




Speech By
Julianne Gilbert

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Record of Proceedings, 22 May 2024

MOTION

North Queensland, Secession

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (4.45 pm): We know that Queensland is stronger together. From the cape to the Gold Coast, our state has always punched well above its weight. If we use the NRL rule of thumb as a reason to break away, will Redcliffe move a motion next? Phins up! If this motion was to pass and the state had to split, I know exactly where the capital would be—Mackay. Mackay is the heart and soul of regional Queensland. Just last month our community cabinet visited Mackay and everybody was amazed at how beautiful and abundant my region is. I am sure everybody would love to come to Mackay.

We are getting on with the job of expanding the Mackay Ring Road with a further investment of \$99.4 million from the state government to continue the works completed in 2020. We are getting people home faster and safer. We are expanding the Mackay Base Hospital, and I love the fact that we are spending \$250 million on another 128 beds. This has been brought forward by at least a decade and a half. It means that we are going to get another paediatric unit and medical and surgical ward upgrades. New birthing suites will also be located on the same level as the surgical department, ensuring a smoother transition of care for mothers and newborns. The women's health unit and the child and adolescent unit will also be moved into the new contemporary ward when the hospital expansion opens in the second half of 2026. These services will make a real difference to residents in my community, delivering them even better care closer to home.

We are also investing in community safety, giving our police and frontline responders the tools they need to do their jobs. A total of 20 extra police officers will join the ranks across the Mackay, Mackay Northern Beaches, Bowen, Moranbah, Sarina and Proserpine stations, including the Mackay Tactical Crime Squad—if the member for Mirani does not want them at Sarina, we will have them back in Mackay—child protection investigation unit and highway patrol. These extra police officers will be supported by 17 new high visibility police vehicles.

It does not stop there: in the last 12 months we have funded more than 3,600 free TAFE places in my region, giving residents in my community the skills they need to get the job they want. It is very important that we keep upskilling people and giving them training to get into work because they want the opportunity to live and work in Mackay.

Working in Mackay has never been better, with unemployment still historically low, thanks to the Miles government. I was having a look at the end of last year to see what the spend was in Mackay compared to the south-east corner. One thing that I found is that the Mackay region beats the south-east corner when it comes to receiving our share of state government infrastructure spend per person. The infrastructure spend has been higher in the Mackay region for the past five years.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Mackay, I will have to ask you to come back to the motion. You are speaking about North Queensland but you are not speaking to the motion at the moment.

Mrs GILBERT: I am speaking against the motion because I believe that, if we do split, my region will be worse off. I was listening to the contribution of the Katter party and they were talking about how they were going to pay for everything from coal royalties. I can remember a time when Mackay was on its knees because the price of coal was so low. People had left Mackay. We had 2,000 empty houses. You would drive through Paget and people had signs up saying they were trying to get work. What will happen to North Queensland if this Katters motion gets up and there is no money coming in from coal royalties? We would be desolate. We would have high unemployment and we would have no money—

(Time expired)