



Speech By
Hon. Scott Stewart


MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 24 June 2022

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (11.37 am): I rise today in support of the Palaszczuk government's 2022-23 budget. Central to our economic recovery has been the ongoing strength of the resources sector. As we all know, our resources industry has been the foundation of Queensland's prosperity for more than a century. This industry continues to support our great state, particularly after the economic impacts of COVID-19. This budget, which is providing record investments in health, creating good, quality jobs and delivering better services, owes much of its success to the rock-solid contribution made by the resources sector.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr STEWART: It is good to see you picked up that bad dad joke. Our resources, which are owned by all Queenslanders—including our kids who are sitting in the gallery today—have been put to work by the Palaszczuk government to serve all Queenslanders. Right now the resource industry supports nearly 80,000 jobs, and this budget will help create good long-term jobs for our emerging new economy minerals sector. It is an important part of our resource industry's future.

The global shift towards electrification and low-carbon technologies will see demand for our state's new economy minerals absolutely skyrocket. As the world searches for the new economy minerals and metals it needs to decarbonise economies, our government will capitalise on this demand by ramping up exploration for and production of these resources. The energy transformation already underway in Queensland will power the economic transformation of our state.

We have been working closely with the resources sector to take advantage of these emerging opportunities, particularly in regional Queensland where I am from. With the election of the Labor government in Canberra, we will finally have a national energy policy that will abandon the decade of policy inaction by the previous government. For a start, our new federal Labor government knows Queensland exists and understands the potential of our new economy minerals. It knows that minerals like cobalt, vanadium and copper, just to name a few, will be essential parts of Australia's energy mix moving forward. These minerals are needed for a wide range of renewable technologies, including batteries, electric vehicles, wind turbines and of course solar panels.

Even though this budget has an unashamed focus on new economy minerals, Queensland's traditional resources like coal and gas will continue to play a role in our energy mix for the foreseeable future. This is one of our state's strengths and we will continue to do the heavy lifting, particularly in the gas sector, to support the southern states. As always, the Palaszczuk Labor government will stand with and fight for Queensland workers.

You cannot have a renewable energy sector without a resources sector, and this budget has Queensland in prime position to take advantage of this as the world looks to decarbonise. The move to net zero by 2050 provides the opportunity to drive confidence and investment in emerging industries like hydrogen and new economy minerals.

The 2022-23 budget includes an increase in the level of royalties to be paid to the state by coalmining companies. The royalties our resources sector generates help pay for our hospitals, our doctors, our nurses and our paramedics and this is a credit to the resources industry. It is particularly good to see the resources industry contributing to our economy, particularly in regional areas where these coalmines are operating. As a regional minister, I know just how important regional communities are to our state and the amazing lifestyles that they offer, but it is important that these regional communities have access to top quality facilities as well. That is why these royalties are so important.

Look around this grand building. It was the gold from Gympie that helped build this Parliament House, which is an amazing legacy. In the coming years, our coal workers will be able to say exactly the same thing about our region's hospitals, and that will be and should be something the resources sector is proud of. These royalties will go towards giving our great mining town of Moranbah the hospital it deserves. They are the reason why we can upgrade our hospitals in Queensland resource centres like Townsville, Mackay and Rockhampton.

The budget handed down by the Treasurer earlier this week also contained a range of measures relevant to the resources sector, including funding, for the implementation of the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan. Our kids in the gallery will have a great future knowing there is a great resources industry for them well into the future.

Mr Hinchliffe: They're smart kids at Nashville school.

Mr STEWART: They are smart kids at Nashville. I take that interjection from the very biased local member.

The QRIDP sets a comprehensive agenda for growth, diversification and transformation that details 43 actions across six areas of focus for government and industry alike. The plan establishes a blueprint for the future for the resources industry, including domestic opportunities in the development of new resources, and further development of new and emerging markets for our traditional exports. The 2022-23 budget takes a significant first step towards the goal of injecting \$39.8 million into the recovery and development of new economy minerals. This multimillion dollar shot in the arm for the new economy minerals sector will fast-track the development of projects and the jobs and the business opportunities that come with them. This will provide significant opportunities for regional economies and workers to secure the economic benefits of new economy minerals operations, processing and advanced manufacturing in their region.

