



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR HILL

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (4.05 pm): I rise to speak to the 2022-23 budget. I do not think this is much of an inspiring budget but there are some good points, particularly in relation to health infrastructure.

I want to highlight something that is very important. I acknowledge Minister Enoch, who provided extra funding for neighbourhood and community centres. These centres deal with disability, loneliness, family and domestic violence, financial stress and they support our seniors. I have five of these neighbourhood community centres in my electorate, and I contacted them all. They realised from the beginning that they were struggling. I want to express appreciation, because many of us lobbied the minister for this and their funding has now been almost doubled for each community centre.

I would like to name the ones in my electorate: Better Together Community Support Centre in Innisfail; ECHO Neighbourhood House at Malanda; Ravenshoe Community Centre—this is the community centre that really worked hard during the Ravenshoe blast years ago where a number of lives were lost and the community was affected; and the Tully Support Centre. Most of these community centres lobbied us and said they needed extra funding, and these are good dollars well spent.

In relation to Main Roads, I have to say that in my electorate there are a lot of roadworks. Probably the biggest complaint I receive is about delays and how long it takes. Up to \$50 million is going into my electorate this year. I acknowledge regional managers Sanjay Ram and Ross Hodgeman, their teams and the minister, because just communicating with them over the years we have seen a lot of roadwork taking place. Some of those are ongoing now, which is working with the community, including Boogan Road; Palmerston Highway; Atherton to Mareeba, Kennedy Highway; East Feluga intersection, where we saw a number of deaths including schoolchildren that devastated the community, Gillis Range Road; and the Bruce Highway at Cowley, which is about to start.

Some of the other funding that came in is for Atherton to Mareeba passing lanes—this is a really big issue for that region and a lot of people have been on our back to try and get these passing lanes—and funds for the Grove Street intersection. Something that has been lobbied for for years in relation to constant traffic congestion is at Atherton on the Kennedy Highway.

I will now mention a couple of things that need work, and one is the Innisfail Japoon Road and the Silkwood Japoon Road. We received a bit of funding for Innisfail to Wangan, and that is fair enough. There are a couple of patch-ups. This road has the most popular tourist attraction, which is Paronella Park, but the road is in a very bad condition and needs to be addressed.

It is also now time to seal the Herberton to Irvinebank road. It is a dirt road all the way through and there are a lot of complaints about that. There is a need for passing lanes from Malanda to Millaa Millaa. There are still none there. That has been pushed for for years but there are still none. We need

to press this because of the increased traffic. There is also a need for the Ootann Road, which is the inland highway. I know that is a council road but there needs to be an injection of funds with a combination of state and federal government money. There are massive prime movers that go on that road. That relieves the pressure on the Tablelands, but they are actually diverting back onto the Tablelands because it is just too rough.

We received \$5 million for the Upper Barron Road about five years ago. The Minister for Transport and Main Roads visited and provided \$5 million because it was a dirt road. That is where we have the Bromfield Swamp, which is a well-known tourist attraction. We have been pushing for that. We are there, but there are about seven kilometres that need to be widened. It is a really dangerous section of road, considering it is a shortcut from Malanda to Ravenshoe and it has an iconic tourist attraction.

On education, there is \$14 million going to my electorate, and I am seeing funds going to some of the growth schools. There is \$11.5 million going to Malanda. That has started but it is ongoing funding because it is one of those growth schools. Tully State High School received \$2,356,000 for their additional classrooms. I have a bit of a soft spot for there because I was born in Tully. Babinda lost its mill, but Babinda State School is a great little school and it is getting \$850,000 to refurbish five learning spaces. Goondi State School received \$90,000 for electronic security. We raised this with the minister because the school has been broken into and trashed five or six times. It is good to see those funds going to that school and they are rapt about that.

With regards to health, the government has been trumpeting a record expenditure in health, yet we cannot see much that will stop the decline in basic health services in regional Queensland. We are losing doctors, nurses, medical surgeons and specialists, and we are seeing hospitals cancelling or delaying surgery continually. This is what is happening in our region. We see massive amounts of funding through coal royalties, but in regards to hospitals we still have funding of about \$12 million to finish the new hospital at Atherton. We are on stage 2, we are almost there, for that \$74 million project. This has brought a lot of jobs to our community and there is no doubt it will benefit our region.

It is great to see funds going to Moranbah for a new hospital because I was the member for that area. Even though that is 1,000 kilometres from where my electorate is right now, this is good news. I had a lot of communication with the late member for Mackay, Tim Mulherin, many years ago. It is good to see that a mining community that produces \$4 billion in gross revenue to that region is getting a bit back in return.

I want to highlight something else now. I want to talk about royalties. All we have heard from this government is mixed messages on coal—how good renewables are and that coal is being phased out and will be replaced. However, all of a sudden we see a record \$7.6 billion in coal royalties being trumpeted by the government which allowed them to announce a record spend to try to plug holes in our collapsing health system. Coal worldwide is in high demand and prices are soaring, but Queenslanders have been told constantly that coal is old technology and not needed anymore and that renewables will replace coal. Now nations are scrambling to get coal base load power stations back online, and our federal government had the hide to turn around and question why base load generators are poorly maintained and broken down during the energy supply crisis. The \$7.6 billion raised from coal royalties is an example of the huge benefits to Queenslanders in the form of jobs and paying for essential services, which is something that renewables will never be able to replace.

In regards to this budget, we have to remember how much money comes in from coal and where it is spent. The Labor government sold the coal component of Queensland Rail. The Queensland government at the time was raking in \$1.8 billion of transport haulage per year. That money was going to hospitals and schools, but now that money is going to overseas companies and it is not going to hospitals and schools. That is why it is so important to invest in these infrastructure projects. That is the importance of coal and these nation-building projects. If we had our way, we would be building that railway track in the Galilee Basin because it is money and jobs returned to us. The state government would own it and get the royalties and the transport haulage, and then the funds would go back to hospitals. It makes sense.

There are some things we have missed out on or that are still ongoing. One is the Kurrimine Beach boat ramp. The plans are in place and locals have been lobbying for this for 20 years. We have got the drawings and the plans, and we just want to see this boat ramp completed. They hosted the Creek to Coast. It is congested and people have to wait in the water where there are sharks and crocodiles, and then at low tide they have to use tractors to fetch their boats. It is very important to get funding for the Kurrimine Beach boat ramp.

We have had representatives from the Atherton-Herberton Historic Railway here in parliament. They are working on that railway track to repair it to ensure that tourists can have a beautiful rail journey from Herberton to Atherton. It will provide massive support to the tourism industry on the Atherton Tablelands. We have been lobbying for that but we have not received any funds at the moment.

There is a need for the North Johnstone transfer project. This was an approved project going back to when the Tinaroo Dam was constructed. It was approved and it was also acknowledged that as farming activity increased there would not be enough water supply to sustain development in that region. This is a nation-building project. It is very important because we are running out of water.

We also need to fast-track the inland highway from the Tablelands to Cairns. This is another project that is very important to open up right up to the gulf and provide quicker access of 20 minutes rather than 1 hour and 30 minutes. There have been 44 closures on that highway for up to six hours at a time.

Mr Dametto: They need a tunnel.

Mr KNUTH: They need to tunnel it right through so it is quick. We saw what happened here when the Airportlink opened. It used to take 50 minutes to get to the airport and now it takes about 20 or 25 minutes. I wanted to bring that to the attention of the House.