




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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

 **Mr JAMES** (Mulgrave—LNP) (5.23 pm): Today I stand before you with immense pride and anticipation as we expose the cornerstone of a brighter future for Queensland, the 2025-26 Queensland budget. This budget is not merely a collection of numbers and allocations; it is the embodiment of our promise for a fresh start. The Queensland government is delivering a record \$116.8 billion four-year capital program that will provide critical infrastructure for Queensland, the largest infrastructure pipeline in our state's history—\$29.3 billion—directly supporting 73,000 jobs across the state. Seventy per cent of this amount will be invested outside of the Greater Brisbane area supporting around 50,000 jobs in the regions. It focuses on four fundamental pillars: safety where you live, a better lifestyle through a stronger economy, health services when you need them and a plan for Queensland's future. We have honoured every election commitment made, ensuring each promise is funded by this budget. This dedication is reflected in the strategic and responsible cost-of-living relief that we provide to Queenslanders. It is targeted and timely, saving vital services and jobs and secures infrastructure and projects that otherwise would have been lost. The Treasurer's approach to the budget is calm and methodical, rooted in a deep respect for taxpayers money and a commitment to deliver what we promised. It is serious, mature and responsible.

Now let us delve into the specifics of this transformative budget. In relation to delivering safety where you live, my constituents are deeply concerned about the youth crime crisis. The Crisafulli government is actively addressing this, countering the effects of a decade of neglect and weak, deliberately watered down Labor laws. There will be 1,600 new police officers armed with more resources to turn the tide on youth crime and \$560 million for new world-leading early intervention and rehabilitation programs to prevent and break the cycle of repeat youth crime. The Making Queensland Safer Laws will ensure that adult crimes result in adult time, backed by additional justice system resources. A new professional victims advocate service will provide dedicated support to victims of crimes throughout the justice process. We are putting the victims first.

Small businesses and local governments will benefit from the Secure Communities Partnership Program with \$40 million in grants to enhance community safety and prevent crime. Specifically, upgrades to the Edmonton Police Station, with detailed planning to commence in 2025-26, and \$148 million to resource police with new tasers, ballistic vests and safety equipment to make our community safer. One of the two new youth justice schools for high-risk teens on youth justice orders, including community service orders, will be built in Cairns. The government is investing \$2.4 billion over six years from 2024-25 to increase adult prison capacity. The Cairns watch house will receive an upgrade. The youth detention centre will be built in Cairns with community consultation before deciding the location, unlike the opposition's approach. The Polair aerial crime-fighting operational capability will be expanded in Cairns and Far North Queensland and guaranteed for another nine years. Support for victims of crime will be funded with an increased budget of \$11.6 million over four years.

When it comes to delivering a better lifestyle through a stronger economy, we are committed to easing the cost of living. Queenslanders have paid a high price for the former Labor government's expensive failures across housing, crime, health and cost of living, hence the state has faced some of the steepest cost increases in the nation across rent, health care, sports participation, food, transport and electricity. Project costs have skyrocketed under Labor's CFMEU tax, hence a fresh start is required.

Far North Queensland will benefit from the Crisafulli's \$100 Back to School Boost vouchers for school students to help with stationery, uniforms and excursions. Children aged five to 17 will benefit from the \$200 Play on! vouchers for sport and active recreation, especially in regional areas like Mulgrave. The \$2 billion Residential Activation Fund launched prior to the election by our Premier in the middle of Mulgrave is an important initiative underpinning the government's commitment to see more Queenslanders in their own home sooner. This fund will provide for trunk and essential infrastructure, such as water supply, sewerage, power, telecommunications and transport—desperately needed in the suburb of Mount Peter. Half of this funding is guaranteed for investment in regional areas like Mulgrave.

Our Boost to Buy program will reduce the deposit gap for home ownership, with income limits set at \$150,000 for singles, \$225,000 for couples and a purchase limit of \$1 million. We are abolishing stamp duty on new homes for first home buyers and extending the first home buyers grant to \$30,000 for 12 months. The Crisafulli government is delivering a place to call home for more Far North Queenslanders, with 561 social and affordable houses in construction or contracted as part of the Securing our Housing Foundations plan. Our ambition is to deliver one million homes by 2044, including 53,500 social and affordable homes, with a record \$5.6 billion investment into new social and community housing initiatives. The Cairns region is receiving the lion's share of the state's Housing and Public Works capital works and maintenance budget.

Housing infrastructure is vital, but it is a chicken-and-egg situation. The Cairns rental market is extremely tight with a current very low vacancy rate of around 0.7 per cent. This indicates a significant shortage of rental properties, making it near impossible for people to find accommodation. However, if we cannot offer places to live then we cannot attract workers for the many jobs needed in our region. As I said, the Crisafulli government is delivering a place to call home as a priority.

