




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

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
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) (5.57 pm): This year's budget is a win for Queenslanders and it is also a win for the Queensland environment. Queensland has the best national parks in the world. We have everything: world-famous beaches, ancient tropical rainforests, red sandy deserts and the largest coral reef in the world. We have five natural World Heritage areas, but right now when people go looking for an ecotourism experience a lot of them end up going to Tasmania—Tasmania, of all places—and Tasmania only has one natural World Heritage area.

The Palaszczuk government thinks that Queensland should be the ecotourism capital of the country, and that is why we have committed \$40 million over two years to revitalise our national parks. Right now international travellers clock up 7.9 million visits to our national parks each and every year, while locals are hitting the parks 51 million times a year. We should not keep these beautiful walking trails and camping spots a secret, because every person who experiences one of our world-class parks will become an ambassador for Queensland and for our environment, not to mention that the total spend by visitors who include a trip to a national park in their holiday itinerary adds \$4.43 billion to the state's economy. That is real jobs which are supported by our national parks, and that is good news for the tourism industry. The head of Queensland's peak tourism body, Daniel Gschwind, has already welcomed this investment, saying it would generate income and jobs for regions and ensure we continue to build our position as a world-class tourism destination.

While those opposite wanted to trash our national parks, opening them up for all sorts of inappropriate commercial development, we are proving that you can invest in your parks to create tourism jobs while protecting them. In fact, what those opposite never understood is that, when it comes to ecotourism, you can only create ecotourism jobs by protecting them. With our record funding commitment we will build infrastructure that will get more people into our national parks while preserving their outstanding natural values, starting with start-up infrastructure like roads and fences at newly protected areas all the way through to new communal kitchens in our camping grounds, multiday walks, bike tracks and gateway centres, as well as new accommodation options like standing tents. We will invest in our online presence so that when people visit sites like TripAdvisor they can get accurate and useful information about our parks, attractions and camp facilities. We will free up some of our rangers' time so they can spend more time with park visitors and more time designing exciting activities in our parks.

We will continue to work with traditional owners to extend these ecotourism opportunities to Indigenous communities in rural and remote areas, particularly throughout the cape. Queensland's traditional owners have been caring for country for more than 40,000 years. We will fund 25 more Indigenous land and sea rangers. This really is one of my favourite programs in government—giving young traditional owners the chance to work on country, delivering environmental benefits and creating

new tourism experiences. Closer to home, we are working with the Quandamooka people to upgrade facilities on North Stradbroke Island, providing jobs for locals on the island and making one of our most loved holiday spots even better.

Straddie is not the only iconic destination getting an upgrade. We are putting \$2.8 million into upgrading the Daisy Hill Koala Bushland. I thank the member for Springwood for the effort he has put into ensuring that the plan for that site will make it a genuinely exciting urban bushland area and a great conservation park to boot. Some \$5.7 million will be used to redevelop the Mon Repos Turtle Centre at Bundaberg. Bundy is also about to become a must-see regional dive destination, when we scuttle the ex-HMAS *Tobruk* late in 2018. We are investing almost a million dollars in special moorings that protect the Great Barrier Reef while making it easier for boaties to visit more special spots along it. While we will continue to acquire new protected areas, we will also maintain the places that are already special in the hearts of locals and visitors. We want people to visit these places, create memories and become champions for their protection.

The 2017-18 budget reaffirms the Palaszczuk government's commitment to protecting the environment, with a \$38.9 million boost to the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection's operating budget. It has taken three budgets, but we are finally putting behind us the destruction wrought by the member for Glass House on environmental programs in the Newman-Nicholls LNP government. The Treasurer has delivered a record budget for environmental protection. This is funding that will go towards the things Queenslanders want.

As I said, the previous government took an axe to environmental compliance programs, while we are rebuilding them. Queenslanders want to know that the environment department has the resources it needs to protect our environment from harm. That is why the Palaszczuk government has provided a \$9.3 million boost to get more officers on the ground, making sure big operators are not polluting our air, ground or water. Queenslanders want to know that when big mining projects come to a close the land will be left in good condition so that we can go on to use that land for other things like agriculture. That is why we are reforming the financial assurance and mine rehabilitation rules for new and existing mines—to make sure mines are rehabilitated without taxpayers being left to foot the bill. This is good for the environment and great for regional Queensland, where there is close to \$8 billion worth of rehabilitation work to do and where local towns are well placed to provide the best people and skills to do it.

