



Speech by

Mr J. HEGARTY

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

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1999 STATE BUDGET

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (4.14 p.m.): In making my contribution to the debate on the recent State Budget, I want to put on record at the outset my dismay at the imbalance of these Appropriation Bills in every respect. The Premier did a good job in concealing the true position that this Budget puts Queensland in. However, within 24 hours, after the dust settled, it was seen to be the inequitable document that it is.

Emphasis has been placed on technology and training in this Budget under the guise of developing a Smart State. I am in favour of both of those initiatives if they are put in perspective in relation to the Government's obligation to the whole of the State, but of course it has not done that. They have been singled out for funding at the expense of traditional areas requiring Government assistance.

A good Government spreads money around and does not place it in select areas benefiting only a few. It is not fair and it is not good government. The savage cuts to the budgets of various Government departments have left experienced public servants reeling. They are staggered at the ineptitude of the Treasurers—both former and acting—but what can we expect when, as Ministers in the previous Goss Government, both were abysmal failures. One thing that no-one can argue against, though, is that it is a true Labor Budget, because no-one else would be prepared to put their name to it.

The irony of this Government's push to train people for employment is that it has done everything it can to dampen opportunities to increase employment by the way it has treated business. This Budget is anti-business and therefore anti-jobs. On top of the recent retrograde industrial relations laws reintroduced by Labor to pay back the unions for past support, businesses large enough to pay payroll tax will be further slugged by the inclusion of employee superannuation contributions into their total payroll for assessment.

Currently, superannuation contributions are at 7%, but they are set to rise to 9% in a couple of years' time. This will put businesses into a higher tax bracket, thereby creating an incremental increase in taxes for future Governments to draw on. This is a disincentive for employers to increase staff and expose themselves to more tax, and it is certainly not a way to encourage jobs growth.

It is difficult to rationalise how Labor thinks. There has been a great deal of rhetoric from members opposite about focusing on jobs, but their every action is designed to impede jobs growth. It has been interesting to listen to Government members extolling the benefits of the multitude of projects that their respective electorates are to receive under this Budget. Ironically, I have not heard a peep out of the Deputy Premier and member for Capalaba over the projects he has gained for his area in the Redland Shire. I am not sure if I will hear from him because he really has nothing to lay claim to. The whole of the shire received nothing by way of capital works except for some TAFE funding and some minor Health and Education funding.

The lack of detail in the Budget does not enable any analysis of any projects of significance, and this is just part of the lack of transparency, which is contrary to what the Government is always claiming. Obviously, the Deputy Premier, despite his posturing as a mover and shaker in his party, got duded by his leader, who arranged a \$250m superstadium deal for his electorate but left nothing for the Deputy Premier.

How can this Government generate a record Budget and achieve a small increase over the coalition's previous record Budgets, especially in capital works? It is easy; it underspends the previous year's capital works budget and then re-announces the funding for the projects again this year. I will give some examples in or near my electorate. There was the re-announcement of \$500,000 for the rebuilding of jetties on Lamb and Karragarra Islands, budgeted for last financial year but not yet constructed; and a re-announcement of \$980,000 for the Capalaba bus interchange. \$1m was budgeted for that last financial year, but only \$116,000 was spent. So it is easy to see the cumulative effect that this capital works underspending has across the State. Aided by the introduction of accrual accounting this financial year, all these old projects are being re-announced in accordance with these accounting principles. Unfortunately, the Beattie Government is not honest enough to acknowledge this and makes out that it is all new money.

One thing that is very galling to me as the local member is the complete lack of regard that this Government and, in particular, the Minister for Local Government have shown for the southern Moreton Bay islands. The Minister and his ministerial officers have reneged on the commitment that they made to the Redland Shire Council to provide funding for infrastructure for the southern Moreton Bay islands. The Minister has the distinction of co-funding, with the Redland Shire Council, a \$500,000 study to solve the islands' problems once and for all. Since that study's completion, the Minister wants nothing to do with its recommendations. Despite questions from myself and the member for Warrego, the Minister continues to sidestep the issue and pays half-truths in relation to possible Federal funding becoming available. However, Federal funding will only be available if the State takes the lead.

