




Speech By
Cynthia Lui

MEMBER FOR COOK

Record of Proceedings, 4 December 2020

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (4.30 pm): It is a pleasure to rise today to speak in support of the appropriation bill 2020-21. In doing so, I would like to offer my congratulations to the Treasurer and Minister for Investment, Cameron Dick, for handing down a solid budget amid a global pandemic and what is arguably the most challenging time in our modern history.

It is evident that Queensland is in good hands. We have witnessed this in the strong leadership of our Premier, Anastacia Palaszczuk, and a strong Labor government. I would like to commend our Premier for all of her efforts and hard work to stand with Queensland, for Queenslanders, to safeguard our communities in the fight against COVID-19 in this state.

No doubt 2020 has been hard on everyone. The impact of COVID-19 has put immense pressure on individuals, families and communities in my electorate. Under normal circumstances, remoteness is always a major factor underlying my community's vulnerability. We got to see the true extent of my community's vulnerability in the face of this pandemic, highlighting many uncertainties. People's health was at risk. Public and private sector services were impacted. People stopped visiting due to restricted travel, resulting in a massive decline in visitor numbers to the region which had a huge impact on the local economy.

During this time, I met with many small business owners—cafe owners, shop owners and tourism operators to name a few—to hear firsthand their experiences with operating a business under very stressful circumstances. The feedback was the same right across the electorate: people's health and economic wellbeing suffered severely due to the many uncertainties that COVID presented.

If there is one thing to go by, I stand by the fact that the Palaszczuk government is a government that stands up for all people, no matter where they live. I am thankful that, since the onset of COVID-19 early in 2020, there has been no report of community transmission in my electorate. I am proud of this government's quick health response because the results were obvious in my electorate. Not only did this government's fast-acting decisions save lives in my communities; it also placed us in a strong position to turn our focus towards economic recovery.

This is a budget that delivers for my community, from Mareeba to the Douglas shire and Cape York to the Torres Strait, focusing on supporting and strengthening services and protecting local jobs, not only now but also into the future.

In health, we are seeing record investment into the region with a total state health spend of \$21.8 billion across the state, and \$1.3 billion will flow into the Torres and Cape and Cairns and Hinterland hospital and health services in Far North Queensland. With a background working in remote health, I am pleased that the Palaszczuk Labor government is investing \$6.8 million of a \$46 million total spend in this budget for the redevelopment of the Thursday Island Hospital and Primary Health Care Centre.

We are delivering new and improved infrastructure. Our government's record speaks for itself: \$5.1 million of a \$17 million commitment to the upgrade of five primary health care centres in the outer islands of the Torres Strait; building replacement of the primary health care centre on Mer Island; \$2 million for the upgrade of the Mossman Hospital emergency department; and just over \$1 million for Coen Primary Health Care Centre for the replacement of the morgue and the replacement and remediation works of the conference building's roof. This government is focused on making a difference to people's health, no matter where they live, and creating opportunities for local jobs.

Local councils in my electorate play a vital role in delivering infrastructure projects that also support local jobs. Works for Queensland is one of the most successful and popular grant programs amongst the local councils in Cook. I would like to pass on their gratitude and appreciation to the Palaszczuk government for its continued support of Works for Queensland as it gives local councils greater leverage to deliver on their infrastructure, maintenance and minor works.

This year, this budget allocates \$36.7 million for COVID Works for Queensland and \$22.5 million is coming into local councils in my electorate. Some 14 local councils in Cook will benefit from these funds. These critical funds are going directly into projects across councils in my electorate and is welcomed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Speaker has reviewed and approved my speech for incorporation. As such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated into *Hansard*.

The speech read as follows—

That is not all. The Queensland government recently announced over \$9.7 million for schools in the Cook electorate to go towards a mix of upgrades and new projects. In Cape York, Aurukun State School will receive \$220,000 to create better teaching walls in the teaching block, replace windows and create cross-flow ventilation across the upper classrooms. Cooktown State School will receive \$136,000 for the upgrade of the prep playground, and the Hope Vale campus of Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy will receive \$370,000 for a new amenities block. These are not all of the schools in the Cook electorate. The Kowanyama State School, Lockhart River State School, Mossman State High School, Mossman State School, Wonga Beach State School and Tagai State College in the Torres Strait, with upgrades at its Malu Kiwai, Mer, Poruma and Saibai Island campuses, will all benefit from critical investments to build and refurbish vital infrastructure and support local jobs.

