




Speech By  
**Hon. Scott Stewart**

**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

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Record of Proceedings, 13 June 2024

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE  
AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; STATE FINANCIAL  
INSTRUCTIONS AND METWAY MERGER AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources and Critical Minerals) (4.51 pm):  
What a pleasure it is to speak after a Greens member because we have heard 'Green-nomics'—everything is free. Let's close down all the mines, and we will just live on the fresh air to pay for everything. Green-nomics—I cannot believe it. That is why they will never be in government.

I rise today in support of the Miles government's 2024-25 state budget. This budget is delivering vital cost-of-living relief to Queenslanders. This budget is good news for Townsville and it shows that we are continuing to invest in the largest city in Northern Australia. We know, like everywhere in Queensland, many people in Townsville are dealing with the rising cost of living. Rising interest rates and increasing grocery costs are making life difficult for many people. That is why, as part of the budget, we are delivering more than \$11 billion in concessions and rebates to help Queenslanders, including giving people \$1,000 off their power bills. This rebate grows to \$1,300 with support from the Commonwealth government. In Townsville alone, more than 18,000 households will benefit from this discount. We are also delivering 20 per cent discounts to people on their car rego, as well as increasing the threshold for first home owners concession on transfer duty from \$500,000 to \$700,000 to help more people get into the property market. Through this budget, we are investing in the future of Townsville as it continues to grow—for example, \$35 million into the North Rail Yards site to help bring more housing into the CBD.

I called on local government candidates in the lead-up to the last election to outline their plan for revitalising our CBD. I asked what they would do, and it was an echo chamber. There was absolutely no response. Something needed to happen so I stepped up and advocated strongly for this project. I have had the pleasure of showing our Premier the benefits of this project when he visited just last week. Good housing must be close to the city and close to critical services, and this site ticks all the boxes. This site will not only unlock important housing options for people but also help bring more people into Townsville's CBD. This is something I brought up earlier this year, and it is incredibly important.

We are investing in this project to help breathe more life into our city centre. We built the Queensland Country Bank Stadium which helped tremendously, but more needs to be done by Townsville City Council. Townsville is a growing city and we know this means there will be more pressure on our health system. That is why we announced a record \$28.9 billion health budget. This includes \$1.5 billion for the Townsville Hospital and Health Service to fund vital services that are needed for the people of our great city. It has one of the largest health footprints in Northern Australia. There is \$136.1 million for the \$530 million Townsville University Hospital expansion in 2024-25. This expansion will deliver 143 new beds to meet Townsville's growing health needs. The construction itself is expected to generate around 1,454 full-time-equivalent jobs back in the region.

We are investing in what our young people need—education, the gift of life. Being a former principal, education is something very close and dear to my heart. I see millions of dollars in funding in schools to deliver new and upgraded facilities in not only Townsville but also Palm Island. This is fantastic news for that community. Belgian Gardens State School, Garbutt State School, Hermit Park State School—which today celebrates their 100th anniversary; it is a great day and I am missing out, unfortunately—Townsville South State School, Townsville West State School, Townsville Central State School, Bwgcolman Community School along with Pimlico and Townsville State High School are receiving funding. Townsville State High School is celebrating their 100th anniversary this year—very important parts of our community. All of these schools in my electorate are receiving funding in the budget for various projects that will help them.

I would particularly like to highlight the \$800 million out of the \$18.8 million in this budget for Bwgcolman Community School. This is a project that I know is very welcome to that community as a whole. The funding for the school on Palm Island will be used to deliver a new admin block, including visiting specialist space offices and a conference room, and a new home economics building that will support food studies and will also be used for both school and community events. Palm Island is an incredibly unique community in Queensland. I am not only proud that it is part of my electorate but also proud that I am its ministerial champion. As a government, we are always investing in Palm Island's future through projects like this one at Bwgcolman Community School.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you have reviewed and approved my speech on the budget for incorporation. As such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*.

*The speech read as follows—*

This budget is also helping deliver the skills we need as well through fee-free TAFE.

In Townsville there has already been 4,123 fee-free course courses started by people—this is incredibly important as these people are part of our future workforce.

They will be able to work on infrastructure being funded through our Big Build like Copperstring 2032 which will unlock potentially \$500 billion of critical minerals deposits in the North West Minerals Province.

Through the budget we're also investing in other major infrastructure like the new Kirwan Police Complex at the old North Queensland Cowboys home-ground.

The first stage of the project will be completed next year and includes the \$45 million Kirwan Police Station, a new PoliceLink call centre, a Domestic, Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons Unit, and other specialist QPS functions.

Community safety is a top priority for myself and the Miles Government.

This budget ensures we can continue to give the police the facilities and equipment they need to do their job protecting the community.

This is part of a record \$4.379 billion budget for Police and Community Safety and helps underpin the Community Safety Plan for Queensland.

It includes funding for the procurement of a permanent Polair capability based in Townsville which we know the Queensland Police Service have repeatedly said is making a huge difference.

Speaker it is the Miles Government that is continuing to deliver for Townsville—whether that's through new infrastructure, educational facilities or cost of living relief.

That's why I'm proud to be part of this government and proud to stand behind this great budget.

The budget is backed by our strong economy and key drivers like Queensland's mighty resources sector.

A sector that employs almost 77,000 people, a majority of whom live in regional Queensland.

A sector that added \$86.5 billion to the Queensland economy last financial year.

A sector that is Queensland's biggest exporter, accounting for about \$96 billion dollars in the 12 months until March this year.

Importantly the royalties this sector generates pays for the vital infrastructure that Queenslanders need and use, like hospitals and roads.

