




Speech By
Donna Kirkland

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 26 June 2025

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

 **Mrs KIRKLAND** (Rockhampton—LNP) (4.03 pm): Today I rise to respond to the government's budget. I rise to speak on behalf of the resilient, forward-looking people of Central Queensland. It is the heart of this great state and a region that has always delivered for Queensland and Australia. It is time Queensland returned that favour, and that is precisely what this budget does. It proves that, no matter where you live, your fair share of opportunity is finally within reach. To the people of Rockhampton, Gracemere and the wider Central Queensland region: this is your budget. It is not just a list of announcements; it is a vision grounded in the things that matter—housing, health, education, sport, community infrastructure and jobs.

Let me begin by sincerely thanking the Premier, the cabinet and the Treasurer for delivering a responsible and economically sound budget. This is a budget that looks to the horizon. It is sustainable, it is balanced and it is responsible. It is a clear departure from the geographical narcissism of the former Labor government. Instead of focusing on the south-east, this budget reaches into the regions like never before. I ran for state parliament because, like those that I represent in my community, I was frustrated at our electorate consistently being taken for granted as a safe Labor seat.

Mr Stevens: And we are glad you did!

Mrs KIRKLAND: I will take that interjection; thank you. Now in Central Queensland we are seeing real delivery. In Gracemere we will build a brand new high school. This \$100 million investment acknowledges growth and the right of every child to a world-class education close to home. This project was called for by the community for over two decades; however, it was consistently cast aside by my predecessors until now. Other projects include: a \$61 million TAFE Excellence Precinct at CQUniversity with accompanying land releases to train and house the skilled workforce of tomorrow; a \$95 million Health Services Academy to train nurses and allied health professionals, fast-tracking a critical health workforce for our region; and a \$42 million investment in stage 1 of our multisports precinct, a hub for regional sporting excellence and also to support the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic rowing and canoeing events to be held in Rockhampton, showcasing Central Queensland on the world stage. Finally, the long Labor delayed Rockhampton Ring Road is now fully funded and moving forward thanks to the perseverance of the Minister for Transport, the Hon. Brett Mickelberg. This \$1.98 billion generational project will unlock economic potential and save lives along the Bruce Highway.

This budget invests in our young people and it also protects them. Rockhampton will be home to one of five Regional Reset early intervention programs, part of a statewide \$50 million package offering 24/7 support to at-risk youth. On top of that, our region will host one of Queensland's four specialist crime prevention schools, a \$10 million investment in turning lives around, not just ticking off statistics. In addition, there is the assurance of \$25 million to establish a local youth mental health step up step down facility, which has been called for by industry leaders for over a decade and again only made possible now by this LNP Crisafulli-led government.

We have not forgotten the smaller projects that punch well above their weight when it comes to community pride, including: \$200,000 for the Walk N Talk hub, promoting men's mental health and wellbeing through connection; our local courthouse will undergo upgrades to improve security and safety for victims of domestic and family violence; \$4.5 million to support Beef Week 2027, a symbol of our region's agricultural strength, cultural identity and economic drive; \$6.4 million to complete the construction of a new neighbourhood centre in Rockhampton, something that I called out for when I was first elected as a councillor; and \$150,000 for the Our Space youth centre for those youths who need a safe space. It is not just another program for youth; it is the message 'you matter and you belong'.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Rockhampton and Gracemere for reaching out to me. It is my privilege to have made your voices heard. To team CQ—member for Keppel and member for Mirani—this is what team effort looks like. The Speaker has reviewed and approved my speech for incorporation, so I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*.

The speech read as follows—

Housing is critical. Every human deserves the right to a roof over their head and a place to call home.

Under the previous Labor Government, regional homelessness soared. In contrast, the Crisafulli Government is taking bold, practical action.

This Budget delivers the highest level of homelessness support funding in Queensland history—with more crisis accommodation, more wraparound community services, and more intervention before people fall through the cracks.

And we're investing beyond temporary fixes—we're building for the long term.

There are already 5000 social and affordable homes under contract or construction—160 of them in Central Queensland alone, including:

- 49 in Rockhampton
- 47 in Livingstone
- 40 in Gladstone

That's real homes, for real people, changing real lives.

Further housing development will also benefit from the release of 27 hectares of greenfield land at CQUniversity.

The CQ TAFE Excellence Precinct will not only deliver 300-400 new tradespeople annually—freeing up land to support housing expansion and healthcare growth for Rockhampton Hospital.

This is co-ordinated delivery across housing, health, and education—future-proofing our region through united, purposeful action.

This Budget speaks with one voice: This is not just a southeast Queensland Budget—this is a Budget for the regions. For Rockhampton, Gracemere, and all of Central Queensland, it means we've been seen, we've been heard—and now, we've been backed.

For our local community, this Budget backs both connection and inclusion—not as buzzwords, but through meaningful investment in the things that stitch our community together.

It begins with sport—not just as recreation, but as a way to build belonging, teamwork, and pride. That's why we're investing:

- \$3 million in the new Gracemere Junior Rugby League and Netball Clubhouse—a game-changer for grassroots sport that will serve as a gathering place for hundreds of families every weekend. This isn't just a building—it's a home base for culture, connection, and the next generation of sporting talent.
- \$900,000 for upgraded facilities at Bluebirds United, continuing our support for local clubs that provide young people with purpose and positive role models.
- \$200,000 to deliver dedicated female change rooms for the Glenmore Bulls—because inclusivity in sport isn't optional. It's essential.
- \$3.4 million to complete Browne Park upgrades, making our stadium ready for bigger events.
- And of course, the \$100 per student Back to school Boost and the \$200 Play On Sports vouchers

These aren't scattered announcements—they are targeted investments in what makes communities thrive. They reflect a government that understands that every child who laces up their boots, every parent who volunteers on the weekend, and every spectator on the sideline contributes to the fabric of our towns.

But Mr Speaker, this Budget doesn't stop at sporting clubs—it drives economic innovation and backs the brainpower of our region.

We're planting seeds of transformation with:

- \$1.6 million for the Capricorn Start-Up Hub—a launchpad for the next wave of Central Queensland entrepreneurs. These are the thinkers and risk-takers who will power the small businesses of tomorrow, and they deserve the infrastructure to match their ambition.

Together, these initiatives make one thing crystal clear: this Budget delivers substance, not spin. It doesn't trade in gimmicks or last-minute splashy announcements. It represents a generational shift in how we plan, grow, and govern—a shift toward genuine community need, responsible planning, and long-term outcomes.

Mr Speaker, this Budget is a compass—not just a calculator.

It builds confidence in our economy because it understands the challenges that small businesses, young families, and local industries face every day.

It gives certainty to families who've spent too long hearing promises that never quite reached them.

It restores hope in a future where your postcode doesn't dictate your potential.

This Budget lays the foundation for the Fresh Start Queenslanders have asked for—a start grounded in integrity, practicality, and pride.

And make no mistake: we in Central Queensland are not just passengers in this journey—we're drivers. We're shaping the roadmap. We are no longer watching decisions be made from a distance. We are active participants, and this Budget proves that.

It doesn't ask us to dream small. It demands that we build big.

Big in heart. Big in vision. Big in delivery.

Because whether it's supporting inclusive sport, backing game-changing healthcare, or nurturing the next tech success story from our own backyard—this Budget sees the strength and possibility in Central Queensland and backs it with funding, focus, and follow-through.

To the people of Rockhampton, Gracemere, and the wider Capricorn region, this is a statement. A commitment. A promise.

We see you. We hear you. And we believe in you.

I commend this Budget to the House.