




Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Record of Proceedings, 28 November 2019

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Cairns Convention Centre

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (2.09 pm): Members of this House may remember that the \$176 million Cairns Convention Centre upgrade was an election promise. I am pleased to report that we are delivering on that and many other promises. Last month I attended a pre-tender briefing for the convention centre expansion and refurbishment project at which approximately 40 industry representatives, project team members, architects and tenderers who will be involved in the process also attended. On the Friday after that meeting the Minister for Housing and Public Works, Mick de Brenni, announced that tenders for the project were now open.

The Cairns Convention Centre generates \$80 million annually for our local business community. It forms a key part of the engine room for the Cairns economy, and as far as I am concerned the bigger the engine, the better. This expansion and refurbishment will enable concurrent and larger events and conventions to be held in our city—conventions and events that fill hotels, restaurants, reef vessels and ground-touring products, which in turn will also provide jobs and strong economic activity. The Cairns Convention Centre expansion will support 570 jobs and that is not even counting the local businesses that will be supported in the extended supply chain. The successful tenderer for the Cairns Convention Centre refurbishment will have to show how they will deliver benefits to Far North Queensland, including how they propose to engage a local workforce.

The Palaszczuk government's Buy Queensland approach shows that we are serious about ensuring this significant investment delivers real value for the people of North Queensland. The first phase of convention centre works will be lift upgrades, which will take place progressively from November so that the facility can remain open and operational until May 2020. That is when the planned closure of five months will take place so that the roof can be replaced, air conditioning can be upgraded and amenities upgrades and general refurbishment work can take place. This will be a challenging time for our community because it is such an economic driver that the hotels recognise that over this period it will be noticeably quieter, so ensuring we are on time is absolutely essential.

The existing centre will reopen in November next year. We will see a new tropical themed entrance and sky terrace offering world-beating views of Trinity Inlet with banqueting space for 410 people. Our aim is to ensure the expansion works cause as little disruption to the centre's operations as possible. Early in 2022 the Cairns Convention Centre will officially reopen bigger and better than ever.

In summary, the Palaszczuk Labor government has provided a big shot in the arm for our region by expanding this economic driver whilst generating jobs and further training and skilling the workforce. This benefits our entire community and fulfils one of our many election commitments.