




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR MILLER

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area, Cost of Living

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.07 am): We know that cost-of-living pressures are being felt across Queensland. Whether it is putting food on the table, fuel in your car or a roof over your head, things are more expensive now than a year ago due to the record inflation left by the previous Morrison LNP government. These impacts are especially tough for our remote communities. Earlier last week I travelled to Thursday Island for the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area cost-of-living summit, co-chaired by the member for Cook and attended by the Attorney-General, the ministerial champion for the Torres Strait; the Minister for Energy; and the Minister for Housing.

We heard from the community that the price of basics like bread and rice can be up to three times mainland prices. The high cost of freight is a big factor, and we heard firsthand what community-led solutions look like. It was a chance to be there face to face and to listen, as good governments do; it allows the community to drive the outcomes they desperately need. What was clear is the need to make transport more affordable, not just for residents but for the wider supply chains they rely on as well. That is why we are committing more than \$64 million in freight subsidies for the Torres Strait, the cape and the gulf to make that happen. This commitment will help to ease the cost pressures on local suppliers, reducing one of their biggest costs—freight—to drive down the cost of basic food items, clothing and other essential items for families.

In Queensland we rely heavily on the Bruce Highway, but in the Torres Strait they rely on the blue highway. The waterways are essential for travel and have been for many millennia. That is why we announced, in partnership with the Albanese federal Labor government, an \$80 million package to upgrade marine infrastructure in the Torres Strait. This will include upgrading the pontoons, boat ramps and jetties that these communities rely on. A further half a million dollars is going towards an emergency maintenance package for commercial operators to get critical maintenance work done on their vessels at the earliest possible opportunity.

We are delivering a new bus for school transport for the kids on Thursday Island, and I want to thank my colleague the Minister for Education for working so well with us on that. We are also helping the Torres Shire Council grow its active transport infrastructure, with kilometres of new shared pathways around Thursday Island which I saw firsthand being very well used by local residents. These key investments will help ease the cost-of-living pressures in the Torres Strait, in the northern peninsula, in the gulf and in Cape York. I congratulate the co-chair of the summit, the member for Cook, for her strong advocacy for all of her local communities.