



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 3)

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BETTING TAX AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (5.02 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Betting Tax and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 and the Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2022. On 6 June 2022 the government announced changes to the betting tax to provide for a more sustainable funding model for Queensland's racing industry. I can say, as many in this chamber would be aware, they have been desperately looking for that. I am very pleased to say that the Palaszczuk government has well and truly delivered, as the minister mentioned earlier today.

The racing levy ensures it will be imposed and calculated on the same basis as betting tax. This will make it easier for betting operators to comply with their obligations in relation to both monthly and annual returns and will streamline administration for the Queensland Revenue Office. The bill amends the Betting Tax Act 2018 to incorporate free bets into the calculation of taxable wagering revenue from 1 December 2022. The Northern Territory is the only jurisdiction not to currently impose a betting tax and, of those that do, all except Tasmania incorporate free bets into calculating the betting tax.

I would like to touch on country racing funding. Country racing, as a lot of us know, is an essential part of the economic and social fabric of communities across Queensland. In line with broader amendments to the Betting Tax Act, an alternative funding method is required to provide certainty to country racing participants on funding for country racing into the future.

Since 1959, the Cairns Amateurs has been an absolute world-class event and it has been supported by the Palaszczuk government. Thousands of people from around the Commonwealth and some from overseas have visited the tropical north. This is an event that pumps \$15 million-plus into our regional economy and it is one of the many events that get the strong support of the government. The changes that are being made by this bill are absolutely essential. Large multinational organisations definitely need to pay their fair share.

There are a couple of things I want to touch on in relation to the appropriation bill. I want to acknowledge the investment the Palaszczuk government has made in the Cairns region. We will not even get into details about the hundreds of millions of dollars that both state and federal governments have invested in relation to roads coming in and around Cairns. The Cairns Western Arterial Road, the northern section of the Captain Cook Highway, has received both federal and state funding and continues to grow. We have seen money from both the state and federal governments in relation to the Cairns Southern Access road, which has been completed and is absolutely spectacular.

The other benefit of this hundreds of millions of dollars of investment is the jobs it provides for the local community. We have very strict guidelines on employment and we have strong engagement with the local community. I talk to a number of people in my community and to a lot of business owners who are heavily involved.

I want to also touch on the \$176 million that we have invested in the Cairns Convention Centre. This was something that was built by a Labor government and now we are refurbishing it. This is a facility which is fundamentally important to our economy. We know from our tourism culture that we have so many hotels around. We bring intrastate, interstate and international events to our world-class convention centre. Prior to the \$176 million development it generated about \$80 million a year, and this permeates through our community and is absolutely essential. At the completion of this upgrade—and you will all be enjoying the final product when you come to Cairns for the sitting of parliament in May of next year—this facility will generate at least \$130 million into our economy. This is absolutely essential.

We spent \$126 million on dredging. We are seeing the cruise ships come in. We recently announced a \$150 million commitment for a major expansion to the Cairns Marine Precinct which will enable the maintenance, repair and overhaul of large ships, not only navy ships. There will also be significant investments in superyachts. We have made a multimillion dollar investment. I acknowledge the Treasurer in this decision because it was the Treasurer who recognised their importance.

We have four international airports in Queensland, more than any other state in the Commonwealth. We do lack critical mass. For those people who do not get it, we do not have the population to sustain the numbers. The way we deal with that is that we fill the belly of the aircraft using our agriculture and aquaculture. The Treasurer approved \$10 million for a refrigerated export facility, which is absolutely fantastic. This will see an expansion of the \$200 million which the Palaszczuk government, in conjunction with the private sector, has put out there to ensure we get a solid return.

There are so many initiatives. We can talk about Building our Regions. We can talk about Skilling Queenslanders for Work, which is such an important program in my part of the world. There is over \$50 billion for an infrastructure program. We have a \$62 billion Energy and Jobs Plan. We have the largest investment in health. We have the largest investment in housing. I have to say, without any doubt, I am enormously proud to be part of a government that gets it and, more importantly, can articulate it.