




Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Record of Proceedings, 22 February 2022

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2)

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 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (4.03 pm): I rise in support of the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2021 and the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2021. This is an annual process under the Financial Accountability Act 2009, as the majority of us are aware, to reconcile the departmental appropriations at the end of each financial year against the relevant budget projections. The unforeseen expenditure incurred by the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service was primarily due to additional departmental services, funding for costs associated with the 2020 state election and additional funding to support service delivery pressures.

It has been acknowledged in this chamber that while six departments had unforeseen expenditure another 17 departments had lapsed appropriations to the tune of \$1.4 billion. This is not reported in the bills but has been published in the Consolidated Fund Financial Report. Lapsed appropriations, I want to stress, are not cuts. They typically represent where funds for a program have not been spent in the year in which they were anticipated. Examples include the Commonwealth government funding adjustments to the North Queensland Restocking, Replanting and On-farm Infrastructure Grants scheme. Another example would be the Community Health and Hospitals Program along with other state programs and machinery-of-government changes.

While speaking of the appropriation bill and the state's finances, it is also important to take into account our state's economic growth in these most unique and challenging times out of which we appear to be emerging due to the sound and rational approach of the Palaszczuk government, of which I am very pleased to be a member. Queensland's economic growth in 2021 was faster than the national average. Queensland's economy grew by 6.1 per cent while Australia's economy grew by 3.9 per cent. Household consumption in Queensland grew by 2.9 per cent in the latest quarter—1½ times faster than that of the rest of the Commonwealth. Private investment in Queensland grew by 4.6 per cent while the national average grew by only 0.8 per cent. In terms of private investment, people only usually invest in places that are doing well or have a very bright future. Dwelling investment in Queensland also grew by 4.6 per cent while the national average stalled with 0.1 per cent growth.

One only has to look around Cairns to see how strong the building industry is there, and I dare say in other parts of the state where people cannot get anybody—any builder, chippies or plumbers—because they are absolutely flat out at the moment and are booming. As I travel around the state of Queensland I am told on a regular basis that this is not just happening in Cairns but is happening across the state. This is why we continued to invest in areas like TAFE. We continued to invest in skills areas. This is the appropriate allocation of capital to ensure that we are building careers and we are building a strong future.

Queensland's business investment grew by 4.9 per cent while nationally it grew by 0.8 per cent. Queensland's economy is 6.4 per cent larger than it was pre COVID; Australia's is just 0.1 per cent larger, so thank you, Mr Morrison. Queensland has added more jobs than any other state or territory

since March 2020, with 124,300 more Queenslanders in jobs today than there were pre COVID. When we take into account some of our biggest industries that employ so many, including tourism, this is a remarkable figure. Our government has overseen the addition of 376,800 jobs since 2015, more than 1,000 jobs every week. That is a positive thing not only for my region of Cairns but also for the state. Towards the end of last year we all would have seen year 12s leaving school and going out into the workforce. Knowing that there are skills being provided through TAFE and other skill-developing programs and knowing that there is need for their employment is such a positive thing to be able to acknowledge.

Queensland's unemployment rate has dropped to 4.4 per cent—its lowest rate since December 2008. It should come as no surprise to anyone in this chamber that Queensland is attracting more interstate migrants than any other jurisdiction in the Commonwealth. More than 31,000 people moved to Queensland in 2020 and 85,000 Australians from other states are expected to come to Queensland before June 2024, hence the need for our ongoing investment across the state in essential and job-creating infrastructure.

The value of Queensland's exports in 2021 was \$79.2 billion. That was up 16.5, or 26 per cent, on exports in 2020. These are the facts and they remain undisputed. We will continue to invest in this sector. As recently as last Friday in Cairns I joined the Treasurer on site to turn the first sod on construction of the Cairns Regional Trade Distribution Centre. These early works will create 30 local construction jobs, with a further 30 jobs to be supported once the facility is operational, including nine new roles. This is about ensuring we are providing the appropriate facilities for our agricultural and aquacultural sector to continue exports so we will not have to subsidise aircrafts flying into leisure destinations. This is also reflected in the \$200 million, the largest single war chest, which was put together by both the Palaszczuk government and four private airports in pursuit of getting those airlines here. It is the biggest investment in aviation that we have seen anywhere in the Commonwealth.

Finally, Queensland's tax settings remain competitive with the average Queenslanders paying \$628 less than the average Australian and \$1,100 less than those in the state of New South Wales. All this has been achieved by a government that listens to the science and makes sound decisions based on that science, unlike those opposite who never understood the science and called for the borders to be opened 64 times before any solution had been arrived at. It was absolutely remarkable.

I thank the members of the Economic and Governance Committee, in particular its chair, for his articulate presentation this morning, and the deputy chair. I also acknowledge the secretariat for the work that they do. Our state's economic future is positive, it is strong and it is growing. These are the facts. They remain undisputed. The Palaszczuk government continues to invest in essential areas for all Queenslanders.