



Speech by

KAREN STRUTHERS

MEMBER FOR ARCHERFIELD

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1999 STATE BUDGET

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (9.48 p.m.): The driving force behind my desire to be a member of Parliament is to have a say on the priorities of Government. I want to continue to push for a better balance between economic and social priorities. I want to make sure that Governments provide incentives for investment and economic growth, and that they invest equally in people directly. I want to make sure that the people I represent have ready access to high-quality schools, hospitals, respite care and other social needs and that they benefit from our fight against crime and drugs. It is also critical that people in my area have job security.

I wish to acknowledge some of the local residents from my area who are in the gallery tonight. Ross Tapsall and his wife Kathy are keen to make sure that they have job security in the future. They are keen to make sure that their kids have a decent education. Tony and others in the gallery feel the same way.

In the Smart State vision in this Budget, our sights are firmly set on continuing jobs growth, skilling people for our rapidly changing work force and developing the regional centres of Queensland. A centrepiece of the Budget is the forecast that 41,000 new jobs will be created this year. One of the most heartening features of this growth is that many more work and career opportunities will be open to young people. As I travel around my electorate, I meet heaps of disillusioned young people. It is the Labor Government that has provided some hope for those young people.

In Algester, Acacia Ridge and other parts of my electorate youth unemployment has been hovering at around 20%. We must improve on this. The massive boost in apprenticeships and traineeships is a big leap forward. Q-Build alone will be taking on 344 new apprentices this year. The Tory Government wanted to privatise Q-Build. That would have wrecked any opportunity for apprenticeships because of the lack of continuity that would have occurred if it was privatised. We are hanging onto it as a public enterprise. Good on Robert Schwarten for maintaining this stand. There will be 885 new apprenticeships and traineeships. They will be created through the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund. With hundreds of new homes being built in Forest Lake and Calamvale, this is good news for young people in these communities seeking trades.

Mature-age workers in my area who have been retrenched and are struggling to regain secure work have not been forgotten in this Budget. Many employers undervalue the experience and wisdom of mature-age workers. Government funding cannot overcome this view, but this Budget provides funding for retraining and labour market support for mature-age workers.

There will be record expenditure on education and training, including the ongoing development of Bremer TAFE. Schools also feature strongly in this Smart State vision. Our Government's plan is to have a ratio of one computer per five students within the next few years. I am sure that this news will be welcomed warmly at Watson Road State School, Calamvale State School and the others in my area that have been struggling to meet the high costs associated with the installation and maintenance of computers. Some schools have been reliant on P & C fundraising efforts to top up their computer stocks. They have had to sell a lot of chocolates and raffle tickets in order to get those computers so this will be good news for them.

In Education we are also covering the basics, with the employment of several hundred more teachers. We are tackling the literacy and numeracy problem with more programs and staff. The

Reading Recovery program in schools in my electorate is producing excellent results. I am rapt in the boost to these sorts of programs, because they assist kids and help them get on with their lives.

Residents on the south side of Brisbane will also benefit from the Mater Children's Hospital \$20.5m redevelopment and the allocation of more police to the Metro South region. Police often cop a lot of flak for being late to break and enters or other jobs. I can say with confidence that the police at Acacia Ridge and other stations servicing my area do their best and cooperate well with schools and community groups. They need more officers to give them an even better capacity to combat crime.

I will be knocking on the Police Minister's door to get a fair share of this allocation to Metro South. I will be doing the ministerial rounds to go into bat for facilities and projects that we missed out on in this Budget. We need increased road funding to ease congestion along Granard Road at Rocklea and Johnson Road alongside Hillcrest and Forestdale. We also need some very creative strategies to get more heavy vehicles using the southern bypass road rather than local roads.

I will also continue to lobby for a bigger injection of funds into our State anti-drug and crime prevention strategies. The two issues are intrinsically linked. We cannot deal with drugs and crime separately; we have to deal with them together. We need to be tough on the causes of crime as well as crime itself. It is heartening to see a greater focus on crime prevention in this Budget.

The other problem that parents have raised with me is that something has to be done to help the 12 to 16 year old age group who are at risk—the kids who are living on the streets, who leave home and wag school, many of whom get into drugs. I have spoken to the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care about this problem. She is also keen to protect these kids from harm. I will be snapping at her heels throughout the year to make sure that these young people and their families get adequate support early on, not when it is too late.

I will be putting in a big effort to make sure that the concerns of residents, many of which require Federal funding, are addressed. People complain to me about the long waiting lists at the QE II Hospital for dental support. We have to do better in that regard. It is a shame that the Federal Government pulled out of the dental assistance scheme. We are having to fill the gaps—put in the fillings—and we cannot do it alone. We need Federal support.

In my area we also need sound barriers along Riawena Road. Again, that is part of the national highway network, but the Federal Government is not coming to the party. I will also be putting in a big effort to make sure that our Smart State vision is successful and to make sure that we maintain smart suburbs in the Archerfield electorate.
