



Speech By
Michael Healy


MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Record of Proceedings, 23 June 2022

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (4.39 pm): There are times in this chamber when I am reminded of the unfortunate American president Abraham Lincoln's comments: 'Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt'.

Mr Watts: Time to sit down then!

Mr HEALY: I am pleased that somebody on the other side got it!

I rise to speak in support of the appropriation bills. What an absolutely outstanding budget this is. I acknowledge the hard work of our Treasurer, the member for Woodridge; the Assistant Treasurer, the member for Jordan; their staff; and those in the Treasury department. I congratulate each and every one of the people who have contributed to this. Not only is it a sound budget; it is a strong budget. It is a by-product of listening to the people of this great state. This budget sees record spending in health and education and some vitally important new initiatives, particularly in relation to mental health, which we all know has been tested as a result of COVID. This is very much needed.

In addition, we see ongoing significant financial commitments not just in the areas of police and environmental protection but also in the housing sector. We see the allocation of funds for a new manufacturing hub in Cairns. Something that is vitally important to regional councils is Works for Queensland, which was not proposed to be an LNP program if they were ever to get in government. It is vitally important that the strong relationship between us and councils continues. Our neighbourhood and community centres will receive \$115.8 million. This is absolutely essential. I have a number of those centres in my community, and I acknowledge the minister and tell her how important that funding is.

When we talk about alleviating the concerns over the cost of living, there is more than \$6 billion in concessions for Queenslanders. It is significant. There are many other important components which stimulate our economy and help our communities. It is with great pleasure that I see that a number of these priorities have been carried over to my electorate of Cairns.

Water security has been an issue in Cairns and surrounds for quite some time. As a matter of fact, the Cairns Regional Council identified this and prepared an action plan in 2015, yet it has taken a commitment from the Palaszczuk Labor government and the Albanese Labor government to alleviate the concerns of the people of Cairns. In this budget, the Treasurer announced a commitment of \$107.5 million in support of proposed infrastructure development which will see water security well into the future, in the long term. This amount will allow stage 1 of the Cairns Water Security program to be completed. This is, as we have always said, subject to the delivery of a business case. I acknowledge Minister Butcher, who has been instrumental in securing this positive outcome. This should assist in

reducing cost-of-living pressures on the people of Cairns. Over \$200 million has been provided by the state and federal governments. This is something the ratepayers of Cairns will no longer have to cover. I am proud to be a party to the delivery of that funding.

On the health front, Cairns will gain more than 100 extra hospital beds, as the Palaszczuk government embarks on the biggest expansion program ever seen in a state focused squarely on health. The massive \$9.78 billion Hospital and Health Infrastructure Plan will include \$250 million for the Cairns Hospital expansion to establish 96 new beds by 2026 and 45 extra beds through a leasing arrangement to expand subacute services in Cairns this year. This is in addition to the ongoing expansion and upgrade of the Cairns emergency department.

The Cairns Ambulance Station and Operations Centre has secured additional funds for redevelopment. This will support communities through the delivery of pre-hospital ambulance response services.

Construction is underway for a new \$70 million, 53-bed mental health unit at Cairns Hospital as part of the hospital's ongoing expansion. It will provide a more flexible response to acute medical health services in a therapeutic environment, providing improved services not just for the local patients but also for families. The three-storey building will also include a 10-bed mental health intensive care unit. The infrastructure project is boosting the Cairns economy, creating nearly 70 full-time jobs during the construction phase. The job is expected to be completed by the end of 2023, with the facility opening its doors in early 2024. The new mental health unit is part of the government's \$82.2 million health investment in Far North Queensland for 2022-23 which also includes the Atherton Hospital redevelopment and Cairns Hospital emergency department expansion.

On a broader but vitally important issue, the 2022-23 budget provides for an additional \$1.645 billion over five years and a capital investment of \$28.5 million to improve our mental health, alcohol and other drug services for a range of initiatives to support suicide prevention and deliver additional beds. This need has been recognised by this government. It has been requested by communities all throughout Queensland. This is another example of a government that listens to its constituents. This investment will also deliver Queensland's contribution of \$109.55 million to the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement with the Commonwealth as well as government's responses to the inquiry into the opportunity to improve mental health outcomes for Queenslanders. The total health funding for this budget is \$23.6 billion. As I said, this reflects the government's understanding of what is needed in our community.

The Cairns Marine Precinct is a vitally important area of growth, development and opportunity for our city and for our region. The Queensland government is investing an additional \$150 million in a major expansion to the Cairns Marine Precinct to establish Far North Queensland as a leading maritime maintenance, repair and overall hub. This measure is absolutely essential for ongoing growth in this area. The expansion will enable Cairns to secure larger defence and marine contracts, further supporting around 4,600 jobs in the region's marine sector. The construction of a new common user facility, including a 5,000-tonne ship lift, will allow ships of up to 120 metres in length to be repaired and maintained on a hardstand area. The expansion will open up significant opportunities for local service providers to pursue new opportunities, to increase capabilities and to create additional skills and jobs. We are seeing that occur through our marine college and the courses being developed through TAFE. The Queensland government will now seek a codesharing arrangement for the project with the Australian government. This \$150 million expansion is in addition to the \$32 million for the Cairns Marine Precinct early works to progress infrastructure upgrading, including the delivery of two new wharves at the Port of Cairns facility.

