




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2023

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

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (8.55 pm): Congratulations to Treasurer Cameron Dick, the Premier and the whole Palaszczuk cabinet for the 2023 budget. It supports families, grows businesses, develops new industry, creates jobs and addresses the cost-of-living pressures. Won't the mums, dads and pensioners of Burleigh be excited when they hear that their member does not want them to get their rebates? All other households across Queensland will receive a \$550 cost-of-living rebate—

Mr HART: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence at what the member has just said and I ask her to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will take some advice, thank you. Member for Mackay, the member for Burleigh has taken personal offence. I ask you to withdraw.

Mrs GILBERT: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker. All households across Queensland will receive a \$550 cost-of-living rebate, and pensioners and concession card holders will receive up to \$1,072, delivering \$1.48 billion for additional electricity bill support not only for households but also for small businesses. Queensland is a modern, progressive state and we are on the cusp of a green energy revolution. We can only realise this with vision and leadership—leadership that is not afraid to make hard decisions and stick to them.

Those opposite have stood up here in the chamber and they have wrung their hands about all the infrastructure they want rolled out in their electorates, the additional staffing levels they want increased in schools, police stations, hospitals and health clinics, all while the member for Chatsworth is sitting on a shopping list of projects that will be slashed off our current infrastructure program. If they were in power, all of those on the other side calling out, 'Give us more,' will miss out while their shadow ministerial team are in full flight playing Jack the Slasher. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition has announced he is going to overhaul the Public Service. The last time they did that, thousands of Queenslanders got the sack. It is time to be afraid.

The last time those shadow ministers were in power, my region got zip. The Vines Creek bridges, for instance—vital infrastructure to keep the port-to-pit supplies of fuels, explosives, large pieces of machinery moving; the most vital path for our sugar exports from the mill to the port—were reduced from two-lane bridges travelling at 80 kilometres per hour to two one-lane bridges travelling at 40 kilometres per hour. The truck loads had to be reduced because the bridges were in such bad repair. Sugar, fuel, fertiliser and other commodity trucks could only be three-quarters full. This meant extra loads and extra expense. That is the infrastructure history of those opposite for my electorate.

I congratulate the Treasurer on having the foresight to introduce the progressive coal royalty tax into Queensland. Because of this decision we are realising the largest health infrastructure build ever undertaken in this great state. Those opposite voted for the coal royalties and now they are silent in

terms of their support. What are they afraid of? They need to stand up in this House and tell us how they would pay for the projects that they back and that they are calling for without royalties. All of those projects would end up on their slashing list.

I have been out in my neighbourhood and across my electorate and I have asked people on the street what they think about collecting more money from coal companies while prices and profits are high. They are all behind the coal royalty structure in Queensland. I asked people in work uniforms clearly branded with their coal company as well as people who are not in the industry. They were in favour of collecting royalties for Queenslanders instead of the money going to shareholders. In Moranbah it was particularly interesting. There was high-vis everywhere and they were big supporters of the new coal royalties. They are happy to be getting a new purpose-built hospital.

The member for Burdekin tries to walk both sides of the fence on this issue. He is telling coal companies he is going to review the royalties program, but then he tells his constituents that he is going to deliver them more of everything. How is he going to do it? The community are not stupid. The minerals in the ground in Queensland belong to Queenslanders. Once they are mined, they are gone forever. We will not get a second bite of that cherry.

My electorate is one of the most exciting places in Queensland to be. We are at the centre of a green energy revolution, set to be the region for the largest pumped hydro project in the world. Our industries are diversifying and growing. Our tourism is about to come into full bloom thanks to the support of the Palaszczuk government to grow regional Queensland and our communities and businesses.

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

The speech read as follows—

Tourism in my region was put on the back burner during the last minerals boom in the Bowen Basin. We are building our tourism experience back into the Mackay Isaac Region based on our natural beauty. We have exciting adventure trails to the west, rain forest to the north-west, pristine beaches and tropical islands to the east. People are also attracted to our diverse range of events, music festivals and concerts. Just recently Legends on the Lawn was well attended and July is our full month of continuous festival activities, international, national and state sporting events, like Rumble on the Reef and national skate boarding competition.

We are ready to do more. The Palaszczuk government has set our new tourism experiences in motion through \$1 million funding to build Wild Cat, a purpose built catamaran to take tourists out to the reef and local islands.

To get tourists out onto our islands and pleasure boats to interact with our islands and reef, our region will receive funding—Great Barrier Reef Marine Funding from the Tourism activation fund.

Our area is geared up to interact with the natural environment, with our abundance and variety of flora and fauna.

Some not so friendly, Crocodiles are protected species in Queensland. To keep locals and visitors safe, the budget delivers funding for public education programs and signage, as part of the Crocwise program. Also, devices to detect and deter crocodiles will be rolled out.