The Deputy Speaker has reviewed and approved my budget speech for incorporation. As such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*.

The speech read as follows—

Key among these funded actions is an additional \$17.5 million over four years for the Collaborative Exploration Initiative.

This initiative provides grants to new economy minerals' explorers and supports innovative exploration techniques, encouraging exploration in frontier and under-explored areas of Queensland.

This takes the total investment over five years to \$22.6 million to find the deposits of the future that will supply the minerals and metals that the world needs to decarbonise.

There's also \$10 million over two years for geoscientific research to find out more about identified deposits and potential new ways to mine them.

And another \$5 million over two years has been allocated for research to better define Queensland's new economy minerals' potential.

While the Department of Resources will be undertaking these initiatives to create a pipeline of new economy minerals' projects, the development of the other end of the supply chain—processing and manufacturing—is also being supported.

The 2022-23 Budget has allocated \$5 million to develop the Queensland Battery Strategy by the departments of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water.

Also, earlier this month, my colleague the Treasurer and I were in Mackay to announce \$5.7 million over three years to the Resources Centre of Excellence.

Those funds will underpin expansion at the centre, and the development of a Future Industries Hub, to support new economy minerals' projects.

Speaker, these Budget funds come on top of at least \$10 million already committed for a common-user new economy mineral processing plant in my hometown of Townsville, initially for vanadium miners.

As I noted earlier, a key theme of the QRIDP is seizing new opportunities through genuine partnership between government and industry.

The common-user new economy minerals' processing plant is a prime example of the kinds of targeted investments the Queensland Government can, and will continue to, collaborate with industry on to de-risk the diversification of the Queensland resources industry.

And in a measure that will benefit across the industry, the Budget includes \$1.59 million for the Department of Resources to make mining and exploration assessment and approvals more efficient.

Another important measure the Department of Resources will be undertaking on the regulatory front will be to scope out a regulatory 'sandbox' to co-design with industry a regulatory environment that supports new economy minerals projects.

Many new economy mineral deposits will likely have a relatively small mining footprint. As a result, I'm keen to ensure the regulatory framework is proportionate—operating robustly to manage impacts but not creating unnecessary roadblocks to development.

This regulatory sandbox will be a valuable opportunity for government and industry to work together to establish an optimal, fit-for-purpose regulatory environment to support new economy minerals projects.

Speaker, Queensland's natural land resources are a significant contributor to our agricultural, resources and tourism industries.

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to improving the sustainable productivity of our land resources to support regional jobs and economies.

We are doing this by providing \$40 million over four years and \$10 million per year ongoing to continue to increase the resilience of Queensland's landscapes through the Natural Resource Recovery Program.

Building on the success of the former Natural Resources Investment Program, the new program will support sustainable productivity, and good jobs, from Queensland's land resources, which will provide sustained economic benefits and outcomes.

Up to \$10 million of the committed funds will be made available to natural resource management organisations across Queensland on a yearly basis, with the potential for other groups to work in collaboration on projects.

This funding will go to developing and implementing projects that contribute to the state's soil and vegetation and demonstrate sustainable economic productivity of the land.

This program will also protect and enhance our great regional Queensland lifestyle.

Key priorities of the program include improved landscape resilience and ability to respond to natural disasters and climate change as well as utilisation of data to drive innovation and, working with communities and industry to adopt sustainable practices whilst driving regional economies.

A key objective of the program will include building genuine and enduring partnerships with Traditional Owners.

This commitment supports organisations and community groups we've worked with, and has delivered more than 330 jobs located in 33 offices across regional Queensland.