Queenslanders also want action on climate change. We received an overwhelming response to our discussion paper on the transition to a low-carbon future. The message was loud and clear: action on climate change is needed now to create new jobs and sustainable communities in Queensland. We heard from tourism operators on the Great Barrier Reef who had witnessed the worst coral-bleaching event ever; from communities who have traditionally relied on the resources sector, keen to ensure the long-term viability of their jobs; from businesses looking for the markets of the future; and from Indigenous communities who see the opportunity for homegrown carbon-exporting industries. The Palaszczuk government will ensure our communities and workforce are ready to capitalise on the global transition. We are putting \$15 million over three years into implementing the right measures to attract the new investment and industries of the clean growth economy. Together with our 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030, we will create our fair share of these jobs of the future here in Queensland.

The Queensland government is refreshing its partnership with the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland to support our small and medium sized enterprises to reduce their operating costs and become more sustainable. We are committing \$916,000 to deliver a free ecoBiz program to businesses to help them reduce their energy, water and waste costs. Not only will this partnership deliver financial savings to Queensland businesses; it will also help us to address climate change. CCIQ CEO Stephen Tait said that thousands of small and medium sized businesses benefited from the previous ecoBiz program and he said that our new partnership 'shows the commitment of the Queensland government to help alleviate pressure on businesses across the state'.

We know that Queenslanders voted for a government they knew would protect and preserve the Great Barrier Reef. We will continue to implement the Reef 2050 Plan and the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, working with local communities to roll out practical on-ground projects that make a real difference to the health and resilience of our reef. Just recently the World Heritage Centre released a draft decision commending Queensland's efforts in implementing the Reef 2050 Plan. That is a long way from where we were when the Newman-Nicholls government was dismantling reef and tree-clearing protections and planning to dump dredge spoil on the reef. In fact, the World Heritage Centre made it clear that we will not meet our water quality targets without the reef protection regulations and land-clearing reforms those opposite continue to oppose. I invite the member for Clayfield to get on board and support our sensible laws and put the reef's World Heritage status beyond doubt.

Unlike those opposite, we are doing everything we can to protect our precious reef. Unlike those opposite, we have put our money where our mouth is. This budget locks in our record investment in reef water quality. It will see us spend \$246 million over the next five years, making the water flowing to the reef clearer and cleaner. We have responded to the Queensland Audit Office's criticism of previous governments by making the \$35 million water quality investment real and transparent. For the first time, every single cent of water quality funds will go towards actions that directly deliver on our commitments under the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan. If the government had not taken this action, the budget for reef water quality would have been reduced by \$85.725 million over the next five years. This will ensure we can continue to deliver important programs like agricultural industry best management practice, Paddock to Reef, on-ground natural resource management and Science in the Paddock.

Queenslanders are sick of being the litter capital of the country. In a major win for reducing waste in this state we are investing \$1.5 million for waste diversion and recycling programs. Right now in our state, supermarkets are handing out a billion plastic bags a year. Many of those end up polluting our waterways and oceans and killing our fish and turtles. We have included an additional \$2.5 million to bring in the ban and introduce a container refund scheme which will make it easier for people to recycle and give community groups a chance to make some extra money.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! Minister, can you confirm that this is not related to the bill you introduced earlier this week?

Dr MILES: Madam Deputy Speaker, this relates to an initiative in the budget to fund the programs in that bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: So you are anticipating the debate in the bill that is before the House?

Dr MILES: No, Madam Deputy Speaker. The budget includes funding to implement these schemes. I have just completed speaking to them, so I will move on if you will allow.

We are standing by our commitment to address toxic firefighting foam in Queensland. In addition to the ban and phase-out for PFAS foams across the state, we have included \$1.4 million over three years to manage firefighting foam pollution. We are pinpointing firefighting foam stocks across Queensland so that we can tackle the PFAS and PFOS issue. This is another Palaszczuk government budget that delivers what Queenslanders want. We have made big pledges to create long-lasting results for the generations of people who live in and visit our great state. I commend the bill to the House.