




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 13 June 2019

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

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (10.40 pm): On Tuesday when the Deputy Premier and Treasurer brought down the 2019-20 budget, she said that it was a Queensland budget that was unashamedly focused on our regions. Unashamedly, that is exactly what it is: focused on our regions and, specifically for me, focused on Townsville.

On Sunday the Deputy Premier and Treasurer and Minister Bailey travelled to Townsville to unveil a half-a-billion-dollar plan to boost mineral freight exports on the Mount Isa line. Freight charges will be discounted and a new container terminal will be built at the port of Townsville to support an already beefed up five-year line maintenance budget to support North Queensland's resource industry. This announcement of investment into Townsville will promote mining and exploration in the state's north-west. Queensland's north-west minerals province contains around 75 per cent of the state's base metals and minerals including copper, lead, zinc, silver, gold and phosphate deposits.

The port of Townsville is North Australia's largest commercial port and Australia's largest exporter of zinc, copper, lead and fertiliser. A number of mines truck minerals from the north-west to the port and the trains that carry minerals in shipping containers have to be unloaded at Stuart and then trucked 12 kilometres to the port at a cost of around \$5 per tonne. Building a new common user rail freight terminal at the port will make the Mount Isa line more attractive for exporters and take trucks off the Flinders Highway and Townsville roads.

The Palaszczuk government will contribute \$30 million towards the construction of the freight terminal, with the port of Townsville providing the remaining \$18 million. Minister Bailey announced \$80 million over four years to reduce rail access charges on the Mount Isa line to drive the shift from road to rail. Commercial operators pay access charges to Queensland Rail to use the Mount Isa line and industry has called on the Palaszczuk government to make rail freight more competitive. I have heard this firsthand from MMG Dugald River general manager Sam Rodda, as well as through feedback received from mining operators last Thursday at the Townsville mining forum. We have listened and we will provide Queensland Rail with \$20 million each year, starting from 1 July this year, to reduce rail access charges and we will work with industry on implementation arrangements.

I acknowledge the major repairs that Queensland Rail carried out on more than 200 sites across 300 kilometres of track following the monsoonal weather event earlier this year. That has resulted in cutting almost an hour off the travel time between Mount Isa and Townsville, significantly improving efficiency and increasing capacity. The time line for that work to be completed was around nine months, but it was actually done within 11 weeks. The Palaszczuk government is investing \$380 million over five years to maintain and improve the line, making the freight journey faster and more reliable.

While that was the first key point for improving our North Queensland economy and creating jobs in our region, perhaps the second key point on which I am getting feedback is the payroll tax reform, which will affect about 500 businesses in Townsville. After that announcement in the budget on Tuesday, I rang the Townsville Chamber of Commerce and I have to tell the House that they were very

happy campers, to say the least. They have been talking about this to the three local members for quite some time. To hear that announcement in the budget on Tuesday shows that the Palaszczuk government and, in particular, the Treasurer are listening to regional members. The announcement of payroll tax reform will assist many businesses affected by the flood event earlier this year. It will give them an extra shot in the arm.

Another thing that I saw in the budget, which I had a sneak peek at, was the announcement of \$2.4 million for the Magnetic Island Forts car park. That might not sound like a lot, but for 20 years Magnetic Island residents have been advocating to make that car park safer. From memory, Mr Deputy Speaker, you are well aware of the Forts car park, as you have visited Townsville and Magnetic Island.

One thing that gave me a lot of joy was talking to the principals of the Townsville schools that had a wish-list boost. I spoke to the principal of my former school at Pimlico, Joel Buckholtz. The school will receive \$570,000 for a covered sports court. The principal said that, directly after our conversation, he would take that information straight to a P&C meeting. He is a very happy principal, because they have been working on that for some time. In fact, they were working on it when I was there five years ago.

I had the opportunity to ring Rob Slater, the principal of Townsville State High School. It is another school where I was principal. I gave him the good news that his school would receive \$250,000 to refurbish the C block amenities, which I know have been old and dodgy for some time. He also had a P&C meeting on Tuesday night and was very keen to share that information. They have been working towards that project for some time.

For me, perhaps the best news of the day was shared with the principal of Railway Estate State School, Dan Broadfoot. The budget contains \$100,000 to replace playground equipment at the school. When I visited the school, the playground equipment had been condemned as it had been eaten by termites and, of course, it was finished off by the floods. The kids who had played on that playground equipment, which was located under a big shady tree, were really upset to see it removed. For almost five years the P&C had been fundraising to replace the equipment. The last I heard, they had raised \$9,000, so to get an injection of \$100,000 is certainly a shot in the arm for them.

Mayor Alf Lacey of Palm Island is extremely happy that the budget has allocated \$2.5 million for a splash park. He said he did not want a pool because they are too expensive for councils to run. He is absolutely over the moon to have gained the funding for that splash park.

Tennis Townsville is very happy to receive \$420,000 to demolish and reconstruct an amenities block to support female participation in tennis at North Ward. I am sure that after Ash Barty's French Open win, we will see an increase in girls taking up tennis, which is a great sport.

The Palaszczuk government is investing in Townsville to the tune of \$190 million for the Townsville stadium, creating 700 jobs. As we announced today, early next year Sir Elton John will open the stadium. That is great news and it sends a very loud message to the international entertainment industry that Townsville will have the capability and the capacity to host megastars such as Sir Elton. I encourage each and every member to come and see Sir Elton John. The last concert that he will perform in Australia will be at the Townsville stadium. Come along to my stadium.

The budget contains \$225 million for stage 1 of the water pipeline to supply Townsville with its water needs for decades to come. All the contractors working on the project are locals. Every time I visit the site, they thank me for the investment that the Palaszczuk government has made into that project. It has kept some of them alive and allowed most of them to employ more apprentices.

There is an allocation of \$118 million for the port of Townsville to widen the channel allowing larger ships into the port. Over 30 commodities are handled through the port and it supports around 8,000 direct and indirect jobs. The budget contains \$17.5 million to procure and commission a berth 4 ship-to-shore crane and continue the development of the associated cargo terminal areas to cater for further trade growth through the largest commercial port in North Australia. While we invest in the port of Townsville, those opposite wanted to sell it. We own it, we invest in it and we love it.

Some \$7.4 million has been invested in the pedestrian bridge to the stadium—to my stadium. That will link Reid Park to the stadium and allow for easier access. There is \$5 million to help Townsville City Council build a promenade linking the Townsville stadium to the CBD to help activate the CBD both before and after events at the new venue.

Every single one of us in this chamber knows that the Palaszczuk government is committed to Townsville. I know because members on my side tell me that time and time again. Why is it that Townsville gets all the money? It is because the Palaszczuk government is committed to Townsville. It is committed to local jobs. It is this budget that reflects that commitment to growing local jobs and enhancing the city's standard of living.