For big projects like the Wangetti Trail, construction was brought forward by six months to create jobs. We are investing \$3.5 million into the Mareeba Industrial Park expansion, stage 3, which will make heavy industrial zoned land available for large-scale development.

When it comes to roads, we announced \$313 million to accelerate work on local roads, including the Peninsula Development Road, the Kennedy Highway and the Bourke Development Road in my electorate. When I see all of the road activity in my electorate I know that we are supporting families, putting food on the table and roofs over people's heads.

In relation to Small Business Adaptation Grants, 140 small businesses in the Cook electorate have been successful in winning more than \$1.2 million in grants as part of the Palaszczuk government's COVID-19 economic recovery plan. I had the pleasure of visiting some of these small businesses: Just Jase Hair, the Sorella Hair & Beauty Studio in Mareeba and the Driftwood Cafe in Cooktown. It is clear that the Palaszczuk government's stimulus support package is providing much needed funds for small businesses to keep them afloat through these tough economic times. The electricity rebate of \$500 million to provide relief for households and small businesses with electricity and water bills is another example of how this government is working to support households and businesses throughout my electorate. Our Land Restoration Fund, \$43 million for five projects, will create over 300 jobs. COVID-19 is putting a lot of pressure on families and, as such, incidents of domestic and family violence were on the increase. This government recognised the impact of COVID-19 on breaking families and, with the Commonwealth government, injected vital funds into community organisations to provide intervention support for vulnerable families. I am pleased that 10 community organisations in my electorate were successful recipients of domestic and family violence funds.

Works for Queensland has always been widely received by my local councils. The new COVID-19 Works for Queensland funds highlights this government's commitment to support the local economy.

I can confidently say that the decisions made by this government to support communities in my electorate through these economic challenging is seen at the community level. Whether its replacing the roof and electrical upgrades at the Community Canteen and continuing refurbishment at the Arts and Culture Centre in Kowanyama or the development of the Cultural Precinct and upgrades to the football field in Lockhart, or the installation of smart water meters across the Douglas Shire and upgrades at the Port Douglas Wastewater Treatment Plant, are only few examples of 14 councils in my electorate to receive the COVID-19 Works for Queensland funds to support shovel ready projects and sustain local jobs in regional and remote communities.

That is not all. In terms of education, this government is delivering so that our children have access to good quality education no matter where they live. In Cape York, Aurukun State School will receive \$220,000 to create better teaching walls in the teaching block, replace windows and create cross-flow ventilation across the upper classrooms. Cooktown State School will receive \$136,000 for the upgrade of the prep playground and Hope Vale Campus of Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy will receive \$340,000 for a new amenities block. Kowanyama State School, Lockhart River State School, Mossman State High School, Mossman State School, Wonga Beach State School and Tagai College in the Torres Strait for upgrades at its Malu Kiwai, Mer, Poruma and Saibai Campuses will all benefit from critical investments to build and refurbish vital infrastructure and support our local jobs.

For big projects like the Wangetti Trail, construction is brought forward six months to create jobs. We are investing \$3.5 million into the Mareeba Industrial Park Expansion, stage 3, which will make heavy industrial zoned land available for large-scale development—COVID-19 economic recovery initiatives for the Far North.

In regards to roads, there will be \$313 million to accelerate work on local roads including PDR, Kennedy Highway and BDR.

In regards to small business adaption grants, 140 small businesses in the Cook electorate have been successful in winning more than \$1.2 million in grants as part of the Palaszczuk Labor government's COVID-19 economic recovery plan. I had the pleasure of visiting some of these small businesses; Just Jase Hair, Sorella Hair and Beauty Studio, Mareeba; and Driftwood Café, Cooktown. It is clear, the Palaszczuk government stimulus support package is providing much needed funds for small businesses to keep afloat through this economic downfall.

The electricity rebate of \$500 million will provide relief for households and small businesses with electricity and water bills.

Our Land Restoration Fund of \$43 million for five projects will create over 300 jobs.

The Palaszczuk Labor government has a strong plan to unite and recover the state's economy. Queensland's plan for economic recovery is well and truly underway and together we will get through these challenging times. I commend the bill to the House.