The Deputy Speaker has reviewed and approved my speech on the budget for incorporation. As such, I ask to have the remainder of my speech incorporated into the *Record of Proceedings*.

The speech read as follows—

Education

The Palaszczuk Government will invest a record \$16.5 billion in school and early childhood education in the upcoming state budget, with hundreds of infrastructure projects to improve schools from the Gold Coast to the Cape. Another five new schools would be opened in 2025 and 2026, while existing buildings would be expanded and improved thanks to more than \$1.9 billion in infrastructure investment supporting thousands of jobs.

And this adds to the on-going investment in our education sector in Cairns. Specifically for Cairns we are receiving \$12.8 million for much needed and essential infrastructure.

Trinity Bay State High School \$5.8 million in 2022-23 out of a \$11.5 million total spend to deliver a new performing arts facility.

Balaclava State School \$300,000 for the refurbishing of 2 learning spaces in block D in addition to funds for the Balaclava OSHC after hours school care.

Cairns State High School will receive over \$800,000 for additional specialists classrooms

Cairns West State School over \$600,000 amenities upgrade

Edge Hill State School will receive funds for both essential administration up grades and covered learning areas.

Parramatta State school will receive \$750,000 for the refurbishment of 4 learning spaces in A block and another \$267,000 funding towards OSHC capacity increase.

Trinity Bay State High School will receive funds for upgrade, reconfigure and refurbish library/resource centre and a new Hall Facility.

We know that the future of our State are in our classrooms now, and that is why we continue to invest in our school, which is an investment in our children's future, and this will always remain a priority for me, as I have promised my community.

Small business

- The Palaszczuk Labor Government will deliver payroll tax cuts to small-and-medium-sized business, as part of the 2022-23 Budget. The Treasurer also announced as part of today's budget that we will provide payroll tax relief to more than 12,000 small and medium-sized Queensland businesses. This will be achieved by increasing the payroll tax deductions to businesses with annual Australian taxable wages between \$1.3 million and \$10.4 million. I know this will be particularly welcomed by the thousands of small to medium sized tourism businesses who have been doing it tough over the last few years—through the global pandemic.

TOURISM

I am pleased to also share that within the 2022-23 Queensland State Budget, we have set aside \$66.4 million over three years for key initiatives aligned with the Action Plan's recommendations including:

- up to \$15 million over two years for the Tourism Experience Development Fund;
- up to \$4 million over two years towards a First Nations Tourism Program;
- up to \$27.4 million over two years for priority tourism projects as part of the Regional Tourism Recovery Program, which includes \$18 million towards the rebuilding of Binna Burra.
- And this is in addition to the Aviation Fund worth \$200 million, already committed by the Palaszczuk Government in conjunction with The Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine and Cairns Airports. This fund is a reflection of the Governments co-operative approach with the aviation sector to attract International flights into Queensland, which we know is an essential part of the Tourism Industries recovery.
- And we are also seeing ongoing investment into the Wangetti Trail. This budget will see \$9.4 million in 2022-23 for a 94 kilometre walking/ mountain biking trail from Palm Cove to Port Douglas, with public and eco-accommodation facilities. This project is without any doubt one of the most amazing projects with vast potential for not just the Tourism industry, but also career opportunities for our first Nations peoples.

Lyons Street Diversionary Centre Expansion \$3 million in 2022-23 out of a \$4.4 million total spend for the expansion of Lyons Street Diversionary Centre.

Cairns Advanced Manufacturing Hub \$3.3 million in 2022-23 out of a \$3.6 million total spend to build an advanced manufacturing centre at Cairns TAFE. Part of the Equipping TAFE for Our Future program.

Screen Queensland—Far North Queensland Film studio \$13.4 million in 2022-23 out of a \$20.6 million total spend for the construction and operation of a new film studio in Cairns. The on-going opportunities this new infrastructure will present in both jobs and careers is unprecedented and I acknowledge the hard work of the Member for Mulgrave in this important area.

And our investment in the Cairns Convention Centre continues, with \$46.2 million in 2022-23 out of a \$176 million total spend towards the refurbishment and expansion of the Cairns Convention Centre to capitalise on the national and international convention markets. Once completed, this important piece of essential infrastructure will generate an estimated \$130 million a year into the Cairns economy.

Works for Queensland will continue. \$46.7 million provided to regional councils to undertake 70 maintenance and minor infrastructure projects in Far North Queensland. (July 2021 to June 2024) has been enormously successful and hugely appreciated by many Councils. This is such an important work program and I know many will be so happy to see this continue.

More jobs in not just our traditional industries, but new and emerging industries are essential and The Queensland Government's economic strategy will help Queensland businesses to take advantage of the many opportunities that are out there and grow our economy.

A growing economy will allow the government to deliver better services across the state, including in education, justice and social services. High-quality services improve the lives of Queenslanders and help everyone to participate fully in our economy and our community.

Ensuring a better future for all Queenslanders is one of our goals, and this budget is ensuring that outcome.