keep these natural areas safe and accessible, while educating visitors about conservation values.

North West Queensland in particular is undergoing important growth of protected area.

The creation of the new Rungella and Littleton national parks represent an increase of close to 200,000 hectares of important habitat for threatened and endangered species.

We are committed to preserving natural conditions and protecting cultural resources and values to the greatest possible extent and, through legislative changes, we have reinstated nature conservation as the cardinal principle of national park management.

We will continue to fund initiatives that maintain our healthy habitats and increase their resilience to climate change.

Mr Speaker, although outside my portfolio, another very important initiative in this budget will help the environment, and will be very welcome by the people I represent in the seat of Mount Coot-tha.

Lots of people have told me public transport is too expensive—

I'm very pleased to be part of a government slashing fares.

This will save people money, and get more people on to buses and trains (which is good for the planet too).

The Budget has cut fares for people who travel from Paddington, Toowong, Bardon or anywhere in between and the City.

Right now it costs \$3.93 for an adult to travel each way at peak hour with a goCard.

From January it will drop 72 cents each way to \$3.20.

It adds up to an annual saving of more than \$370 for regular commuters.

And there are many other Budget initiatives in my electorate to be proud of.

I'm passionate about making sure our kids have access to quality education and \$350,000 to refurbish the Bardon State School classrooms will ensure the students there are learning in the best environment with the best resources.

We have also affirmed our commitment to providing vital services for people living with a disability or who find themselves in need of extra help.

My electorate will benefit from \$19.979 million in funding for local support services.

\$1.173 million will ensure children in need of protection have a safe place to stay, including funding for residential care services.

And a further \$1.916 million will go to local organisations that support families to safely care for their children, including funding for residential care services provided by UnitingCare Community in Bardon.

Excellent groups such as Act for Kids, Pregnancy Counselling and Education Services in Red Hill, Yourtown in Milton and The Corporation of the Synod of the Diocese of Brisbane in Toowong.

\$248,000 will go to Community Queensland in Bardon, an organisation I've had the great pleasure of working with them and this money will allow them to deliver local social services, such as the free food Pantry and a range of practical lifestyle activities.

I'm proud of what this budget delivers for Mt Coot-tha and I'm proud of what it delivers for our environment.