



Speech by

LINDA LAVARCH

STATE MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

Hansard 17 September 1998

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (10.10 p.m.): This is the first time that I have had the privilege to respond to a State Budget on behalf of the people of Kurwongbah. I say that I am delighted to be responding to the first Beattie Labor Government Budget. If I was asked to make a list of expectations that electors have of a Government, I would put leadership as No. 1 on that list. Of course, leadership goes hand in hand with a good leader. What makes a good leader? Many would express views about concepts of vision, of communication, of listening to people and the ability to take people with them. Already Peter Beattie, in his short time as Premier, has demonstrated these attributes. One of the more interesting views about what makes a good leader is the view that a leader is made by the circumstances in which the leader finds himself. What is meant by that is that we view leaders by the events that surround them.

So what are the circumstances in which Queensland now finds itself? The Budget reveals that our circumstances are challenging. Our country does not face war, nor does our State face the prospect of economic depression. However, short of these two terrible events, we face as daunting a set of challenges as at any other time this century. Economic circumstances are not bleak but nor are they easy. But most importantly, economic opportunity is very uneven. Some industry sectors are performing reasonably well while others, such as the resource sector, some primary production and parts of the service sector, are doing it tough. Equally, economic prosperity among the regions and individual households varies considerably. This disparity of result in opportunity contributes to a greater sense of uncertainty. That is manifested in concerns about unemployment and job security.

The Treasurer, the Honourable David Hamill, and the Beattie Government have rightly delivered a Budget that focuses on jobs and on addressing social needs. The Budget is a sound, economic response to outside market forces. It will put us in good stead to weather the current international financial crises. Over the past 12 months, there has been unprecedented volatility in the world financial markets, with the collapse in the Asian currencies and the Russian rouble and worsening economic problems in Japan. Significant decline in the value of the Australian dollar in comparison with the US dollar and large falls across-the-board in world equity markets are making the situation in Queensland all the more difficult and will have adverse impacts on us.

These challenges require strong leadership. They require a response that can counterbalance the adverse impact. They require a recognition of where shortfalls will occur and initiatives in place to take up the shortfalls. The Budget does this and it does it in a number of ways. It does it by strengthening our domestic economy, by taking direct action to strengthen our economic and social fabric, by strengthening our domestic economy by supporting consumption here, and stimulating activity through increased capital works.

I am proud to be part of a Government that is inclusive and that recognises the importance of community, cultural and economic diversity. I am also proud to be part of a Government that recognises the challenges being faced by our community. We are listening to the community's concerns and responding to them.

For my part, back in May 1997 at the Kurwongbah by-election I became acutely aware of the peak levels of insecurity and uncertainty in the community. In my first speech to this House, I addressed those issues at length. I set myself goals by which to address the three main issues of concern of the

people of Kurwongbah in a plan for Kurwongbah. Many of the goals set out in my plan have been achieved.

This Budget delivers more of these goals. One of these achievements has been the establishment of a Police Beat shopfront at Westfield at Strathpine. This has now been added to by the budgeting for a community Police Beat at Bray Park. One of the major concerns of Kurwongbah residents is community safety. In part, this means that we need a greater police presence with police being accessible in order to respond in times of need and being visible as a deterrent. These measures go a long way towards enhancing community safety in our area. I am also aware that the community of Eatons Hills has been calling for a greater police presence, and I have been working with the Minister for Police and Corrective Services to address that need.

To address the community feeling of uncertainty where jobs and job security are concerned, the commitment of this Government is without question. The Working Queensland initiatives in the Budget will benefit greatly the people of the Pine Rivers Shire. The Community Jobs Plan, which is a strategy for creating jobs, and the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program will see \$283m being spent to provide up to 24,500 jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships over four years as well as 6,500 apprenticeships and traineeships in the public sector, up to 9,000 additional apprenticeships and traineeships in the private sector, and 9,000 job placements of three months to six months on community and environmental projects. We will also see 17,800 extra jobs in capital works, making a total of 65,600 jobs supported by the Capital Works Program, 685 additional teachers, 995 extra health workers, and over 370 more police and civilian support staff.

Funding of vital public infrastructure, especially in roads and rail, is very welcome news for the people of Pine Rivers. There is no doubt that tackling local transport needs is a major issue in my electorate, and this Government has made a good start. The provision of \$36m for the third rail track from Mayne to Caboolture will mean more peak hour express trains and more train services generally for Pine Rivers commuters. It also means a more comfortable trip to the city, especially for workers. A seat on the train all the way to work will be a welcome change. The allocation of \$1 billion for roads Statewide represents a significant investment in our public infrastructure. It must be emphasised that these new roads will be user free, which is a very different situation from that now experienced in States such as Victoria and South Australia, where new roads are toll roads.

Many other measures in this Budget will greatly benefit the electorate of Kurwongbah. In education, the Budget has delivered a record \$3.46 billion expenditure program with new initiatives in literacy and numeracy, new initiatives for students with disabilities and new initiatives that have measures to address the inequities that exist currently between schools. The scrapping of the Leading Schools program has greatly assisted all State schools in my electorate, such as Lawnton State School and Petrie State School.

In health, a record Budget of \$3.722m has been delivered with a focus on more health workers, new and refurbished hospitals and health facilities and, most importantly, an extra \$18.05m to assist in reducing the waiting lists for public hospitals. Although Pine Rivers does not have a public hospital, it has an excellent community health service.

For our seniors, the free ambulance service and concessions on motor vehicle registration will mean more dollars in their pockets. The introduction of the Home Assist/Home Secure program in Pine Rivers will give the seniors in that area peace of mind. Many local residents have worked hard to get this program into Pine Rivers, and I know that they are delighted that it is going ahead. The introduction of the solar hot water system rebate has also been well received. Already, I have received many approaches for applications for the rebate.

The acceleration and boost in the Capital Works Program will generate more business for many of the local industries in my electorate. The Brendale industrial estate has many small and medium-sized businesses that service the building and construction industry. This should generate more jobs and a greater sense of job security for those employed in these industries.

In conclusion, I can say proudly that this Budget has a strong social capital base. Funding to disability services has rightly been called a revolution. A massive boost of \$126.2m has been budgeted for people with disabilities living in the community. This will mean improved life chances and circumstances for many, many local residents in the Pine Rivers Shire. The shame of the unmet needs and the paltry amounts offered by the coalition is now a thing of the past.

This is a Budget that shows leadership from good leaders. I congratulate the Treasurer on delivering a sound economic Budget, a Budget that delivers all our election promises, and a Budget that has a strong social base.
