




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 18 June 2021

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (2.00 pm): The 2021-22 state budget delivers a solid plan to protect our health, create jobs and work together as Queenslanders to recover from the economic impact of COVID-19. We have seen Queensland recover economically faster than other states and countries around the world. This has only been possible due to the Palaszczuk government's sensible and staged approach to mitigating the pandemic's impact on Queenslanders and the efforts made by Queenslanders to contain the virus by following the health advice and supporting each other through the pandemic. I particularly want to acknowledge the efforts of local government mayors who worked with us to ensure that there was not one single case of COVID-19 in a remote or discrete Indigenous community in Queensland.

This budget outlines the continued steps that the Palaszczuk government is taking to build on that recovery effort. This state budget demonstrates the Palaszczuk government's commitment to continue supporting and safeguarding Queensland communities. It supports the delivery of the promises we made to the people of Queensland at the last election, especially our most vulnerable—our seniors, our Queenslanders with disability and our First Nations Queenslanders. Through this state budget, we are providing funding that will enable Queenslanders, regardless of their ability, age or where they live, to participate and be included in their communities, to be resilient and to enjoy social wellbeing and economic security.

The COVID pandemic has seen our state having to implement a savings and debt plan. Fortunately my department will achieve its savings targets without affecting frontline services for our seniors, people with disability or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Queensland seniors have repeatedly acknowledged the efforts of the Palaszczuk government to keep them safe during the height of the COVID pandemic. Ensuring Queensland seniors can live their lives free from physical, emotional and financial abuse and scams is a top priority for this government, unlike those opposite who had no minister for seniors, who slashed the Office of Seniors' budget by 63 per cent, who planned to scrap pensioner concessions leaving seniors on a fixed income looking at significantly reduced quality of life just to pay their bills, and had no policy plans to make Queensland seniors' lives better or recognise the contribution they make to our state and communities.

The Palaszczuk government is continuing to provide \$423 million in seniors' concessions and rebates to more than 839,000 Seniors Card holders. This supports our seniors to access medical aid, to pay their power bills, car registration or to access public transport, and access museums and galleries, also helping to reduce the effects of social isolation.

We know that older people are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse as a result of aging and fear of homelessness and social isolation. Elder abuse is an abhorrent act which causes harm to an older person and, sadly, is most often perpetrated by a family member or friend.

Earlier this week on 15 June, we launched our Elder Abuse Awareness Campaign to mark the anniversary of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. The theme for this year's campaign is 'Together we can stop elder abuse'. The Palaszczuk government is committed to doing our bit to stop elder abuse and to raising awareness of this issue in our communities. This is why we are investing \$4.8 million over four years and \$1.2 million per year ongoing for seniors' legal and support services, financial protection advice and a scams and fraud protection helpline for our seniors.

In 2012, we saw the LNP cut \$642 million from disability services and \$368 million from NGOs providing disability supports. The Palaszczuk government is committed to supporting the almost 96,000 Queenslanders with disability.

The state's role in disability service has changed significantly since the transition to the NDIS full scheme agreement in October last year. That is why we are providing funding of \$14.6 million over four years and \$3.6 million ongoing to support peak and representative bodies to build the capacity of the disability and community care sector to deliver viable, cost-effective and quality services.

We are working proactively with the Commonwealth through Minister Reynolds and all jurisdictions to ensure that the Queensland government investment of more than \$2 billion annually is delivering the reasonable and necessary supports that Queenslanders living with disability require. We are also continuing to invest in positive behavioural support for Queenslanders with disability by providing funding of \$6.6 million over two years from 2021-22.

There are some Queenslanders with disability who are not eligible for the NDIS. Funds of \$7.3 million over four years and \$1.8 million ongoing will provide support for disability services clients who are ineligible for services under the NDIS, as well as funding of \$5.1 million over four years and \$1.3 million ongoing to advance disability services functions. We recognise the importance of advocacy to ensure Queenslanders with disability have access to the supports they need, whether or not they are eligible to access the NDIS.

This year's state budget will boost disability advocacy services to assist Queenslanders with disabilities to access mainstream services, safeguard wellbeing and to assist with NDIS related issues, thanks to additional funding of \$8.1 million over two years, commencing in 2021-22. This funding will assist people like Elliott, a 10-year-old with multiple cognitive impairments and living in a regional community who had previously attempted to access the NDIS. However, he was not able to source the necessary clinical assessments to provide the evidence to meet the NDIS access requirements. Thanks to those who advocated for Elliott, his application is now approved, assisting him and his family to connect with local support services for the very first time.

