



Speech by

**MIKE REYNOLDS**

**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

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Hansard 16 September 1999

### **1999 STATE BUDGET**

**Mr REYNOLDS** (Townsville—ALP) (12.50 a.m.): It is with a great deal of pleasure that I speak in favour of the second Beattie Budget—a Budget which contains good news for the Townsville/Thuringowa region. I welcome the commitments that have been made to the Townsville/Thuringowa region in the Appropriation Bill which is being debated in the Parliament this evening. The Budget contains a number of key aspects and I congratulate the Premier and acting Treasurer on the excellent work that has been done in presenting this Budget to the Parliament over the last couple of days.

I previously mentioned some key aspects, and I would like to highlight some of those again tonight. The 1999-2000 Budget allows for a record capital works expenditure. It is also a strong Budget for jobs. It is a Smart State Budget providing record spending of \$3.8 billion on education. Queensland is going to employ an extra 288 teachers. The electorate of Townsville has a number of key needs in the education area. I am very pleased with the priority that the Beattie Government has given to the education of children in my region.

May I say to members this evening that the Townsville/Thuringowa region has done extremely well in attracting State Government budgetary allocations. I would like to commend my colleague the member for Mundingburra, Lindy Nelson-Carr, for working with me in representing our electorates over the past 15 months. We have worked hard to ensure that the Townsville/Thuringowa region receives a fair go. We live in Townsville, which is about 900 miles from the State capital. It is a long way away. It takes strong representation to ensure that we receive our rightful allocations. In the last two Budgets we have been able to receive our rightful allocations under a Beattie Labor Government. It is a far cry from what happened under a coalition Government which neglected Townsville, neglected Thuringowa, and neglected the electorate of Mundingburra.

The Beattie Government Budget provides for 325 additional police and 73 emergency services personnel to be employed across the State. I would like to commend the Premier and the Ministers who brought those increases forward. This represents a real addition to services in the State of Queensland. The Townsville/Thuringowa region will receive a large share of the State's record \$5.2 billion capital works program. This program will build infrastructure and create important jobs for 68,000 Queenslanders.

Labor inherited an unemployment rate of 9% from the Borbidge coalition Government. Labor came to Government some 15 months ago with a promise of jobs, jobs and more jobs. It is great to see that, in this Budget, Labor is projecting an unemployment rate of 7.75%—well below the 9% rate inherited from the Borbidge coalition Government.

May I say to my fellow members tonight that, as we strive towards our 5% unemployment target, we do so with a great deal of credence. We will work towards ensuring that we maximise regional economic development opportunities.

I would like to welcome the health aspects of the 1999-2000 Budget, particularly as they pertain to the Townsville/Thuringowa region. Some \$53m has been allocated to the new Douglas Hospital, which is being developed right next door to James Cook University. Construction will be completed in mid-2001 and the hospital will be opened at the end of that year. The hospital will be complemented by

an \$8m commitment to the James Cook University medical school. It has taken 26 years of hard fighting and campaigning to get this medical school. I feel very proud that north Queensland will now be served by a first-class medical school at James Cook University.

These health facilities are important to the whole of north Queensland. These facilities will work on indigenous health problems in rural and remote Queensland. The facilities will help to ensure that we are able to retain doctors in north Queensland. For far too long we have seen doctors being trained in the metropolitan capitals of Australia. This has meant that we have not been able to retain doctors in the north Queensland region. There are many reasons why the medical school will be a success. It will work in conjunction with the Douglas Hospital, the Cairns Hospital and the Mackay Hospital. We will have a first-class medical school for the whole of north Queensland.

I welcome the commitment that has been made by the State Government to roadworks in my region. I know that the national highway work is important. \$6m has been allocated to the Bluewater/Leichhardt Creek road construction project. This is a section of the Bruce Highway which was neglected by the coalition Government. It is a very important part of the Bruce Highway between Townsville and Ingham. This work has been long overdue.

The Government has allocated \$3.5m to the Garbutt to Upper Ross Road development. This is another key part of our national highway network. As was mentioned by the member for Charters Towers, \$5.5m has been allocated to the Herveys Range development road. This is an important road when one considers the exports and imports to and from the area, including the cattle industry.

I am very impressed with the work that the Beattie Government has undertaken with regard to rail infrastructure. The 1999-2000 Budget contains another commitment to rail infrastructure in the Townsville region, with \$4.5m being allocated to the Stuart rail servicing site Stage 2 development. All these infrastructure developments are coming to Townsville at a time when Townsville is poised to ensure that our growth and development will kick on. These developments will ensure that we maximise job opportunities in Townsville and Thuringowa. It is an exciting period of our development. We will ensure that we maximise the regional, social and economic opportunities that are going to come our way.

I welcome the number of capital works items that have been committed by the Beattie Government in this year's Budget. I would like to refer to some of the ongoing commitments that the Beattie Government has made to the Townsville electorate. In about a month's time we will see the completion of the Townsville Strand development. This is a \$28m development. It was constructed as a result of a partnership between the Beattie Labor Government and the Townsville City Council, which is ably led by Mayor Tony Mooney. The Beattie Labor Government and the Townsville Labor City Council has been a great partnership.

This Budget contains a \$4.3m allocation to the development of the Townsville Strand. On 24 October we will be very proud when the Premier of this State, Peter Beattie, comes to Townsville and opens the Strand development. It is a great development for Townsville. It is a signature development for Townsville. It is a great tourism development for Townsville. It will highlight the amenity of Townsville. The people of Townsville will be able to use the Strand for a great number of recreational opportunities.

The Budget allocates \$6m to the Nelly Bay development. I am very much aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the Nelly Bay area is an area which is very dear to your heart. The Nelly Bay development will be important to Magnetic Island.

The Budget also allocates the final \$4m to the Dairy Farmers Stadium. This stadium is very important to all north Queenslanders. We often find that people come from Brisbane to attend Cowboys matches. We see crowds of 31,000 people attending the stadium for matches between the Cowboys and the Broncos.

I applaud the Minister for Housing and Public Works for his commitment to the Garbutt urban renewal program. This program languished under the coalition Government. We saw dozens of houses disappear from the suburb of Garbutt. In this Budget we see a further \$3m allocated to assist with urban and community renewal in the suburb.

Another part of my electorate which has been ignored by coalition Governments is Palm Island. Palm Island has been particularly targeted for infrastructure renewal with a further \$4.6m being allocated to the Palm Island Hospital development, \$500,000 for a new ambulance station and \$3.5m to complete the Palm Island dam. These are all very important infrastructure projects for Palm Island. The people of Palm Island have worked incredibly hard over the last 12 months.

The \$50m allocated to the new regional centres program will provide assistance with social and economic infrastructure and facilities in large regional centres such as Townsville. It will focus on community infrastructure programs such as city centre rejuvenation. It is ideally suited as a funding base for the re-development of Townsville's CBD.

I conclude by saying that the Beattie Government recognises the dynamic climate in the Townsville/Thuringowa region. This State Budget is very much reflective of this in terms of its social, environmental and economic impacts in regard to the Townsville/Thuringowa region. I commend the Budget to the House.

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