




Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Far North Queensland, Health Services

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (2.39 pm): The Palaszczuk government is committed to providing quality health services particularly in regional areas. I note that we have increased the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service's operational funding by 77 per cent. Since 2015 in our region we have hired 243 more doctors, 695 more nurses and midwives, 61 more ambulance officers and 154 more allied health professionals. When the LNP was last in government it sacked 306 health staff in the Cairns and hinterland region, including 48 nurses. I echo the remarks of the nurses who visited here today. I took some time to thank them for the wonderful contribution they make to our community.

In March this year I was delighted, along with the minister, to announce that we have acquired land for a new 32-bed surgical centre to be located on the corner of Charles and Digger streets—the same site as the future Cairns Health and Innovation Centre. This new surgical centre will be adjacent to JCU's Tropical Enterprise Centre. That will form part of the Far North Queensland innovation precinct. This is a further commitment that we make. This is a step in the transition to a university hospital.

As I speak, work is going on at Cairns Hospital, where we are building a new \$70 million mental health unit. The new mental health facility will have more capacity to treat more patients and will provide a better environment to help patients who need help, hence the need for this facility. The whole building is designed to help people recover from mental illness. It will include a modern, culturally appropriate design and family-friendly spaces, naturally including the latest technology.

Our government's huge investment in Cairns Hospital includes \$250 million in the 2022-23 budget to deliver 96 additional beds and \$26.5 million for the expansion of our emergency department which is currently underway. I used to get calls from doctors when there were crowds and it was getting busy. I have not had a call for a while. I go down and touch base with them. This is what we needed. It is vitally important. I can say that the staff are very happy about it.

We are also leasing a 45-bed facility for offsite treatment of subacute patients in Edge Hill. This is working extremely well. I went and made that announcement not long ago. We are opening the \$1.5 million multidisciplinary preadmission clinic to allow patients needing elective surgery or related procedures to be assessed in a central location. This is what people in this part of the world need and this is what the Palaszczuk government is doing. We are delivering and ensuring the best future for the people of the regions.