



Speech by

GEOFF WILSON

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Hansard 16 September 1999

1999 STATE BUDGET

Mr WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (11.54 p.m.): It is with great pleasure that tonight I stand to speak in strong support of this Budget, the second Beattie Labor Government Budget, which is continuing in the tradition established by the first Beattie Labor Government Budget delivered last year. This is a sound, responsible and cautious State Budget. It promotes the traditional planks of Labor Government in this State—health, police, more money for education, public works, and major public expenditure.

The broad highlights of this excellent Budget are as follows: the average unemployment rate is targeted to fall to 7.75%, the lowest rate in a decade; 41,000 new jobs are expected out of this Budget; the net operating surplus from this Budget from the general Government sector is \$21m; tax concessions total \$27.7m, and a significant part of that is an exemption for employers in relation to trainees and apprentices taken on by those employers; a State Capital Works Program of \$5.2 billion supporting 2,600 additional and 65,400 ongoing jobs; and finally, the economic growth rate is forecast to be 3.75% with an employment growth rate of 2.5%.

People in the suburbs of Brisbane, and in particular the north-west suburbs of Brisbane where my electorate is located, will relate more to these figures: this State Budget will provide across Queensland 288 more teachers, 325 more police, 44 more ambulance officers, 27 more fire and rescue personnel, and more nurses to complement the hospital system. So many, many aspects of this Budget are commendable and they apply to areas throughout the State.

In the limited time that I have available, I would like to focus particularly on the impact that this Budget has on the Ferry Grove electorate. The funds that are earmarked broadly for work to be undertaken in the Ferry Grove electorate and for the services being provided by this Beattie Labor Government in the Ferry Grove electorate, and in the north-western suburbs more generally, amount to in excess of about \$6.8m. A couple of key projects that are targeted focus essentially on the more efficient supply of electricity to the north-western suburbs, and particularly the newly emerging suburbs and residential developments in the Samford Valley.

In Upper Kedron, Powerlink earmarked a project worth \$3.5m, for which it is to be highly commended. Prior to this project and until recently, Powerlink proposed that it would upgrade the major electricity transmission line that comes from the Brendale substation down south to the suburbs around Ferry Grove and Upper Kedron—a distance of 15 kilometres. That would require the removal of good stands of trees and bushland in a strip about 20 metres wide over those 15 kilometres. When the environmental impact of that development and the cost was investigated fully, at about the same time it was revealed that some other changes needed to be made, which meant that the work could be delayed indefinitely. It may be that the upgrading of that particular line never needs to happen. Instead of carrying out that work, Powerlink is proposing to build the first stage of a substation in Upper Kedron and also to build a temporary transmission line and tower spanning only 700 metres to assist in the provision of more secure and reliable power to the north-western suburbs.

In addition to that project, Energex is proposing to build a 33/11 kV substation in the area of Samford. The substation is designed to augment the transmission lines that provide power to the Samford Valley and, in particular, Mount Nebo and Mount Glorious. As those areas develop, the load on the electricity system will increase. The new substation will allow those areas to be more readily

catered for. Energex has a very difficult job and it finds it very difficult to develop a very positive public relations image in terms of the service it sometimes provides. In the last 15 to 16 months, my office has received many complaints from Samford Valley, Upper Kedron, Mount Nebo and Mount Glorious residents about the highly unreliable provision of power. It is hoped that the substation at Samford and the development at Upper Kedron will overcome some of those problems.

In the last six months, a number of my constituents have raised concerns about the congested parking around the Ferny Grove Railway Station, particularly in the suburban streets, as the station car park fills up. As a result of representations to Queensland Rail and the Minister for Transport, Queensland Rail has been allocated \$100,000 to undertake a planning study for a bus/rail interchange at the Ferny Grove Railway Station. As I indicated earlier, the suburban growth that is taking place in the north-western corner of my electorate is putting a lot of vehicular pressure on the car parking facilities at the railway station.

