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MEMBER: Ms LAUGA

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (3.17 pm): Whilst there were lots of things that I disagreed with in the member for Mudgeeraba's budget reply speech this afternoon, the thing I most disagreed with was when she said that Mudgeeraba is the best part of the world. I have to disagree with her on that and say that the electorate of Keppel and the southern Great Barrier Reef region in my view is the best part of the world.

I rise to speak in support of the appropriation bills. In doing so, I first congratulate the Treasurer, the member for Woodridge, for the delivery of this budget, his first budget, in very challenging times. I also congratulate the Treasury officials who have worked on preparing this budget, together with the government, across all of the departments. To do this so swiftly after the election has been quite a feat, so congratulations go to the Treasurer and the entire Queensland Treasury for all of the work they have put into this budget.

I am very proud that consistently the Palaszczuk government has delivered the bulk of spending on new job-creating projects outside of Brisbane. Budget after budget after budget, the bulk of spending on new job-creating projects is outside of Brisbane in our wonderful Queensland regions, and that is our job as regional members of this place. Regional members on this side of the House consistently fight for and stand up for regional investment and job-creating projects in regional Queensland. We have seen over the past year in particular that regional Queensland has once again demonstrated its resilience and ingenuity during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is the strength of sectors such as agriculture and the mining of coal and other minerals that has protected and fortified our economy from some of the worst effects of the COVID-19 downturn.

While I am on my feet, I want to thank the workers of regional Queensland—not only the frontline workers who have helped keep us safe this year from this COVID-19 pandemic but also the workers right across the sectors. The essential workers right across regional Queensland—and all over Queensland really—have been keeping our economy moving and keeping our state moving. They have kept the trucks delivering food to our supermarkets and they have been at the checkout so we could pay for our groceries. They have been working in our hospitals and our schools. Right across our economy, those regional workers and workers right across this state have helped support our economy and helped us get back on our feet.

030 Our government knows how important the ongoing growth of Queensland's regions is to our continued economic prosperity. Our government is committed to backing regional projects that will drive private sector jobs growth. By creating skilled job opportunities in these regional centres, we will support more investment and boost economic prosperity for all Queenslanders.

Queensland's regions offer a diverse range of industries and investment ready opportunities. I would invite anybody looking to invest in Queensland to consider investing in regional Queensland, particularly now that we have so much more of a COVID-safe economy here in Queensland and in regional Queensland. Attracting people and investment to the regions where and when they are needed is not only an essential part of effectively managing Queensland's future population growth but it is also essential to giving regional Queensland the keys to unlock its full potential.

We must support more jobs in regional Queensland and more private sector investment in regional Queensland, and that is what this budget and this government are all about. This budget is about continuing to deliver the economic plan which we put in place prior to the last election so that regional Queensland, including Central Queensland, can continue to recover. We are supporting small businesses, growing manufacturing and building the infrastructure for our communities, which creates jobs during construction but also builds upon the foundations already laid down for our regions.

This budget supports more jobs, improves transport and communication links, expands our social and community services and enhances the liveability and vibrancy of our regional communities. We want to see substantial new investment in the development of Queensland's critical minerals sector. I am proud that the Palaszczuk government has released an investment prospectus for the North West Minerals Province which Trade & Investment Queensland will use globally to attract capital to unlock

these vast opportunities. We want the world to know that Queensland is open for private sector investment and in particular that regional Queensland is open for private sector investment.

I am taking it as my role in this place in this, my third term, to make it a priority to attract that private sector investment to Central Queensland. I have worked hard with the government to fight for our fair share in Central Queensland, and this budget really does deliver the capital and the job creation projects that we need in Central Queensland. However, we need the private sector to come on board as well. That is why I am going to be working closely with Trade & Investment Queensland and the Deputy Premier in his role in State Development to attract even more private sector investment to grow jobs in the Central Queensland region.

There have been some really strong health decisions that have been made this year. In Central Queensland we are lucky that we have not actually had a case of COVID-19 for many, many months now. That is as a result of all of the hard work of Central Queenslanders and as a result of Central Queenslanders taking that advice of the Chief Health Officer and also the leadership of the Premier and the Deputy Premier, who at the time was health minister. As a result the Central Queensland economy is booming.

Andrea, who runs Oshen Yeppoon, a hotel in Yeppoon, will tell you they could book out their hotel twice every night. All of our hotels on the Capricorn Coast and in Rockhampton are booked out consistently. People need to book well in advance. Airbnbs are not even available. Our cafes, restaurants and retail boutiques are all experiencing great trade as well. People just have to talk to Tanya and Grant Lynch at Vue Yeppoon, who tell me that they have had people from all over the state eat at their restaurant over the last couple of months and now people are booking from all over the country as well.

We actually have an unemployment rate of 5.5 per cent in Keppel to the June 2020 quarter whereas the Queensland unemployment rate is at 6.4 per cent. We have consistently had an unemployment rate in Keppel that is at or below the state average for almost five years now. It just goes to show that the hard work of the Palaszczuk Labor government in Central Queensland is starting to pay off. We are also starting to see youth unemployment dropping. In Central Queensland youth unemployment decreased by almost seven per cent over a 12-month period to October 2020, so it fell from 17.9 per cent to 11.1 per cent. That was the single largest decrease in youth unemployment over that period for anywhere in the state.

