




Speech By  
**Michael Healy**

**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2023

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

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (4.25 pm): If the member for Nanango wants to know where the money went, I will give her a bit of a tip. If she listens to me I can tell her where some of it went. First and foremost, I want to begin by acknowledging the hard work of the Treasurer and the cabinet and saying what an absolutely fantastic budget this has been. The people of Cairns have welcomed this with open arms. It has been fantastic.

The budget delivers on several key measures aimed at easing the cost of living for Queensland families. We recognised that to a total tune of \$8.2 billion. As we have heard before, as part of the 2023-24 Queensland budget every Queensland household will receive an electricity rebate totalling at least \$550. This rebate will be split evenly across four quarters for the next financial year. On top of that \$550 rebate, eligible concession holders will continue to receive the standing \$372 concession. This means that eligible concession holders will receive a total of \$1,072 in power bill relief. This is real help when people need it. They need it now and we are working towards that. This is something we have been talking about and it is important that government listens and reacts. That is vital.

In addition to that, we are also going to be providing \$645 million over four years to make kindergarten more accessible to more Queensland families. This will equate to 15 hours of free kindy per week for all four-year-old Queensland children. Families will save on average around \$4½ thousand per year through this initiative. We know at this time it is absolutely essential and this will be a great help to those families. The Free Kindy initiative will commence in January of next year. I can tell honourable members that I have already received correspondence from both kindergarten teachers and families in my electorate to say how excited they are about that.

In addition to that we have an extension of the Fair Play vouchers. This will ensure that everybody gets a fair go. There are the SwimStart vouchers; the budget is also providing \$4.8 million over two years to expand the Fair Play scheme. These vouchers up to \$150 will be available for eligible kids aged up to four years. There will be 30,000 of them across the state, which I think is fantastic. I know my electorate will be very happy to hear that.

Speaking broadly, we have significant investment in Cairns. We are looking at \$1.7 billion on infrastructure for productivity-enhancing infrastructure and capital works, and that is estimated to support around 4,900 jobs. We have \$1.6 billion going into health. That includes the \$26 million upgrade of our emergency department, the \$70 million which is being invested in our mental health facility and the \$250 million which is put aside for the expansion of our hospital.

Out of the significant investment across the state—and we are talking billions; I think it is the largest investment in education—\$79.9 million will be going into education in my electorate and the Far North. I can tell honourable members the students at Trinity Bay will be getting a \$20 million performing arts hall, which is fantastic. Parramatta State School and Balaclava State School will be seeing improvements to after school hours care facilities. These are investments where we need them. I know that Cairns State High School will see significant improvements in essential infrastructure.

In terms of social housing, \$206.5 million will go into the Far North. I acknowledge that, just as importantly, the budget provides a significant capital increase of \$1.1 billion for housing and homelessness, as well as additional supporting funds. These funds are available to invest in such projects as the Cairns youth foyer. We are ready to work with stakeholders to identify a site. This is something that we have been talking about for quite some time, and I know that the Cairns Alliance of Social Services will be very happy to hear this news.

We have received \$17.7 million for homelessness services; \$150 million for the new common user facility; \$27 million to upgrade roads and bridges in our marine precinct. There is over \$350 million being invested to expand our marine infrastructure. We know that this will provide a strong future for our children, so we are expanding our educational facilities. Our marine college is being expanded, with \$16 million in total and \$8 million in this budget. It is not only about expanding the infrastructure; it is about providing a flow chart so that people can study, learn and go straight into a job. There are significant contributions for so many areas of TAFE. Looking at the Chamber of Commerce, we have invested in a wellness fund there. We will be investing \$1 million in a Cairns Indigenous training centre. These outstanding measures are about job creation. There are so many areas where we are doing well.

I wanted to touch on the budget reply speech of the Leader of the Opposition—the current Leader of the Opposition, that is. I was interested that he made no detailed suggestions. He mentioned nothing about jobs and nothing about job creation—absolutely nothing whatsoever. It was so broad that I almost forgot what he was talking about. I have spent my entire working career in commercial entities—some of which turn over hundreds of millions of dollars. That speech was devoid of any fiscal relevance; it was concerning. What I found interesting was the comment of the current leader that part of their side's solution to the health problem was to let doctors and nurses run health facilities. That is interesting because every question time he expects the health minister to override them. The only thing more impressive than the inconsistencies of what you are presenting to us is your inability to articulate anything of any sense.