It makes me wonder what the Minister really knows about the islands. I am pleased that he has re-entered the Chamber, because I say this particularly for his ears. The islands are a beautiful place to live, but the scenery diminishes somewhat if, as a resident, one is contending with unmade roads with potholes that constantly cause dust to come into the houses during the dry weather and sometimes make it impossible to reach home due to vehicles getting bogged in the wet. The Minister might like to reflect on that when he is sitting comfortably in his chauffeur driven ministerial car, driving down Old Cleveland Road towards his electorate.

The Minister might also like to reflect on the growing island population that is causing the Moreton Bay Marine Park to come under pressure from pollution. The bay is potentially a sewer outlet for the houses that only have septic systems for waste disposal. Yesterday the Premier said that protecting the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park was an admirable thing to do. What about the Moreton Bay Marine Park?

The Local Government Minister and his officers had ongoing discussions with the Redland Shire Council, as was pointed out again during question time yesterday. However, it is obvious that that was done with a deal of duplicity. Today's Redland Times says it all, with a headline that states "Dudded on Bay funding". The article states that the mayor of Redlands said that, following a number of meetings that he had with senior departmental officers and the Minister himself, he had an understanding that the money would be available. The article says that the mayor is extremely disappointed that no money is available for the islands and that there is no financial help for council.

Mr Lucas: He'll be very pleased that you quoted him.

Mr HEGARTY: I am quoting a local publication. I encourage the member for Lytton, who is very adept at keeping his eye on the local media, to read this article. Indeed, I will save him the trouble. I table this article for the information of the member for Lytton. The island situation is now at a critical stage.

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. The member is misleading the House. No guarantees were given by any Minister of this Government, and members opposite know it. The member should not always rely on reports that are not accurate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr HEGARTY: If the member for Capalaba had any clout in this Government, he would do something for the area that he represents, but he does not do anything. He is a lame duck. He is all talk and no action.

I turn to another aspect that highlights the lack of funding the Redland Shire Council received in this Budget for the provision of infrastructure. The Redlands is one of the fastest growing areas in Australia and is situated close to the capital city. Because urban development occurred mainly south and north of Brisbane, the area has only recently been discovered and is experiencing strong population growth. Apart from the north-south Cleveland-Redland Bay Road, there are four major east-west roads leading to the city, the Gateway Motorway to the north and the Pacific Motorway to the south. Most of those east-west connection roads are not fully dual laned.

I am glad that the Deputy Premier is in the Chamber now, because under the coalition Government roadworks were given a real boost. Boundary Road at Thornlands is currently being

upgraded to dual lane, as is Bryants Road at Loganholme in the southern part of my electorate. The gaps are in the Redland Bay Road/Capalaba area, which should be dual laned to provide an eastern access route from the southern part of the shire through to the city. It was planned that those latter important projects would receive funding hopefully in this financial year, but the huge shortfall in road funding will put them well beyond the 2000-01 Roads Implementation Plan.

It is interesting that the member for Capalaba is in the Chamber now, because those roads are in his electorate. He is the Deputy Premier and he cannot even get any money to pick up the shortfall.

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive and I ask for them to be withdrawn. The Roads Implementation Program has not changed since the coalition was last in Government. We are funding an ongoing project in those areas as per that program.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member has asked for a withdrawal.

Mr HEGARTY: I withdraw anything that he is sensitive about. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. That roadworks funding will stop after this current project and it will be left to the member for Capalaba as the senior member representing the shire and the Deputy Premier of this State. We will see what he can do.

The Police Minister's lack of competence in trying to refute the cutbacks in police intake numbers during question time yesterday highlights the 3% decrease in the Police budget for this financial year compared to last. The Wynnum Police District, which covers the Redland Shire, has the lowest police to population ratio in the State. While I assure people that more police will be allocated to our area as police numbers increase, it gives me no confidence that the Labor Government is already starting to erode the good work done by the previous coalition Government in establishing an extra police academy in north Queensland and providing the funding necessary to get the Queensland Police Service to its present strength of nearly 7,500.

My local police station at Redland Bay is a Stage 1 facility. The water police and two general duty officers who are stationed there do an excellent job. However, a single-shift policing operation cannot provide the coverage that the local area needs. I have for some time been calling for another shift of general duty officers at the Redland Bay station as an interim measure before a full 24-hour station can be established with an expanded police station.

