




Speech By
Hon. Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 17 June 2021

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (2.29 pm): I rise today in support of the Palaszczuk government's 2021-22 state budget. This budget will help us continue to deliver our plan for economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the resources sector will continue to be a key part of this moving forward. Already in the past 12 months we have seen how important this traditional industry is to Queensland, and it has been able to continue operating, keeping thousands of people in jobs throughout the global pandemic. The resources sector is incredibly important for all of Queensland but particularly so in the regions in places like Townsville, which I am proud to represent.

As our government has said since the beginning of this pandemic, we will continue to invest in Queensland's traditional strengths such as the resources sector to help us come back stronger from this pandemic. In this budget more than \$42 million will be invested in the Queensland's resources sector and land programs as part of the 2021-22 state budget.

This latest budget will allow Queensland to continue its resources-led recovery through exploration grants, initiatives and mine rehabilitation programs. These investments are crucial to making sure our exploration and resources sector remains strong and we continue to drive new discoveries as we transition to a low-carbon economy. The resources sector has continued operating during the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting 71,000 jobs. I would like to take this time to again thank everyone in the resources sector—not one single case of COVID-19 in 71,000 jobs.

As part of this strategy, the Palaszczuk government will continue to help explorers discover new economy minerals, which are crucial for renewable technology such as electric vehicles and batteries. We will do this with \$2.5 million towards Collaborative Exploration Initiative grants and a further \$2.2 million to facilitate the development and expansion of the new economy minerals industry. Exploration investment is critical for finding new deposits and developing potential new projects, which means more royalties, more exports and more jobs for Queenslanders. The latest statistics from the ABS show that exploration in Queensland is up 22.5 per cent to \$705 million in 12 months. Investment in exploration today is what will lead to the next generation of projects, which is why this budget is backing the sector.

There are even more opportunities for the resources industry to grow, with the announcement of the \$2 billion Queensland Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund as part of this budget. You cannot have a renewables industry without a strong resources industry, and Queensland has a real opportunity to take advantage of this moving forward thanks to the world-class North West Minerals Province. There is a world-class minerals deposit on our doorstep which the world will increasingly look to in the future. Minerals like vanadium, cobalt, copper and rare earth elements will be in demand. That is why we are investing \$13.8 million in our new economy minerals initiative to help explorers discover new economy minerals and future jobs across North Queensland.

In this budget, we will invest \$15.5 million to address rehabilitation of abandoned mines across Queensland. This package will include continued management of the Linc Energy site. On this site 50 wells have been identified as high priority for decommissioning due to the associated contamination risks. I am pleased to report to the House that this work is already underway, and in the coming year this funding will be focused on those wells. Another priority site is the abandoned Collingwood tin mine, which was disclaimed in 2015. Given its proximity to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and the Great Barrier Reef catchment, my department will be focusing on decommissioning the tailings dam. Additional works include site works at the abandoned Wolfram Camp mine and make safe works associated with historic mine shafts on the Atherton Tablelands.

The state budget also delivered for our gas industry. The state budget delivered a \$222 million investment in publicly owned clean energy operator CleanCo. This included \$24.6 million to develop the Kogan North gas fields in a joint venture with Arrow Energy. Gas will play an increasingly critical role in our energy mix as we move towards this government's commitment to net zero emissions by 2050. With CleanCo investing in additional gas supply, this will also assist Queensland's push to deliver our commitment to a 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030. This commitment builds on our already announced \$5 million Bowen Basin Gas Pipeline Feasibility Study.

I am also proud that this government is leading the development of the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan. Work is already underway on the plan, having attended multiple workshops across regional Queensland. This is going to be a great success. As I said earlier, the resources sector will continue to be a key part of Queensland's economic recovery plan from COVID-19, which is why the Palaszczuk government will continue to back it in with real investment.

In this budget another \$11 million will be invested to continue strategic programs that improve and restore rangelands, soil and vegetation catchments through the Queensland Natural Resources Investment Program. Also, as part of the Natural Resources Investment Program, a further \$500,000 will explore ways to improve partnerships and innovative ways to deliver grant programs.

Additionally, my department will be investing \$7.7 million to continue protection of the Great Barrier Reef as part of the \$270 million Reef Water Quality Program being led by Minister Scanlon. This investment is in addition to the \$400 million already invested into the reef by the Palaszczuk government.