It means we can give people \$1000 off their power bills and provide other cost of living measures.

These resources belong to the people of Queensland and they deserve their fair share.

It's our strong resources sector and our progressive coal royalties that mean we can provide cost of living relief to Queenslanders.

We know those LNP pose a risk to progressive coal royalties which mean the cost of living relief in this budget is at risk.

Our resources sector backs Queensland and this government in turn continues to support the industry through this budget.

Speaker, we know that we're in a global race towards net zero.

A low-carbon economy will rely on a range of renewable energy sources to power the future, from wind and solar farms to pumped hydro.

It is only right that we explore all the options available to us and here in Queensland we are blessed with an abundance and a variety of renewable energy sources.

We can't just rely on one source to prop up our low-carbon future.

That's why in this year's budget we will invest \$4 million to investigate the viability of natural hydrogen.

Natural hydrogen—or as it's sometimes known, gold or white hydrogen—can often be found in a variety of settings below the ground and can be extracted for energy generation.

Natural hydrogen extraction is an emerging industry and could be a crucial part of the energy mix as Queensland moves to decarbonise.

We will work with research partners to investigate the viability of such an industry here in Queensland.

This is a hallmark of Queensland's resources sector—always exploring, always innovating and always seeking to grow and create more jobs and contribute to our economy.

This investment in a natural hydrogen study builds on our continuing collaboration with the sector to embrace the next global revolution.

We have a global ambition to transform our economy through the responsible use of Queensland's critical minerals.

And we're delivering on that ambition through the \$315 million Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy.

We're doing this by reducing rent for mineral exploration permits to \$0 for five years, making Queensland the lowest cost jurisdiction in Australia to hold mineral exploration tenures.

We're creating Critical Minerals Zones around Julia Creek-Richmond to support the vanadium industry and around Mount Isa to support secondary processing opportunities.

We've delivered eight rounds of our hugely successful Collaborative Exploration Initiative, as part of a \$21.2 million commitment over five years helping companies to fast-track mineral discoveries.

The latest round provided funding of up to \$300,000 to 18 projects across regional Queensland including near Chillagoe, Cloncurry, Mount Isa and Townsville.

Nearly three quarters of all successful projects are involved in the discovery of new copper deposits, an essential resource for many types of clean energy.

Combined with the \$170 million Queensland Critical Minerals and Battery Technology Fund; our investment to build a Queensland Resources Common User Facility in Townsville; as well as the Commonwealth Government's \$22.7 billion Future Made in Australia initiative, it is clear there is unprecedented support and funding for the resources and exploration industry in Queensland.

Speaker, this budget also provides funding for the continuation of our successful Abandoned Mine Lands Program.

In the last couple of years this team in my department have:

- decommissioned legacy wells at the former Linc Energy and Carbon Energy sites;
- and completed a five-year \$9 million remediation at the Collingwood Tin mine near Cooktown, in close consultation with the Kuku Yalanji Traditional Owners and their representatives.

We will now invest nearly \$71 million over four years to continue the vital work of remediating legacy sites across Queensland.

This includes funding of:

- \$7.8 million to secure and support critical care and maintenance at the recently disclaimed Mount Garnet and Surveyor-Balcooma mine sites.
- \$4.3 million for completion of stage two remediation works at the abandoned Goondicum ilmenite site in 2024-25.
- And \$5.7 million for critical care and maintenance, water management, remediation planning, site clean-up and demolition works at the former Thalanga mine west of Charters Towers.

Not only does this program address high-priority public health and safety risks, but it will also benefit regional businesses by creating jobs and we will also support traditional owner groups with capacity to deliver site remediation activities and contribute to the overall sustainability of Queensland's vital resources sector.

Lands

Speaker, as a government we are committed to the responsible development of our island resorts for the jobs and business opportunities they create in regional Queensland.

We have never shied away from taking action where necessary, when lessees fail to meet their obligations.

It was our government that took action to protect the future of Great Keppel Island.

The leases held by Tower Holdings over the Great Keppel Island resort were forfeited and my department has been managing the site.

Speaker, it's fair to say the former island resort site the department inherited is in a state of disrepair.

As part of this year's budget, we will invest \$5 million towards making the area safe and secure.

We are doing this because we believe in GKI's tourism potential and for the jobs and business opportunities it will create for Queensland.

Speaker, my department is steadfast in its commitment to work with our Traditional Owners as part of the Queensland Government's Path to Treaty.

The Path to Treaty is a broader commitment to reframe the relationship between the Queensland Government and Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have ancient and enduring connection to land and waters and as Minister with Queensland's portfolio responsibility for resolving native title claims, compensation claims, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land transfers, I am proud of the outcomes being delivered across Queensland.

There have been 180 native title claimant applications determined in Queensland and 94 per cent of those have been settled by agreement.

This budget continues to support this government's efforts to reframe the relationship with First Nations peoples with additional investment through an Indigenous Land Use Agreements Support Package.

The funding will be used to help negotiate, authorise and implement tenure resolution agreements with the State of Queensland.

Speaker, this budget recognises the valuable contribution our resources sector makes to Queensland.

This is a sector that supports thousands of jobs across this vast state, while the royalties it generates helps build the infrastructure and is also helping provide the cost-of-living relief measures in this budget.

We recognise how important this sector is and that's why this budget backs the industry with investment in exploring new technologies and reaffirms our continuing support to help the industry develop the next big thing in resources—our critical minerals sector.

We also recognise the importance of our tourism islands and that's why we will invest funds towards making the former island resort on Great Keppel Island safe.