




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2023

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Seniors and Disability Services) (10.17 pm): I am proud to stand tonight as a minister in the Palaszczuk government this week as we deliver this budget. I want to acknowledge the hard work of our Treasurer, who is with us in the chamber tonight, as well as my cabinet colleagues.

I am honoured as the member for Barron River to acknowledge the wins in this budget for my home electorate and also for the Far North Queensland region. I welcome the headline figures of \$1.6 billion in new cost-of-living relief and a record \$8.2 billion in total concessions. I embrace our plan to tackle cost-of-living pressures with free kindy, school breakfast programs and a power bill rebate of \$550 for every home in Queensland. I celebrate the fact that we are on the cusp of Queensland's Big Build—the biggest infrastructure build ever undertaken in the history of this state.

I am proud to announce a record child safety budget of \$2.14 billion—the first time the child safety budget has topped \$2 billion. This budget will see 123 new child safety officers and support staff employed on the front line to help Queensland's most vulnerable children and families.

While visiting child safety offices across Queensland I have been proud to meet with so many passionate, caring and hardworking child safety workers. I met people like Nicola in Roma who often makes an 1,100-kilometre round trip to visit children and young people in surrounding towns. In Townsville I spoke with Shandel, a young woman working for the department as an admin officer while completing her social work degree. Shandel has the full support of my department as she works towards her goal of becoming a child safety officer. In Roma I met with Jessie-Lea, a university student from Brisbane and one of 32 young people statewide who took part in paid university placement as part of her social work degree. In Mackay and Cairns I witnessed a promising trial to appoint paralegals to work in child safety offices to help process court documents and other paperwork. This helps our CSOs to spend less time in the office and more time with children and families who need their support.

We are leaving no stone unturned in addressing the workforce challenges we face in child protection. The 123 extra positions, at an estimated cost of \$11.4 million in the next financial year, will help continue to drive down our caseloads, with priority given to locations with high workloads. It is also fantastic to see a record investment of an extra \$167.2 million over four years and \$20 million in ongoing funding from 2027-28 to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families known to child protection. In this regard we are working towards expanding delegated authority beyond the two trial sites in Rockhampton and the Sunshine Coast. We will also expand Family Wellbeing Services which have proved so effective at diverting First Nations families from further contact with the child protection system.

In disability services the budget invests \$7.8 million to support at-risk children and young people to access the NDIS until December 2024. The Access and Referral Team, or ART, supports vulnerable children and helps young people with disability to access the NDIS. Since 2020 ART has assisted more than 3,600 people to gain access to NDIS supports, including 530 children and young people last year alone.

I am happy to advise the House that the Palaszczuk government has committed to continue to deliver accommodation support and respite services, or AS&RS, until June 2025. We believe this budget celebrates the contributions that seniors make to Queensland through their roles as carers, workers, volunteers and community leaders. We will invest \$15.3 million over the next four year to support Queensland seniors. This budget will enable seniors to feel cared for, safe and supported by Queensland's world-class frontline services.

In my home electorate of Barron River this budget tackles the hot button issues: cost of living, health, housing and roads. I welcome ongoing work on site selection for a new youth detention centre near Cairns and the expansion of the youth co-responder model to deal with or divert high-risk young people.

For our roads there is \$6 million to kickstart the \$359 million total spend towards the upgrade of the Captain Cook Highway between Smithfield and Cairns in partnership with the Australian government, and there is \$30.9 million towards the \$300 million duplication commencement of the Cairns Western Arterial Road between Redlynch Connector Road and the Captain Cook Highway, also in partnership with the federal government. I commend the Palaszczuk government's 2023-24 budget to the House.