




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 14 June 2019

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

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (12.16 pm): In the wake of a record season of bushfires, cyclones, floods and monsoonal troughs, it is with pride and honour that I stand before the House and back a record \$740 million budget allocated for the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. It is a budget that backs to the hilt the Palaszczuk government's commitment to keeping Queenslanders safe. It underscores this government's commitment to ensuring that our fire and emergency services from Cape York to Coolangatta have the capacity to do their jobs professionally, safely and with the equipment and vehicles they need.

On Tuesday we announced \$50 million for another 75 new fire appliances across the state. Of those, 25 are slated for the Rural Fire Service. I am immensely proud of our government's investment in our rural fire appliances. In the three years those opposite were in power, they delivered an average of 27 trucks a year to the rural fire brigades. The Palaszczuk government, on the other hand, has delivered an average of 60. Last year it was 119 in one year—that is, double the average. It does not matter how one does the numbers, the result is the same. We recognise and believe in the work, support and commitment of our Rural Fire Service personnel—staff and volunteers.

As an aside, when we are committing money and resources to our rural fleet, there is nothing but the utmost support from the men and women of the fire and rescue service, our urban fleet, who staff our urban trucks. They know our rural fleet needed help. They supported us to deliver it. As loyal and committed members of QFES, our fire and rescue personnel recognised when and where QFES resources needed to be delivered.

We must now address the urban aerial fleet, our type 3 pumpers, our absolute front-line staff trucks, and steer our resources in that direction. QFES is a team and a team backs its teammates. I request everyone in the Rural Fire Service and RFBAQ to back the team and back QFES.

I point out that when the Palaszczuk government came into power our Rural Fire Service was completely dependent on sausage sizzles and chook raffles to put fuel in the tanks of our remote and regional fire trucks and to keep them maintained and on the road. That is because the LNP gave our rural fireys zero dollars for fuel and maintenance. Since 2016 this government has committed ongoing \$3.8 million a year to ensure that our rural fireys have exactly what they need to keep their communities safe. Today I am proud to say that the Palaszczuk government meets all their costs and those sausage sizzles and raffles are no longer necessary.

Our Blue Water Review into the voluntary marine rescue services along Queensland's coastline is going great guns, so the member for Gregory need not worry. There has been fantastic progress, with community meetings at Southport, Redcliffe, Townsville and Gladstone and two more scheduled for Tin Can Bay and Cairns. It is a project led by volunteers from the coast guard and Voluntary Marine Rescue—the two groups determining their own direction. It is not about me. It is not about what our government believes. It is about them. They have my full support in determining their support and what

their organisation will look like. I can announce to the House that they have already made one clear determination, and that is that they want there to be one single marine rescue organisation for the state of Queensland.

With this budget we are continuing to deliver brand-new career firefighters across Queensland. We committed at the election to deliver 100. We are well on track. Nearly 50 of those have already been allocated to stations and another 25 will be allocated this year. That is because this government backs jobs across this great state.

This budget also has \$104 million in new capital expenditure and capital grants for QFES for new stations, for upgrading stations, for refurbishments, for continuing the work that has already been started—and that includes Longreach. I would like to take this opportunity to reassure the member for Gregory that the Longreach fire station is on track to be completed by mid-2021, as it was when he asked me last year at estimates. When I replied that it would be completed in June 2021, his response was, 'That sounds good.' I reiterate that, in line with the Palaszczuk government's commitment to regional Queensland, we are still 'good' to deliver the Longreach fire and rescue station by mid-2021. What a fantastic complex it will be for Longreach when I hand over the keys to the \$3.1 million complex that will be a new home for the Fire and Rescue Service, the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service.

Our State Emergency Service has been allocated almost \$5 million for communications, for facilities, for flood boats and for vehicles. This is in stark contrast to those opposite. When they were in power, they proposed to sack almost 60 Rural Fire Service staff. They cancelled a whole recruit course. They stopped recruiting. They called off-duty firefighters who were fighting for their rights 'strippers'.

I will turn for a moment to the electorate of Barron River. Roads are the arteries and veins delivering our children to their schools and our workers to their jobs and taking them all home again at the end of the day. Roads are quite literally the lifeblood for the families and the neighbours in my community. Ground has been broken on the highly anticipated Smithfield Bypass, and I am not the only resident to breathe a sigh of relief. I recognised the need for the bypass. I fought for it. Now it is with a great sense of pride that I can see it literally coming out of the ground.

In this budget the Palaszczuk government has committed \$1.435 billion to the entire Far North Queensland region for roads during the next four years. Of that, \$144 million has been committed for four major Cairns projects—the Cairns Ring Road, the western arterial road duplication, the Harley Street intersection upgrade and stage 5 of the southern access upgrade.

This budget also delivers for our schools, with \$59.5 million across Far North Queensland. Of that, more than \$25 million is coming to my electorate alone for three major school upgrades at Redlynch State College, Smithfield State High School, Trinity Beach State School, as well as Kuranda District State College.

For QFES, this budget is an investment in our people. It is an investment in our vehicles. It is an investment in our bricks and mortar. During this financial year we will see new aerial fleet arriving into Queensland Fire and Emergency Services—state-of-the-art aerial firefighting appliances, the kinds of trucks that you had as a child. You know the little fire trucks you buy? We all had them. I had them. We are buying them for real. These are world-class. They will be stationed in and around Brisbane. They will be replacing a lot of our fleet which is ageing. I know that our crews are desperately looking forward to receiving them. These appliances, trucks, will be at the largest of the largest fires, but they could also be doing something as simple as rescuing a cat out of a tree. It is something that we are very, very proud of.

This is a fantastic QFES budget. It is a fantastic Palaszczuk government budget. I congratulate the Treasurer, and I congratulate the Premier and all of my cabinet colleagues. I commend the budget to the House.