One of the disappointing things in this Budget was the huge cut in capital works funding, particularly in the area of educational institutions.

Mr Elder: Not in the Redlands.

Mr HEGARTY: You wait and see. You reckon there is no capital works cut in the Redlands?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind members to speak through the Chair.

Mr HEGARTY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am taking an interjection and that is quite allowable. My concern is that as a result of the shortfall in the capital works budget, the educational institutions in my electorate will be affected. I will highlight one of those institutions. The Stage 4 expansion to the Victoria Point State High School is under way. Part of that Stage 4 project was the provision of a student facility, which would be an important facility to provide indoor recreational and sporting facilities for the students, especially as the Year 11s and 12s come on stream next year. That project was progressing. A sum of \$0.9m was provided for the project, which also had the support of the local shire council which was prepared to enhance it by providing a further \$250,000 to build kitchen facilities and a stage so that the hall could be used by the wider community. As late as a couple of days ago, that project was scrapped.

Mr Elder: You're getting everything in the Budget. Don't go telling fibs.

Mr HEGARTY: The Minister interjected before and said that we had lost nothing. I have told him what we have lost, and what is his reply?

Mr Elder: You've got everything in the Budget that was allocated to Victoria Point. Don't go telling fibs.

Mr HEGARTY: No, the Government has led them up the garden path and now it has duded the local community. If the Minister had any go about him, he would have looked after his local area.

The same thing is happening with other projects throughout the State. I believe that about 50 projects have had a line drawn through them. Another school in my area that has been looking forward to the provision of some extra facilities is the Thornlands Special School. That school is in a unique position as it draws children from a number of adjoining areas. The school is underresourced in relation to teaching areas and facilities. As members would understand, because of its nature the school needs special toilet block facilities and so on. That school will be penalised by this Government's inability to implement a decent Capital Works Program.

I come back to the southern Moreton Bay islands. According to the Budget papers, this financial year the Minister has allocated \$410m for future developments in the output performance of the Department of Local Government. I call on the Minister to apply some of that money to the southern Moreton Bay islands, which will at least make a start in implementing some long-overdue and much needed infrastructure for the community. The amount of money that was quoted in the paper today by a representative of the honourable member for Capalaba was \$136m. That may be the optimum figure, but the fact is that the local council and the community are desperate to take any sort of money.

Even if it were only a couple of per cent of the Budget which could be paid over a few years, they would be grateful to have it at least acknowledged that the Government will do something in the longer term to meet its commitments to those island communities. I will not be holding my breath. I will be happy to make an apology in this House if during this financial year the Minister makes a commitment to fund those commitments. I do not think he has the ticker. I do not think the member for Capalaba has the ticker, either. If you had any pull in this Government you would tell him, but you do not. You are a paper man.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! The member for Redlands will address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr HEGARTY: I will continue to speak about the saga of the bay islands. It is strange that the Local Government Minister could find funding for other parts of the State. He could find \$15m for the Strand redevelopment in Townsville. I am not trying to take away the prospects of the good people of Townsville to promenade down the Strand at some future time, but what about the real battlers in the world such as those in some of the communities in the southern part of the State?

If the State Government can assist local governments in the north and in other parts of the State, then what is it doing for the south-east, which has 63% of the total population of the State? We should look at the Redlands area as a hallmark of what a caring Labor Government does for the battlers of this State. But we will not hear a thing from the Government because it does not have the commitment to put its money where its mouth is.

In the short time I have remaining I give credit to the Government for a good initiative brought forward in this Budget, that is the trialling of drug courts. There is no doubt that if young people, first-time offenders in particular, can be kept away from experienced, hardened criminals, some young lives may well be saved instead of cut short by an early death or ruined by a life of crime necessary to support a drug habit. I commend the Government on that initiative. That initiative was the thought of the coalition—we were moving in that direction—but Labor is in Government and as it holds the Treasury benches it is able to fund it. I hope this measure will be successful. If it is—I am fairly confident that it will be if some already successful models are followed—I would like to see it continued and expanded in order to try to reduce the impact of the ravages of drugs on the youth of this State in particular.