The new Natural Resource Recovery Program will maximise both investment and outcomes for our regions.

My department continues to support local government as the day-to-day managers of the crucial stock route network.

Like the resources industry Queensland's agricultural industry has been a traditional strength and our stock routes are a vital part of this.

In the coming financial year, \$900,000 will be allocated to improve and maintain stock route water facilities across the state to ensure their safe and efficient operation.

The stock routes network is a key piece of infrastructure for producers who use it for agistment in times of drought, and for drovers moving and feeding up to 330,000 head of stock each year.

Mr Speaker, I said earlier that the future of the resources sector is bright.

It is a future that is underpinned by this budget, and the investment it makes in the further development of a robust, viable and sustainable resources sector—most notably through our Queensland Resource Industry Development Plan.

It is nonetheless important to recognise the challenges our industry confronts today and will continue to confront into the future.

The war in Ukraine and the sectional challenges being made by some countries to the global rules-based order have profound implications for trade—notably for us, the recent embargo on our coal exports imposed by the Chinese Government.

Global trends toward cleaner sources of energy presents challenges as well as opportunities, and we must navigate the way forward with a steady and temperate hand upon the tiller.

But if the resources sector has demonstrated anything during the last decade, it has been its resilience and adaptability.

Change is already upon us—but I am confident that, as we continue to engage in extensive and inclusive consultation with the industry, the resources sector will continue to thrive, and continue to be the cornerstone of Queensland's economy.

Mr Speaker, through this budget, the Palaszczuk Government is supporting the resources industry through a range of measures including supporting our new economy minerals sector which is important to my hometown of Townsville.

But it's not just resources industry that will benefit from this budget Speaker.

In Townsville, like everywhere throughout Queensland we are investing in our health system.

The massive \$9.78 billion hospital and health infrastructure plan will include \$530 million for the Townsville Hospital Expansion to deliver 143 extra beds.

Townsville University Hospital is already world class and this investment will continue to make sure the biggest tertiary hospital in Northern Australia continues to provide a fantastic service to North Queenslanders.

The Palaszczuk Government has a proud record of delivering extra health services and I'm happy that is continuing in Townsville as part of this state budget.

Also another matter close to my heart being a former principal is our record investment in education.

In Townsville as part of this budget we are investing \$41 million to maintain, improve and upgrade our schools.

This is incredibly important because young people are our future and investing in top class facilities will help them achieve their goals.

I'm proud to say that in this budget there is \$7.2 million in out of a \$12.9 million total spend to deliver a long awaited new performing arts facility for Pimlico State High School as well as upgrade skills development and training facilities and construct additional specialist classrooms.

Being a former principal at that school I know how welcome this will be for this community and I'm proud to be delivering on another election commitment for my community.

Investing in facilities which help grow the skills of young Queenslanders is a key part of this budget and is a priority of this government.

We are investing \$5.3 million in this year's budget out of a \$10.6 million total for a Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Training facility at the Bohle TAFE campus.

Hydrogen and renewable energy are important parts of this state's future so it's essential that our young people have the skills to help this new industry thrive for decades to come while creating more good, secure jobs.

That's also why this government is also investing \$26 million for water infrastructure alongside the new Federal Albanese Government at the Lansdown Eco Industrial Precinct.

This will be used to construct a 13km raw water pipeline and pumping station connecting the Lansdown Eco-Industrial Precinct to the Haughton Pipeline, and a water reservoir.

We know there is huge potential in the Lansdown precinct, so does Townsville City Council and finally so does the Federal Government.

Speaker, this budget has a focus on creating good, secure jobs, delivering better services and capitalising on our great lifestyle.

And there's no better lifestyle than the one on offer in Townsville, which is why I'm so proud to be part of the Palaszczuk Government that through this budget is continuing to deliver for all of Queensland.

I congratulate the Treasurer on the budget he delivered this week, and agree wholeheartedly with the Premier that Queensland's best days are still to come.

I commend the budget to the House.