




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (8.01 pm): It gives me great pleasure to speak in support of the Palaszczuk government's 2019 Appropriation Bill. I acknowledge the independent member for Noosa's fair and balanced analysis and hope that other non-government members exercise the same mature observation. Very well done. Thank you very much for that. It was more or less a lesson for half the chamber today.

Budgets are about an expression of values, about making choices and setting priorities for the future, particularly for the state. It is no secret that during the last financial year Queensland was badly affected by flooding, drought and fire. A top priority of this government was to rebuild communities that were badly affected. This has not been an easy task. I commend the Treasurer on her first-class job in targeting support for both individuals and industry sectors most in need. This is a Labor budget that delivers for all of Queensland. It is delivering more opportunities for jobs, a secure Cairns through more police, an updated base for our ambos, a better educated Cairns with new classrooms and specialist learning hubs, and a healthier Cairns community through record funding for our hospital.

We know that being a regional community means we need to invest in delivering infrastructure and services so that families access quality education, health and transport services, just to touch on a few points. The Palaszczuk government can always be trusted to deliver on health care. This year's Health budget for the far north was \$63.6 million more than last year, an increase of nearly seven per cent. The focus of this budget is strengthening front-line services and delivering jobs. We cannot have a strong health system without hardworking front-line staff.

The Palaszczuk government is continuing to create jobs right across the far north for doctors, nurses and paramedics. This year's budget will see a further 130 staff employed locally. Jobs will also be created through the delivery of capital works and infrastructure. Demand for health care continues to grow and on an average day in Cairns and hinterland health services our hardworking doctors and nurses provide inpatient care to 769 patients as well as deliver 2,334 non-admitted patient services, 766 specialist outpatient services and accident and emergency services to 432 people. Building new facilities will create jobs while helping us take care of our growing and ageing population. This is a win for the entire community.

Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service's 2019-20 budget also includes \$70 million for a new mental health precinct at Cairns Hospital; \$900,000 to provide a new Breastscreen van for Cairns and the hinterland region; \$5.6 million to upgrade Cairns Ambulance Station, and just as importantly the operations centre; \$8.8 million to upgrade the chilled water system which is essential to the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems at the Cairns Hospital—and members can imagine that working in the tropics this is pretty important; and \$3.7 million to construct a state-of-the-art hybrid operating theatre in Cairns Hospital to ensure best practice and increase the surgical capacity.

Mental health issues affect one in five in our community. We all know somebody who is dealing with a mental health issue. This budget has put a spotlight on mental health, with \$61.9 million of new funding committed to support the new cross-agency Shifting Minds flagship *Taking action to reduce*

suicides in Queensland. The new \$70 million Cairns Hospital mental facility will have more capacity to treat more patients and will provide a better environment to help in the recovery of mental health patients. The whole building will be designed to help people recover from mental illness. It will include a modern, culturally appropriate design, family-friendly spaces and of course the latest in technology.

Cairns and the hinterland region will become the permanent home of a Breastscreen van. Every week in Australia, 343 women are diagnosed with breast cancer. We know that early detection gives women a much greater chance of successful treatment. Our government does not believe that a postcode should determine the level of health care received; as this announcement reaffirms. The government is also investing in statewide health initiatives for all Queenslanders such as an additional \$77.4 million to tackle waiting lists and by improving patient access to specialists through our specialist outpatient strategy. We are making permanent our 400 nurse navigators and 100 midwives committed to at the last election with a \$147.5 million funding boost.

Having two school-age children, education is close to my heart. As Nelson Mandela said, 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.' That is why I was delighted to see in this year's budget the Palaszczuk government once again investing an overall record of \$13.7 billion across early childhood schooling and further education. We make this investment because we know and recognise the importance of education and the significant contribution it makes to the betterment of our community.

In Cairns, some of this investment means that the Whitfield State School will receive its long-awaited \$500,000 new playground. Edge Hill State School will get \$200,000 for painting blocks B, C and D and prefabricated buildings. Cairns State High School will build a new multipurpose sports hall as part of a multi-million dollar renewal at a cost of \$11 million. There is \$9.5 million for a new building at Trinity Bay to accommodate that school's growing population, which will exceed 1,800 students. This is in addition to money being allocated across eight schools in the Cairns electorate for maintenance and works throughout the 2019-20 financial year. Cairns TAFE will also receive \$2.8 million for training infrastructure.

Again, this is not just about education; it is also about good quality jobs in the local area. The Palaszczuk government is listening to community concerns and working hard to respond to local priorities. We must ensure that our local communities have a strong voice in government and that we deliver what the people of the far north need and deserve. I am pleased to see more funding for the Captain Cook Highway and the Western Arterial Road. I know how busy these roads can get so it is great to see additional Palaszczuk government funding to further reduce congestion and increase safety.

More than 230,000 people are expected to call Cairns home in the next two decades. That is why we have secured \$71 million to match federal government funding for the Cairns Ring Road project from the CBD to Smithfield. This will enable planning to start straightaway for a solution that cuts travel time during peak hour, improves access to major motorways and means heavy vehicles no longer have to navigate our CBD.

The Palaszczuk government also recognises how important small business is to our economy. It is a big business, hence the important development which is absolutely fundamental and will impact on over 100 businesses in our community—that is, the increase to the payroll tax threshold for small businesses from \$1.1 million to \$1.3 million. At this stage I acknowledge that Advance Cairns and the Cairns Chamber of Commerce have both welcomed, with very positive statements, this and further initiatives by the government.

In addition there is a \$2.3 million investment in our successful Back to Work regional employment package, and it is specifically for Cairns. This is a very positive initiative for our small businesses, which make up 80 per cent of the commercial entities in Cairns city. In addition to this, the port expansion will begin in the next several weeks. This is an issue that has been discussed for many years. The second tranche of funding for that has been around \$71 million.

Mr Power: A lot of money.

Mr HEALY: It is a lot of money. I take that interjection from the member for Logan. Also, the expansion of the economically vital Cairns Convention Centre is well underway. There will be further announcements. We expect to see building take place early in the new year.

It is important that the people of Cairns know that the Palaszczuk government is investing in jobs, delivering in health and education, and easing cost-of-living pressures while building essential infrastructure in our community. I thank the Premier and the Treasurer and their teams, and all ministers, on behalf of the people of Cairns. I reassure the people of Cairns that I will continue to work and be an advocate for what we need in our future.