




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 14 June 2018

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

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (3.05 pm): I rise to speak in support of the 2018 Appropriation Bill before the House. This is the fourth consecutive true Labor budget and another one that we can be proud of. I am delighted that this budget will see the Palaszczuk government investing heavily in Rockhampton's future.

The Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service's operating budget of \$610 million is almost \$44 million more than that of the previous financial year. It is a record health investment for the region. It is funding growth that reflects the government's commitment to providing quality health services to regional Queensland. No matter where people live in Central Queensland they will have access to high-quality health care.

We are investing in a new \$14.3 million 42-bed residential drug rehabilitation and treatment facility in Rockhampton to improve access to specialist alcohol and other drug services for Central Queenslanders. This is a vital investment and part of a package of measures to tackle the problems that are all too obviously created by ice addiction. We are also investing \$4.4 million across Central Queensland for community mental health services.

I was delighted to see a funding commitment of \$5.7 million for major renovations to the North Rockhampton Nursing Home to be completed by the end of this year. There is also funding to ensure that work can be completed on the much needed and very keenly anticipated \$25 million multistorey car park at Rockhampton Hospital, which will be completed in December. The Palaszczuk government will continue to advance our facilities to provide high-quality health services in Central Queensland.

I thank the Premier and Minister Enoch for their support with a funding commitment of \$8 million for a new art gallery for Rockhampton. We now need the federal government to commit. I take this opportunity to invite Malcolm Turnbull to match the state government funding. This art gallery will house one of the most envied art collections in Australia. Through this budget commitment we will be able to build an art gallery that triples the proportion of the art collection that can be displayed.

The benefits that a state-of-the-art art gallery will bring to Rockhampton are many and varied. It will enhance economic opportunities for artists and cultural service providers. It will create job opportunities in construction, ongoing and in the arts sector. It will bring more tourists to the city and increase tourism expenditure. It will make an active contribution to the revitalisation of the CBD, to name a few benefits. The Palaszczuk government is working hard to ensure a strong future for the arts, and this investment recognises the critical role arts infrastructure plays in the cultural vibrancy of Queensland.

The community of Gracemere will receive funding for a new state-of-the-art fire and rescue station under this year's budget, with the Palaszczuk government recognising Central Queensland's increasing demand for services. Gracemere's fire and rescue auxiliary station will be replaced at a cost of \$2.1 million. The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring Queensland Fire and Emergency

Services personnel have the appropriate facilities and equipment to continue to respond to emergencies confidently and safely. This new station will assist the critical work of our first responders, ensuring they have both the capacity and the capability to support Gracemere's current population and further expected growth. The budget also includes \$800,000 to complete the upgrade of the Rockhampton fire and rescue station and communications centre.

Since January 2015, more than 153,000 new jobs have been created in Queensland. This is something that we are proud of on this side of the House. The government's Back to Work program, offering up to \$20,000 for employers taking on eligible jobseekers in regional Queensland, will continue. The program has supported over 13,000 jobs across Queensland since July 2016, with 600 jobs in the Rockhampton local government area to June 2018.

We continue to see jobs growth as a direct result of other initiatives such as Skilling Queenslanders for Work. This program has helped jobseekers in Rockhampton develop the skills, undertake paid work placements and earn nationally recognised qualifications. Organisations in my electorate are delivering incredible outcomes from the training they offer under Skilling Queenslanders for Work, with the majority of participants going on to further education or finding employment.

Works for Queensland is delivering jobs, jobs and more jobs in Central Queensland. We see the positive impact it is having. We have listened to councils who told us they wanted more and we are delivering \$11.9 million to support job-creating maintenance and minor infrastructure works across local councils in Central Queensland as part of the Works for Queensland program. That is more jobs and more infrastructure for regional Queensland. That is what the Palaszczuk Labor government is all about.

The \$66 million announced for Rookwood Weir should bring to an end all the conjecture and negativity about the state government's support for the \$352 million project. It is so good that after so much public debate the cash will start to flow to build Rookwood Weir, with all of the benefits this priority infrastructure will bring. I join the people of Central Queensland in welcoming this budget commitment. This means jobs and business opportunities, as well as future water security for Central Queensland. Construction will bring approximately 100 jobs and an opportunity to increase and diversify our region's agricultural production well into the future. The weir will provide a backup water supply for Livingstone shire, Rockhampton and Gracemere as our communities continue to grow. Access to water is essential for growth, for agriculture, for business and industry, and for our local communities.

The budget allocates \$107.4 million out of a total of \$243.2 million for the expansion of the Capricornia Correctional Centre, further building on the original investment. When this project is completed, the jail will have an additional 348 cells.

It would be remiss of me not to mention some of the other infrastructure investments in the budget. There is \$40 million out of a total spend of \$121 million to duplicate the Bruce Highway to four lanes between Yeppoon Road and Parkhurst; \$8.8 million out of a total of \$14.5 million to widen the Bajool-Port Alma road; \$10.9 million out of a total of \$75 million to duplicate the Capricorn Highway between Rockhampton and Gracemere; \$10 million out of a total of \$19 million for overtaking lanes and other safety measures on the Capricorn Highway between Gracemere and Emerald; and \$9 million out of a total of \$30 million total to complete improvements to the intersections and road train access on the Rockhampton-Yeppoon Road due for completion by the end of 2019.

There is \$21.9 million out of a total spend of \$82.7 million to upgrade the capacity of the north coast rail line between Central Queensland and Townsville; \$5 million out of a total of \$17.2 million to build a mixed use development in Rockhampton's CBD; \$15.7 million out of a total of \$25.5 million for the new four-storey car park at the Rockhampton Hospital, providing 597 parking bays; \$6.5 million out of a total of \$12 million for the upgrade and repair work at the Rockhampton Courthouse; and \$1 million out of a total of \$2.5 million to refurbish classrooms at North Rockhampton State High School. There is also \$91,000 for regional councils to provide preschool literacy sessions, known as First 5 Forever, at libraries in Central Queensland, honouring our election commitment.

Since the 2015 election, the Palaszczuk government has improved front-line health and education services in Central Queensland by employing an additional 77 doctors, 144 nurses, 137 teachers and 58 teacher aides. This is a budget that will boost the local economy, create jobs and inspire confidence in the region. This is evidence that Rockhampton is on the up. Business confidence is returning, house prices are strengthening and private investment is flowing. I am very proud that the Palaszczuk government has shown the support in this budget that will accelerate that positive momentum. It is a fantastic budget for Queensland, for Central Queensland and for Rockhampton, and I enthusiastically commend it to the House.