




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Record of Proceedings, 20 March 2018

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Cairns Convention Centre

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (2.32 pm): I rise to talk about the proposed expansion of Cairns Convention Centre that will be underway once we have completed the commitments we have for the Commonwealth Games. First and foremost, it is important to acknowledge that Mr Keith De Lacy—a member of this chamber, a very hardworking Labor treasurer, a man of integrity, honesty and hard work—was key and fundamental in securing this fantastic facility for the people of Cairns.

An important point that needs to be made about this facility is that it is an absolute jobs provider. This facility generates \$80 million for our economy. If we bear in mind that we are looking at about \$2.6 billion to \$2.8 billion from tourism alone, this is a key player and a masterpiece in that crown. The investment prior to the election by the Palaszczuk government is absolutely spectacular—\$176 million to expand this facility. This will enable not only more sporting events but also, more importantly, conventions. These conventions fill our hotels. They utilise our tourism assets, whether it be going to the reef on any one of the numerous vessels or the utilisation of Sky Rail or the other 300 tours that are operated by companies throughout Cairns and the region. It is a pretty important facility. An expansion of this facility will benefit the wider community.

The Cairns Convention Centre is owned by the state and is operated by the Department of Housing and Public Works under a very successful commercial agreement with AEG Ogden, which also runs a number of very successful and large facilities around Australia. I congratulate Ross Steele and his team for the way things have been running there, particularly over the last couple of years. More importantly, like everybody in this chamber and the people of Cairns, I wish them all the very best for the upcoming Commonwealth Games as they will be hosting the basketball. Good luck to Ross and his team there.

The executive government approved \$1 million to develop a business case to examine the opportunity to expand the Cairns Convention Centre. At the completion of that process the executive government set aside \$176 million, as I stated earlier, over a two-year period from 2018 to 2019 for the expansion and, just as importantly, the refurbishment of the Cairns Convention Centre to be held in contingency and released upon cabinet consideration of a satisfactory business case.

The Building Queensland Act 2015 requires that Building Queensland, which provides the Queensland government with independent expert advice on major infrastructure, lead the preparation of a business case for any infrastructure proposal with an estimated capital cost of \$100 million or more. Building Queensland is working with the department to progress the business case development for the Cairns Convention Centre. A business case consisting of two stages is being developed. Stage 1 is a preliminary business case that will include identification of service need, benefits, demand and potential options. This is expected to be completed in May of this year. Stage 2 is a detailed business case that will provide further analysis of the preferred option to support a proposed submission to the Building Queensland board in the second quarter of the 2018-19 financial year.

Subject to the success of the business case for expansion and refurbishment, land purchase and site preparation will then be undertaken in advance of construction. The enthusiasm for this project of not just the people involved in this process but also the people of Cairns is overwhelming. We follow the development of this very closely.

It is also important to recognise that attracting people to this project is a costly exercise. The well-resourced Tourism and Events Queensland has been working with Ross and his team to ensure that, at the completion of this project, we have those events, we fill our city and we ensure that we have strong and profitable jobs that are available for all.

There is a strong process of consultation with a number of stakeholders and that has been made available to everybody in the city of Cairns and people outside who are involved in our city. This includes people who are involved or who have an interest in the tropical north global tourism hub. Being so closely associated with the convention centre, we think it important that they be involved in this process. Without any doubt, the Palaszczuk government has invested significantly and astutely in this major asset that will benefit the people of Cairns and our region.