We have consistently seen a low unemployment rate, below the Queensland average, for years now and we are also seeing a significant decrease in the youth unemployment rate. House prices are up. House sales are up. New builds on new homes are up and the rental vacancy is now below one per cent in both Rockhampton and Yeppoon. It is at an historic low in Rockhampton. Master Builders are saying that they are excited and their tradespeople are very, very busy. We also had a little bit of a stimulus earlier in the year with a hail storm. Now we cannot find a roof labourer anywhere in Central Queensland because they are so busy fixing all the roofs in our region.

There is so much to talk about in terms of the Palaszczuk government's budget highlights for the Keppel region for the 2020-21 financial year. I will highlight some of them. There is a \$1 million commitment to the Emu Park Surf Lifesaving Club, and I am very proud to have already cut the ribbon on the first stage of that project, and the second stage is \$339,000. Graeme Crow and John Phelan at the Emu Park Surf Lifesaving Club are very pleased to see that refurbishment underway. There is almost \$800,000 towards the Cooberrie Park Wildlife Sanctuary dinosaur themed tourist attraction, which is all part of improving our tourism infrastructure in the region. I am sure there will be plenty of young people right across Australia who will be very excited to see the 35 new life size dinosaurs, the dinosaur dig, mini golf, picnic, playground and new entry and kiosk worth almost \$900,000. I know that the Smedley family, who runs—

A government member interjected.

Ms LAUGA: The member for Cairns will have to make a trip down. I know there are many young people who will be very excited to see that.

There is over a million dollars in disaster recovery and reconstruction funding. That comes after the Cobraball, Gracemere and The Caves fires over the last few years. There is \$6.7 million towards Skilling Queenslanders for Work, and I know organisations like Jobs Queensland and MDA will be very keen to continue their wonderful work helping skill people up and get them into work. There is \$4.2 million towards Project Booyah and the Respect program. I am very proud to have played a role in establishing Project Booyah in Central Queensland several years ago and to see so many of those young people graduating from that program and continuing on to lead productive and happy lives free

of crime in most cases. I know that Constable Joe Ramsay and the team at Project Booyah will be pleased to see a continuation of their funding.

In terms of Transport and Main Roads in this budget year there is \$1 million of a total \$5 million towards the strengthening of the pavement of the Rockhampton-Yeppoon road. A lot of local people are very pleased to see the work on that road starting. Over 11,000 vehicles per day use that road. There is \$1.1 million towards the Taranganba State School pedestrian signals and bus-set down area, and I know principal Susan Beatty will be very pleased to see the work on that project commence soon.

Importantly, there is the final \$4.8 million towards the new 42-bed residential alcohol and other drug rehabilitation and treatment facility in Rockhampton and work on that has now started. I know Debbie Ware from the ICE Affecting Families Capricorn Coast with whom I have been working closely for years now and to whom I introduced the Premier—and this is how this project was born—will be very pleased to visit the site with me in the next couple of weeks to see that work underway. We are expecting that facility to be open in August 2021.

There are millions and millions of dollars in terms of education commitments in Keppel and right across Queensland. I am very, very pleased and proud to be part of a Palaszczuk Labor government that is delivering yet again another record Education budget. I would like to congratulate the Minister for Education, Grace Grace, on all of the work she has done to ensure that we deliver a record Education budget year after year. We know—and certainly this is what I am very passionate about—that all Queensland children, no matter where they live, deserve a quality education, and this year we are delivering a record \$14.2 billion in Education funding in this state budget. That includes a record \$1.9 billion in infrastructure spending, which means that Queensland students and teachers will benefit from world-class facilities at school.

This investment builds on the \$5.2 billion spent on school infrastructure by the Palaszczuk government since 2015. That investment has created new schools, new classrooms, school halls, libraries, performing arts centres, playgrounds, amenity blocks, security fencing and facilities. It will also mean more jobs for Queenslanders and will help drive economic recovery from the global pandemic. This infrastructure investment will support more than 3,100 construction jobs.

031 Building world-class schools and facilities is only one part of the job, though, in terms of giving our students a great start. The welfare of our students and staff is also vitally important. That is why I am really proud that this budget includes \$100 million over three years for a student wellbeing package to ensure every Queensland primary and secondary state school student has access to a psychologist or similar health and wellbeing professional. They will be able to go to school—and we are trialling this pilot with GPs—and see a doctor or a psychologist to get the help and support they need. I am so excited to see how this rolls out, because I just know that it is going to be a game changer for student wellbeing in Queensland. As part of this \$100 million, more than \$4 million will go towards establishing this pilot for GPs.

At the election Labor committed to giving students free access to sanitary products. We are delivering on that commitment with \$2½ million being invested to provide pads and tampons at 120 state and non-state schools across the state. We are partnering with Share the Dignity to deliver this program.

Queensland's fantastic teachers, teacher aides and school staff are the backbone of schools right across the state. We will employ more than 6,100 teachers and 1,100 teacher aides over the next four years. That is building upon the over 6,000 teachers and over 1,000 teacher aides that we have employed in the last four years. We are doubling down on our investment over the next four years. We will also invest in a new Turn to Teaching paid internship program to attract aspiring teachers from other fields of work. I am really keen to see this roll out, because this program will give 300 aspiring teachers financial support and real-world teaching experience to complete their teaching qualification and guarantees a permanent teaching role at a state school upon completion.

A great start to education should be accessible to all children, no matter where they live. I am very passionate about working together with the Minister for Education in my role as Assistant Minister for Education to help build upon the work that we have done in the last four years and to continue to deliver a world-class education for students in this state. I commend the bills to the House.