



Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill

Health and Environment Committee, Report

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (4.27 pm): I rise to endorse our Health and Environment Committee report and the recommendations around the budget. There are a number of budget highlights that I will go into in my contribution. There is record investment in Health; record investment in the 16 independent hospital and health services across our state; and record investment in the Queensland Ambulance Service. The Health budget also funds the Queensland Mental Health Commission; the Office of the Health Ombudsman; the Council of the QMIR, our research institute; and Health and Wellbeing Queensland.

One of the biggest highlights during 2020 and COVID was the \$1.2 billion health package allocated as part of Queensland's economic recovery plan, *Safeguarding our health*. That funding package covered a range of equipment and services associated with managing and containing COVID-19. We should be very proud of that commitment. That package included funding for fever clinics, doubling emergency department capacity, intensive care units, acute care services and regional aeromedical services for remote communities. The package also included the purchasing of additional ventilators and stockpile of personal protective equipment, or PPE; it allocated \$250 million to address the surgery backlog arising from the pandemic; and there was a massive injection into a mental health and wellbeing community package.

There is also \$265 million in funding to build seven satellite hospitals. That will enable acute hospitals to safely manage patients via alternative models of care across South-East Queensland. That program includes Bribie Island, Caboolture, Redlands, Pine Rivers, Ipswich and QEII. This is a great investment in health. After working in the health committee in the previous term, one of the things I was very proud to have seen was the commitment and budgeted amount of \$171 million to the people of Queensland around palliative care. That funding package goes through to 2025-26.

The Queensland Ambulance Service saw record investment. In the budget I was very happy to see the completion of new ambulance stations. I know that many members here had investments in their electorates—

Ms Boyd: Kirwan.

Mr HARPER: Thank you, I will take that interjection. I was very happy to recently open the new Kirwan ambulance station, and I thank the minister for allowing me to do that. The minister visited that facility just recently. We also had a \$40 million funding commitment for the Kirwan Health Campus, and I look forward to seeing that come to fruition over this term.

In relation to the other portfolio area that we cover, which is the environment, we saw record budgeted amounts for 2020-21 for a range of things, including: \$10 million over four years for the Reef Credits Scheme; \$10 million for Reef Assist; and increased funding of \$10 million over four years for projects supporting ecotourism, including upgrades to national parks and World Heritage areas. I was interested to see \$5 million to support the implementation of the South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy.

In wrapping up, one of the points I wanted to make was that the statement of reservation from the LNP mentions that 'the Minister did not apologise to the Rockhampton nurse' who was involved in the COVID outbreak. I ask the LNP: when are you going to apologise for closing the Barrett Centre? That is an absolute disgrace. I would not sit there laughing about that because people lost their lives. The member for Mirani commented that fundamental economic indicators in Queensland were in 'bad shape' with 'rock bottom levels of confidence'. Maybe the LNP will be interested in this article from the *Townsville Bulletin*, which states 'Business confidence soars after government stimulus in Townsville'. I think that is a fantastic way to wrap up.

Tabled paper: Document, undated, titled 'Business confidence soars after government stimulus in Townsville' [170](#).