

Speech By

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; GOVERNANCE, ENERGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE, REPORT

Mr CHIESA (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (3.14 pm): I rise as a member of the Governance, Energy and Finance Committee to support the adoption of report No. 28 and the 2026-27 budget. One thing is very clear with this budget: this is a government that understands Queensland does not stop at the south-east corner. For too long, North Queenslanders watched our infrastructure needs grow while investment failed to keep pace. This budget is changing that. There is perhaps no better example in my electorate than Port Hinchinbrook. For years the people of Cardwell watched this once great asset deteriorate while successive Labor governments failed to resolve it. This government has stepped in.

The budget provides $64 million to restore Port Hinchinbrook, including dredging, remediation and resilience works. This is not another announcement about what might happen one day. Procurement for dredging is underway, environmental and geotechnical investigations are progressing, and we are finally moving towards restoring an asset enormously important to Cardwell and the wider region.

Housing is another example. We can talk about housing targets all we like, but you cannot build homes without the roads, water, sewerage and infrastructure required to support them. That is why the Residential Activation Fund matters. In North Queensland, round 1 has already helped unlock 2,700 homes, including major infrastructure investment in the northern beaches of Townsville of $29.5 million and $7.3 million to Hinchinbrook Shire Council for their projects. This is what regional investment looks like. It is also about restoring safety. During estimates I asked the Premier about crime and about a commitment I took to the people of Hinchinbrook at the by-election—Breach Bail, Go to Jail. My community spoke clearly: bail is a privilege and if offenders breach their bail conditions there must be consequences. Unlike the former Labor government, this government is listening and delivering. While nobody suggests the job is finished, the evidence presented at estimates showed that victim numbers across Queensland have fallen by 9.6 per cent. We are finally heading in the right direction.

Delivering more also requires us to make every taxpayer dollar work harder. Every dollar unnecessarily added to the cost of a government project is a dollar that cannot fix a road in North Queensland, unlock another home or improve a regional hospital. That is why this government abolishing Labor's Best Practice Industry Conditions is critical. Labor's BPIC regime drove up infrastructure costs and reduced productivity at precisely the time Queensland needed to build more. Continuing BPIC would have added around $20 billion to the infrastructure pipeline. The CFMEU commission of inquiry has raised serious concerns about restrictive conditions and additional costs on taxpayer-funded projects.

Queenslanders have every right to ask whether they receive value for money, because regional Queensland knows what happens when governments waste money. It means the Bruce Highway does not get the investment it deserves. It means areas like the Gairloch floodway remain unattended to. This budget changes that, with funding this year to fix it. In the north we pay taxes too, but too often under Labor we did not see our fair share coming back. This government has a different approach.

We are already seeing the results of the Crisafulli government's Energy Roadmap. Since 1 July, regional household electricity prices have fallen 6.9 per cent and small business prices 8.1 per cent. We are progressing CopperString to strengthen North and North-West Queensland's energy system and help unlock the enormous economic potential of the north-west. We are investing another $100 million into the Queensland Critical Minerals Fund, taking it to $250 million and supporting opportunities including high-purity silica processing at Mourilyan which will create up to 180 local jobs. We are backing the skills pipeline needed to deliver that growth. For regional Queensland and Hinchinbrook, these budget numbers actually mean something. They mean jobs, homes, safer communities, lower power bills and infrastructure that regional Queensland has waited far too long to see delivered.

Those opposite have included a statement of reservation with this report. They are entitled to do that, but North Queenslanders have already delivered their own statement of reservation on Labor's record. At the Hinchinbrook by-election last November, Labor received just 8.4 per cent of the primary vote. That is not an accident; that is a verdict. After a decade of being treated too often as an afterthought, people wanted change. This budget demonstrates what change looks like. It means restoring Port Hinchinbrook, unlocking thousands of new homes, restoring safety where we live, reducing regional electricity prices, backing North Queensland industry and jobs, and making sure taxpayers' money is spent delivering infrastructure, not unnecessarily inflating the cost of it. North Queensland is no longer an afterthought. This government is listening, investing and delivering. That is why I support the committee's recommendation, and that is why I support the budget and report No. 28 before the House.