QR is very keen to look at the development of a bus/rail interchange and an elevated car park to cater for the increasing vehicular traffic in the area of the Ferny Grove Railway Station. That is being done at the same time as the Samford Road upgrade, which is going through the final consultation process. The intersection of Ferny Way and Samford Road at the Ferny Grove Railway Station will be reconfigured.

A number of constituents have also complained to me about the service on the Ferny Grove line. As a result of the issues being raised with me, I have made representations to Queensland Rail. I have been advised that part of the moneys, amounting to approximately \$87m in this year's Budget, will provide for additional suburban car units. Part of that funding increase will cover the provision of extra carriages on the Ferny Grove line. Three steps are proposed in this regard. The diesel service that, until the last couple of weeks, ran in the morning from Mitchelton Railway Station to the city has now been replaced by a three-car electric train. In early 2000, it is anticipated that the afternoon service from Mitchelton to the city will be replaced by a second three-car set. In early February 2001, it is anticipated that an additional three-car set will operate the morning and afternoon service from Mitchelton into the city. Those changes have all been made possible because of the allocation of funding provided in this year's Budget for those and many other three-car sets throughout the suburban network.

In the last six months, the Ferny Grove Railway Station has been the venue for a trial of a new safety approach called the core zone, which has been undertaken by Queensland Rail. Cameras have been installed to focus on particular sections of the platform that have been marked out. Those sections are adjacent to services such as the ticket vending machine, the attendant's window and other facilities. Therefore, there is a dedicated section of continuous observation to give added security to people using the rail system. Commuters using the railway system from the Ferny Grove Railway Station have been surveyed and I am advised that quite a positive response has been received—so much so that \$5m has been allocated in the Budget to extend that security approach to other suburban railway stations.

As I draw to the close of the time that I have available tonight, I wish to mention a couple of other things that are commendable in this Budget. A sum of \$1m has been provided from the Emergency Services budget to secure the long-term operation of the SES cadet program. As some members will know, the Mitchelton State High School was the first metropolitan State high school at which the SES and youth action cadet program was trialled. As a result of that trial, the program has been extended into other high schools. I am pleased to say that the Budget has been crafted in such a way as to secure the continuing operation of the SES cadet unit at the Mitchelton State High School. That is an excellent program and I commend it to the other high schools into which it will be introduced.

A matter that I think warrants attention in the education section of the Budget is the Building Better Schools program, which has been provided with about \$18m of additional funding, \$14m of which is to be allocated to south-east Queensland schools. I am pleased to see that high schools have been added to this program. There are 14 schools in my electorate. I can assure members and the people of the Ferny Grove electorate that with great vigour I will be lobbying the department to ensure that the various needs of the schools in my area are met through the Building Better Schools scheme.

I know that many other members are busting to make their contributions in this debate tonight, but I have a few final points to make. I commend the Minister for Health for the provision of an additional \$640,000 for the crime prevention strategy, which is directed at young people at risk. The strategy enables youth workers, medical practitioners and others to be engaged to work with the local communities in the identification of and early intervention with young people who are at risk, particularly in relation to the problem of illicit and licit drugs and their misuse.

I commend the Minister for Health for the introduction of an extra day at the Mitchelton State High School and an extra day at the Ferny Grove State High School for the school health nurse. The nurse now spends two days at Mitchie high, two days at Ferny Grove high and one day at The Gap high school. This is a very commendable initiative. That initiative also links with a local initiative that I

have assisted with. A number of community groups in my area have come together to explore ways in which they may be able to work more cooperatively with each other and Government to assist kids who are on the edge. The Kids on the Edge project has kicked off in my area.

As I am mindful of the time, I will conclude by saying that this is a very good but cautious and probably conservative Budget from the Beattie Labor Government. It is soundly based, particularly as it builds on the principles established in the first Beattie Labor Government Budget relating to the key areas of health, police, education and public works. I commend the two Bills to the House.
