



Speech by

**LINDY NELSON-CARR**

**MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA**

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Hansard 18 September 1998

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**  
**APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Ms NELSON-CARR** (Mundingburra—ALP) (11.45 a.m.): I rise to speak to the Appropriation Bills. This Budget is a responsible Budget. This Budget is a reasonable Budget. This Budget is a Budget for jobs. This Budget makes an excellent start in implementing Labor's election commitments. Not only is this Budget accountable, with the introduction of national changes in Government accounting introduced in May, but this Budget has provided for big increases in the area of capital expenditure.

The details of the Budget figures are part of Labor's commitment to fiscal honesty, and Treasurer David Hamill is to be congratulated on consistently highlighting the correct figures. In contrast to the coalition's May Budget, this Budget shows significant increases in revenue across-the-board. This surplus Budget has been introduced without introducing new taxes and charges, and this Budget will break the unemployment cycle. As a member of the Beattie Government, I am proud to be part of a team that is bringing social justice back onto the agenda—a Government that is delivering community needs. We will spend \$380m in Labor initiatives to deliver election commitments.

In addressing the social needs of Queenslanders, funding is provided for urgent attention to improved health services, commitments to the disabled living in the community, free ambulance services, housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, education improvements, greenhouse climate change initiatives and the multicultural grants program to assist ethnic communities. This global picture is good news for Townsville and firmly places this booming city on the map.

The new rail projects to the tune of \$84.7m are welcome, including \$23m for construction of coal and livestock wagons at the Townsville workshops, \$11m to complete the manufacture of the Great South Pacific Express, \$22m for the upgrade of the line between Townsville and Hughenden, \$16m for a new spur line into the zinc refinery near Townsville and \$9.5m for Stage 2 of the Stuart complex. The Townsville port will have \$33.1m spent for improvements in capital dredging, jetty and berth extensions, reclamation works and new plant and equipment. Funding for health facilities has meant the go-ahead for the Townsville Hospital at Douglas, a medical school, the bone marrow transplant unit, a national unit for multidisciplinary studies of spinal pain at the Townsville General Hospital and new health facilities on Palm Island. \$20m will also be spent on road and transport facilities in Townsville.

This Budget recognises Townsville's role in developing Queensland, with the inclusion of \$9.5m for correctional centres in Townsville, up to \$10m for school building projects in Townsville, \$4m for modifications to the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, \$2.5m in development projects in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, \$300,000 for construction of a disability respite centre in north Queensland, \$200,000 for redevelopment of facilities at Alligator Creek in Bowling Green National Park, \$150,000 for new ambulance communications centres at Townsville and \$50,000 for the Magnetic Island National Park. It is obvious that this Government understands that north Queensland counts. Townsville is the second-largest city in Queensland, and this Budget has also given a high capital boost to redeveloping The Strand, the Nelly Bay safe harbour, the upgrading of the Willows Sports Complex, the Garbutt urban renewal scheme and new Police Beats at Garbutt, Rasmussen, South Townsville and Kelso.

As the elected member for Mundingburra, let me again describe my electorate. The constituents in the electorate include employees in the public and private sectors, professionals, labourers and a large population of soldiers from nearby Lavarack Barracks. While many people go outside Mundingburra to work, Mundingburra is where they live, so the issues of city life, that is, jobs, education, health, justice and the environment, are the primary concerns of my electorate.

**Mr Lucas:** And they made an excellent choice in their member as well.

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I thank the honourable member for that comment.

Mundingburra is middle Australia, and this Budget addresses the needs of ordinary Australians. As mentioned, health funding will rise in Townsville, therefore bringing tremendous benefits to our city. Not only will our facilities be improved and refurbished, but hospital waiting lists will be reduced and early intervention will be the focus. Those people in my electorate suffering from mental disability will benefit from the region's mental health services. As a guidance officer in local high schools, I often came across the heartbreaking and insidious problem of suicide. How terrible to come across our youth who feel such hopelessness that they see no alternative but to commit this shocking act.

This Government is not only breaking the unemployment cycle but it is also providing much welcomed assistance for those caught in the social net of hopelessness. Counselling in the school context has its very valuable place, but what happens when our troubled youth leave school or indeed drop out or are excluded? This Government has made provision for an allocation of \$44,557 for a Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy to help counter one of regional Queensland's most dreadful problems.

Alcoholism and drug addiction are also affecting our young people. With all the social problems affecting those most at risk often comes the added dilemma of drug abuse. I have worked closely with many of these people whose lives have become unmanageable. It is easy to patronise those less fortunate, to wax rhetorical about our all being born equal and therefore all being treated equally. It is easy to get emotive and espouse the reintroduction of guns for protection, but these bandaid and socially corrupt philosophies do nothing to alleviate fear and hopelessness. All they do is raise the level of social malaise, social corruption and social deviation. These ideologies will do nothing for those less fortunate, but they will fill our jails, they will divide and they will never unite. That ill-informed thinking is about collectivising and branding. It is all about blame, not forgiveness. Social ills can only be minimised with compassion and understanding. Guns and jails will not fight the cause; they will merely treat the symptom. That approach has never worked in the past and will not work in the future.

It is a myth and indeed indictable to suggest that we are all equal. Our Aboriginal people are failing in the system. It is a known fact that in all aspects of health, education, jobs and social justice, Aboriginals have some of the lowest levels of acceptable standards in the world. It is a myth to think that we are equal when all one has to do is walk through a shopping mall, go to the bank or even sit in a restaurant for a meal. How many Aboriginal employees does one see? How many Aboriginal employers does one see? How many positions of power are held by Aboriginals? How many Aboriginals are sitting in this House? We have had thousands of years to become so-called civilised, but there are those among us—One Nation members—who believe that since being given the vote less than 40 years ago, Aboriginals are to be left alone to fend for themselves in this very unequal world. These same people believe that the ill health, alcoholism, illiteracy and unemployment that plague our Aboriginal people are faults that rest with them and are for them to deal with. How inhumane!

How fortunate that this Government is committed to improving living conditions for these disadvantaged people. How fortunate that as part of this Government we believe that the least we can do is offer conditions that will improve the lifestyles of indigenous peoples, to make some attempt at lessening the gap between the haves and have-nots and attempt to climb the ladder to reach equality. Aboriginal women are struggling against increasing odds to keep families together, taking on each other's children—children who are at continued risk of a number of social failures. The women are carrying the burden of family breakdown, struggling to keep their children off the streets. Housing is their problem and health is their problem. This minority group of Australians deserves equality. However, suggesting that they already have equality because they are Australians is blatant hypocrisy. This minority group of Australians, the first Australians, deserves better. They deserve whatever we can give them in order to improve their lives and give them some hope. Aborigines are singled out because of the colour of their skin. To suggest that those people receive more than white Australians is shameful. This Government is making fine attempts to improve and reconcile by implementing policies that address the social problems that Aboriginals continue to face. Those policies illustrate that there is a wide range of social indicators that show that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are severely disadvantaged when compared with other Queenslanders. The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development will address human rights issues affecting our indigenous Queenslanders on the basis that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are entitled to facilities and services comparable to those enjoyed by most other communities in Queensland.

The overrepresentation of indigenous people in contact with the justice system will receive a concerted and collaborative effort from State and Commonwealth agencies to address this issue. Many of my former students, who for all those social reasons became a menace to themselves and to society, need a high level of support, understanding and a reason to break the cycle. They do not need to be ostracised, abandoned and labelled.

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