We must not forget that 65 per cent of Queensland is still affected by drought, and we need to do all we can to help our drought-affected farmers however we can. That is why we will be delivering \$3.2 million in land rent rebates for landholders in drought-declared areas. In addition to this rebate, drought-declared landholders will be granted a hardship deferral for required rent payments.

Through this budget, the Palaszczuk government is doing what it can to help keep businesses operating and thriving, people employed and our resources sector going strong. It is not just the resources industry that will benefit from this budget. In Townsville we are continuing to back job-creating projects with millions of dollars being invested into the city. Essential infrastructure in North Queensland, like the \$193 million channel upgrade at the Port of Townsville, is incredibly important. This will position the city well into the future and will also support our growing resources sector which Townsville is a key part of.

Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, you have reviewed and approved my speech on the budget for incorporation. As such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*.

The speech read as follows—

We are continuing to invest in maintenance and upgrades of the Mt Isa to Townsville rail lines which is a key link for companies getting their resources to Townsville's port.

Let's not forget there were for sale signs up at both places under the Newman Government.

Mr Speaker we all know water security is vital for all communities to continue their growth in the future, which is why under this budget, the Palaszczuk Government is funding stage two of the Haughton Pipeline after we flushed the Feds out because they were trying to rip off Queensland.

It's now been 318 days since that happened and we're still waiting to see where or even if the Federal member for Herbert will do with that money which he promised would stay in Townsville.

Water security is key for Townsville's growth into the future and so is tourism which is why we're backing Magnetic Island with real investment.

As part of this budget, we are investing \$4.9 million in 2021-22 out of a \$7 million total spend to upgrade Magnetic Island roads as we know it's the jewel in Townsville's crown.

We're backing stage three of the Museum of Underwater Art off Magnetic Island with a substantial investment after funding the first two stages which have been a great drawcard for visitors to North Queensland and we are also investing in the world-class Magnetic Island National Park visitor trails network.

It's real investment from this budget that makes Townsville a great place to live, work and visit.

Mr Speaker another huge investment as part of the 2021-22 State Budget is in our schools.

Being a former teacher and principal, I know how important the right learning environment is and I'm proud to be part of a government that has a record education budget.

In Townsville alone there are more than 30 different projects at schools throughout the city which will benefit from this budget.

There are millions of dollars in funding for school upgrades throughout the city which will not only benefit students but will create jobs too.

School halls, refurbished learning facility, new playgrounds and so much more is what this government is backing though this record \$15.3 billion State Budget investment in school and early childhood education.

Mr Speaker throughout Queensland we are backing the health system with this budget too.

There is a record health investment of \$22.2 billion which will continue to provide a world-class health system, which is also critical to continuing managing the ongoing risks of COVID-19.

In my hometown we are investing in the Townsville Hospital and Health Service with \$17.8 million this financial year for construction projects to improve facilities at the hospital, including the expansion of the Outpatients Department.

Just this month as the Minister for Health, the member for Mundingburra and the Member for Thuringowa know we opened an expanded and refurbished paediatric treatment area in Townsville University Hospital's emergency department.

We also announced we are funding a paediatric cardiology service for North Queensland which will be based at the Townsville University Hospital.

There is an exceptional hospital on Townsville's doorstep with exceptional staff and this is possible because it's this government that backs our workers and health system with real investment as is clear in this budget.

From March 2015 to March this year this government is backing our frontline health staff putting on an extra 249 nurses and an extra 182 doctors.

The Palaszczuk Government has made no secret that our focus is on creating jobs and that's what this budget is all about.

As part of this budget we are putting in the largest investment in social housing in Queensland's history with a new housing plan backed by \$1.9 billion investment over four years and a new \$1 billion Housing Investment Fund to boost housing supply and increase housing and homelessness support across Queensland.

This will help support vulnerable people and ease stress on those looking to move to places like Townsville.

It will also help continue our economic plan for recovery as it will create and keep tradies in work.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, this budget is about backing all of Queensland and backing our plan for economic recovery from the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The resources industry is a traditional strength of Queensland's and it has shown how vital it is in the past 12 months.

We continue to back all parts of the economy and we continue to back the regions like Townsville.

Investing in major infrastructure like stage two of the Haughton Pipeline, the Port of Townsville upgrade and the Mt Isa to Townsville rail line will continue to create jobs and support our economy.

That's how you keep Queensland on the road to economic recovery.