We are delivering health services when you need them. Health services are a priority and we are delivering more than ever before. This includes the construction of three new hospitals and 10 major upgrades, alongside provision for over 4,500 additional health workers in 2025-26. Our record \$18.5 billion investment under the Hospital Rescue Plan will stabilise the elective surgery waitlist with \$1.5 billion to provide for 30,000 surgeries. Abolishing Labor's patients tax will make visits to a doctor cheaper.

We are uplifting the health operating budget by 10 per cent to \$29.4 billion to ensure critical health services are fully funded, with more health workers and more free health care than ever before. For the Cairns region, this includes our share of the \$1.8 billion allocated to stabilise the surgery waitlist, meaning more elective surgeries when and where Mulgrave residents need them, including by partnering with the private sector through the Surgery Connect program to reduce waitlists and have patients seen sooner. There is \$181 million to refurbish selected areas within the Cairns Hospital as part of the Hospital Rescue Plan; \$1.7 billion to reduce ambulance ramping by 30 per cent by 2028 and deliver more paramedics; \$60 million for the Cairns Health and Innovation Centre stage 1 to deliver extra capacity for clinical services and provide health education, training and research facilities; and \$29 million to redevelop the Queensland Ambulance Service with the addition of the Cairns operational centre.

The 2025-26 budget is delivering a plan for Queensland's future. A sum of \$166 million, as part of the \$390 million for stage 1 of the Cairns Water Security project currently under construction in Mulgrave, has been locked in. That is a critical infrastructure project for the future of our region. There is \$9 billion for major Bruce Highway upgrades and safety improvements, locking in the 80-20 funding deal with the Australian government. There is \$48.4 million to continue the valued Works for Queensland program to support local councils in regional Queensland to deliver grassroots priority infrastructure. That program is now permanent, allowing our councils to plan with certainty.

We are putting the 2032 Olympic Games back on track with comprehensive plans for transport, infrastructure, tourism and a \$250 million investment to boost grassroots sport participation in the lead-up to the games. Our local sports clubs in Mulgrave will benefit from legacy projects. A \$446 million investment will support Destination 2045, ensuring Queensland's tourism future with funding for aviation, event attraction and new product development. There is \$13.6 million to complete the expansion of the Great Barrier Reef International Marine College in Cairns. There is \$150,000 for the

Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre wildlife hospital. There is \$1.5 million for the Jeff Pezzutti Park activities centre upgrade in Mulgrave. There is \$8 million to deliver the replacement of the Cairns Fire Communications Centre. There is \$640,000 for Yarrabah State School's secondary campus amenities upgrade and \$600,000 for detailed design and planning for the Yarrabah multipurpose centre.

In the 2025-26 budget, the Crisafulli government has committed \$38.4 million for planning and enabling works for the first stage of the maritime Common User Facility, CUF for short, confirming our support for this regionally significant project. The proposed Common User Facility will include a 5,000 tonne ship lift and new hardstand areas. Unfortunately, the budget for the Cairns Common User Facility project blew out by hundreds of millions of dollars under the former Labor government and they hid it from Queenslanders prior to the election. That was a \$466 million budget blowout for the Cairns Marine Precinct under Labor. There is an old adage: if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. That is exactly why that project sat idle for three years before Labor handed it over to Ports North in late September, weeks before the election. Michael Healy, the member for Cairns and a minister in the previous government, failed the people of Cairns and our marine industry. The fact is that Labor lied to Far North Queensland when announcing the initial funding, with limited planning and costings.

I turn to political contrast. Where Labor left critical services, jobs and projects underfunded, we have stepped in and front-loaded spending to save these important measures. We are delivering targeted and responsive long-term cost-of-living relief, improving Queensland's living standards now and in the future.

Mr POWER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member may have strayed and used some unparliamentary language. I ask that he withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kempton): Member, be careful with your language, please, and you can proceed.

Mr JAMES: With this budget, Labor's scare campaign is dead. They created a culture of fear and intimidation in our Public Service. We are empowering our Public Service by reducing reliance on external consultants and contractors, increasing internal capacity and establishing Queensland Government Consulting Services. Our stakeholders have welcomed this budget with open arms. P&Cs Queensland praised our commitment to education and cost-of-living measures, particularly the \$100 Back to School Boost, providing immediate relief to struggling families.

In conclusion, this budget is a testament to our promise for a fresh start. It is a blueprint for a safe, prosperous, healthy and forward-looking Queensland. Together, we are laying the foundation for a brighter future for all Queenslanders. Queensland is open for business.