




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2017

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (2.37 pm): I rise to make my contribution to the 2017 budget and address the Appropriation Bill. In the Far North, the key budget measures that have been eagerly awaited by business, industry and residents have included the Cairns Shipping Channel Development Project and the upgrade of the Cairns Convention Centre.

The story of dredging the inlet at Cairns to take on larger cruise ships has been a conversation and argument for many years in Cairns. Cairns already has a dredged channel. Without it, you would struggle to get any of our reef fleet in or out of the city to the reef, Green Island or Fitzroy Island. The cruise numbers for Cairns have been strong. In fact, they are strong across the country, the state and of course the world. Cruise ship demand has grown consistently, but particularly in the past two years we have seen a spike in demand. It has been stated to me by P&O representatives that their customers spend twice as much money on Cairns stopovers than any other stop on their route. There can be no doubt that having a cruise ship dock at your city injects money into your economy. Be it coffee, beer, excursions or sightseeing, it all adds up.

In recent years, the issue arising at Cairns is that the dredged inlet is not wide and deep enough to accommodate the new classes of cruise ships currently circling the globe. Figures from ports north indicate that the demand on cruise ship access to Cairns is growing strongly, but it is not just the number of ships: it is the size. With increasing numbers of cruise ships having to anchor outside the channel and tender into Yorkeys Knob for access and passengers having to spend 20 minutes on a bus, a far more suitable arrangement is to increase the channel dimensions to allow for direct access to the cruise liner terminal in the city, which is literally 100 metres from the city. I look forward to the EIS shortly and the announcement of the on-land dredge spoil location and process.

The Cairns Convention Centre was built in the days of Labor treasurer Keith De Lacy, some 20-odd years ago. A shining light of tourism in Cairns, it has twice received the International Association of Congress Centres award for best congress centre in the world—in 2004 and 2014. It is one of only two centres in the world to receive this award twice. Owned by the state government, the Cairns Convention Centre needs upgrading. It is not that it is small; it is not that it is run down. In fact, it is quite the opposite. The demand for large-scale conferences of thousands of participants, multiple large rooms and theatres, breakout rooms and separation of conventions that all want to come to Cairns is very much on the rise. The business case for the upgrade has been described by our local industry as a no-brainer. I welcome the \$176 million in the budget and forward estimates to bring this economic driver for Cairns on line.

In the Cairns region the key economic driver is tourism. Tourism is driving private investment in our region at levels not seen for decades. The backbone of tourism is more than just a glossy brochure. The Great Barrier Reef cannot be ignored. The world is concerned about the health of the Great Barrier Reef. Locals are also concerned about the health of the Great Barrier Reef, because rarely do you find a Cairns worker who does not work in tourism or in a job that supports the tourism sector directly or

indirectly. Government investment in the Great Barrier Reef is critical. I welcome the record budget for Tourism and Events Queensland, because I know that it is through TEQ that we can get the message to the world about the Great Barrier Reef and encourage the world to come and experience it. Once you experience it, you respect it, you cherish it, you want to help it and you want to tell your friends and your countries all about it. By investing in tourism attraction we can educate the world about the pressure the reef is under and we can encourage the world to do its bit to help.

The government's Powering North Queensland Plan will benefit the Cairns region by providing more generation from renewables. Cairns is at the end of the line of up to 1,400 kilometres of often lost transmission. The north of the state has the sun, the wind and the water. I welcome the vision of Minister Bailey in recognising the untapped potential all across our north. By investing in this space and by keeping generation and distribution in government hands we can control electricity production and prices. Cairns does not want more coal-fired power stations built in Queensland.

The Works for Queensland allocation of another \$200 million over two years is an investment welcomed by our mayors. Rarely have I had a conversation with a mayor or CEO in Far North Queensland in which they have not spruiked Works for Queensland—how it was delivered by the state and what they have done with it. I welcome that continued investment. I think it provides a positive outlook for our councils.

Every member of this House pushes for various projects or policies leading up to budget time. I am sure that most members in this House have missed out on a project they have been pushing for. For Barron River it is the Smithfield bypass. For two years this has been worked on under my watch—years of preparation, submissions and planning. I certainly thank Transport and Main Roads at Cairns for their hard work on this issue. I also thank the motorists of the northern beaches for their input to and support of the project. We did not get it this time. I know that this news will disappoint many thousands of motorists in Barron River. For that I have no excuses, only a steadfast commitment to get this project delivered at some stage in the future. Funding is competitive and you cannot win everything every time, but the fight must go on.

For the past 2½ years I have been bearing the load of representing not just the Barron River electorate but also the Cairns electorate. One has to ask: where was the member for Cairns on the port redevelopment? Where was the member for Cairns on the convention centre upgrade push?

The No. 1 infrastructure project in Barron River has been and still is the Smithfield bypass proposal. My passion for this project is rock solid. It has come this far under my watch. I know that it stacks up. I know that it will work to resolve the Smithfield roundabout congestion. Instead of just bashing government, I want to work with the hardworking departments. Unlike those opposite, I will work with government to progress this issue and bring it forward. We will keep fighting for it. It was Labor that delivered the Bill Fulton Bridge project after hollow promises from the LNP and it will be Labor that is the only party trusted to sort out the Smithfield bypass.