There is more. Dan and Amanda Pelagalli of Mackay Adventure Lodge and Wake Park received \$50,069 from Tourism Experience Development Fund. Dan and Amanda's newly built lodge will attract a new level of tourism to Mackay by providing a high level of glamorous backpacker style accommodation for all ages, adding to our local offerings. Dan and Amanda will also purchase a bus to run tours to our local attractions specialising in the wallaby on the beach experience.

\$2 million of Act Eco funding will assist Marine Media to deliver a \$6.5 million two-storey tourism facility, featuring accommodation for 26 persons, including an office, reception area, lounge, deck areas, accessible lift, kitchen, dining area, boat workshop/storage and laundry.

The facility will be used by guides and operators to deliver world class adventure and nature-based tourism experiences across the Mackay region, including fishing tours in the nearby dams, hiking and trail running in the nearby Crediton State Forest and Eungella National Park and mountain biking once the adjacent Pioneer Valley Mountain Bike trail is constructed.

The project is estimated to attract 3,200 annual visitors and generate \$2.9 million in overnight visitor expenditure a year, providing 19 construction jobs and 23 operational jobs.

Education is the passport to a person's future. Having quality learning space is a must for our students. This budget delivers the necessary funding for ongoing maintenance and upgrades to our local schools. We will see refurbished classrooms, new and improved playgrounds, new fencing and everyone's favourite tuckshop upgrades and much more across a range of local schools. Education is for everyone; Andergrove SS will be upgrading their accessibility points for all ability students.

We have some of the most talented students in Queensland in our region. The students from North Mackay State High School Marching Band have represented Mackay at Disneyland and are invited to participate in the Brisbane ANZAC march every year. They have many talented students in all areas of performing arts. Congratulations to the school community for your lobbying and persistence, a \$14.1 million performing arts centre is in this year's budget. Having a purpose built performing arts centre will help students on their journey to artistic careers or just instil in them a love of the arts.

Getting children school ready for formal learning puts them in good stead for their educational future. Free Kindy for all 4 year olds will commence January 2024 and will take pressure off household budgets to engage 4 year olds in their first stage of pre-education. Kindy helps children be classroom ready, it can also pick up issues with hearing, sight and coordination early. Families on average will save \$4,600 each year on Kindy fees. A win, win for families and education. Thank you to Minister Grace Grace for leading the education portfolio.

We need to be conscious of water safety for our young children. A good way to keep them safe is learn to swim classes. Eligible 4 year olds will be able to access one of the 30,000 SwimStart vouchers to become water safe.

Without good health life is difficult to navigate. The work of Minister Yvette D'Ath is now being carried forward by Minister Fentiman to roll out the Palaszczuk government's historic hospital and health infrastructure spend. This is only possible by distributing coal royalties to the whole of Queensland. Including, the Mackay Base hospital's 128 bed expansion for paediatric, medical, and surgical patients. Also delivering more acute, sub-acute, women's, children, and neonatal services in our city.

To take pressure off our Mackay hospital the services surrounding Mackay within the Mackay HHS are receiving upgrades and rebuilds. The Sarina hospital and staff accommodation is nearly completed. With weather permitting, patients will begin using the purpose built hospital on Brewers Road by the end of this year.

The Moranbah hospital, staff accommodation rebuild, and new helipad will begin construction this year and receiving patients by the end of next year.

Proserpine hospital will receive the refurbishment of the clinical and assimilation training area, clinical assessment rooms and office space. Through the Rural and Regional Renal program, they will begin renal services saving patients needing to travel to Mackay.

We know that the Queensland public health system is under pressure from increased demand for services as well as a shortage of a skilled workforce.

The challenge of workforce shortages is particularly real for rural, regional and remote hospitals and health facilities, like those within the Mackay HHS. I welcome the \$5,000 payments available to nursing and midwifery students completing their final practicum in a rural and regional setting. When students experience life in the regions, they are more likely to apply for work outside of the south east corner on completion of their study.

There is dignity in work and being able to sustain yourself. We cannot rely on our traditional industries to keep our community in work into the future without innovation and value adding to diversify our economy. As sucrose from our sugar cane is becoming more unpopular as a food source, the bagasse that is generated from the sugar milling process is being processed into new bioproducts at the QUT Mackay Renewable Bio commodities Pilot Plant precinct converting the biomass into commodities like aviation fuel, marine fuel and bio diesel.

Sucrose through a fermentation process it can be processed into protein, this is world leading, the humble sugar plant can potentially be part of developing our world food security.

Stage 2 of the Resource Centre of Excellence will transform the mining industry in the Bowen Basin. The centre will develop the retrieval and processing of critical minerals from the tailings of coal mines. This will see the mines delivering coking coal and critical minerals for our lifelong batteries.

My region is booming because of the management of the Palaszczuk government.