The Palaszczuk government recognises the importance of Queensland's rich Indigenous culture. That is why we are investing in the health and wellbeing of the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. We understand that education is critical to securing positive futures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. This budget provides a funding boost of \$4 million in 2021-22 to the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foundation to increase educational choices for First Nations Queenslanders.

We know that overcrowded housing is a critical factor in the disadvantage experienced within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In addition to the record \$2.9 billion investment in social housing for Queensland, the Queensland government will inject funding of \$4.5 million to address land administration requirements and land and infrastructure program planning initiatives in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This investment will contribute to closing the gap and enable home ownership for First Nations Queenslanders in their communities. We are investing funding of \$800,000 over four years and \$200,000 ongoing to implement the Indigenous Languages Policy and Indigenous Languages Grants program supporting the preservation, revitalisation and maintenance of Indigenous languages.

I also acknowledge the contributions that are included in this year's budget from other portfolio areas delivering outcomes for First Nations Queenslanders, including those investments that support Indigenous employment and entrepreneurship, community development and access to justice. I am happy to see ongoing support for the Murri Courts and the extension of the Local Fare Scheme, both of which the LNP cut.

In our ongoing efforts to reframe the relationship with First Nations Queenslanders and promote reconciliation, we have committed \$27.6 million to managing native title compensation claims and a further \$1 million in additional funding over four years and \$300,000 ongoing for the continuation of reconciliation initiatives, including the Celebrating Reconciliation Grants Program and funding for Reconciliation Queensland Inc.

As the Premier has said, ensuring that reconciliation is more than a word, the Palaszczuk government is putting our money where our mouth is. We recognise that reconciliation must be grounded in genuine commitment and actions that facilitate truth telling and healing.

The establishment of a \$300 million Path to Treaty Fund honours those who for generations have called for treaty. It honours the knowledge, contribution and commitment of those 1,700 community members who contributed to the treaty report and recommendations. It honours the work that the Treaty Advancement Committee and Queenslanders are currently doing to progress the path to treaty. Returns will be used to support path to treaty actions and the government's response to the Treaty Advancement Committee report, expected to be provided to government later this year.

I am very happy with what this budget delivers for my electorate and for the people of Barron River. Firstly, I know that Barron River locals will be happy that we have secured \$1 million towards a much needed upgrade to the facilities at a local not-for-profit animal shelter—the Young Animal Protection Society, also known as YAPS. Some \$500,000 will flow towards that in this year's budget. The local boaties will be very happy to know that \$4.6 million has been allocated to construct the Yorkey's Knob boat ramp and floating walkways. For our Kuranda friends up the hill, I am pleased to announce \$12 million has been allocated for the Kuranda range and Kennedy Highway Intelligent Transport System, ITS, to improve safety and reduce the number of crashes on this stretch of road. Along with that, over \$1.3 million has been set aside for a study of the Barron River Bridge upgrade at Kuranda.

The Palaszczuk government continues to deliver for education, with just over \$2.5 million for ongoing works on Barron River schools, including upgrading halls at the Redlynch State College junior and senior campuses, creating a new out of school hours care facility at Machans Beach State School and new learning spaces at Freshwater State School. A further \$9.9 million will go towards construction of the 94 kilometre Wangetti Trail. This will not only increase local tourism and create jobs but also provide a huge economic benefit for First Nations people, including the Yirrganydji people, welcoming visitors onto their country and providing cultural education for future generations.

Cairns Hospital will receive a further \$46.1 million towards a new mental health unit, expansion of the emergency department and to continue with ongoing hospital improvements, including progression towards the Cairns University Hospital. The Cairns region wins from this budget with fantastic new infrastructure and capital works projects estimated to support around 3,900 jobs in this region.

Last, but certainly not least, I am extremely excited to say that this budget will provide the final \$31.3 million out of a total of \$164 million to complete the Smithfield Bypass. Some \$10 million has been allocated to continue upgrading the Cairns Western Arterial Road and \$14 million to upgrade and expand the Captain Cook Highway. I can assure the residents of my electorate that the Palaszczuk government takes improving our roads seriously. It is great to see the federal government come on board and contribute to funding for these arterials. I certainly welcome their support in helping to ease congestion in Barron River. I am pleased the Queensland government contributions are locked in over the forward estimates.

In conclusion, the Palaszczuk government is committed to creating strong, inclusive Queensland communities where everyone has an opportunity to succeed and grow. I support the budget.