



Speech by

Mr N. ROBERTS

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

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STATE BUDGET

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (3.56 p.m.): I want to make some comments on the Budget measures affecting my electorate and also on some recent improvements to facilities throughout the area. Firstly, I wish to make some general comments on the Budget. I want to commend the Government for ensuring that this Budget concentrates on the things that matter, in particular, having a major focus on jobs, education and health. Facilitating employment creation and growth is certainly a significant and necessary role for Government. This Budget does that in a number of ways, and I just want to mention two.

Firstly, there is the continuance of a major Capital Works Program—\$5.4 billion, which will help create around 41,000 jobs—and, secondly and very importantly, there is a focus on educational initiatives that are going to stimulate the innovation that we need to sustain employment growth, particularly in those areas where there is innovative use of new and emerging technologies. It is no longer sufficient for us to rely upon traditional industries and occupations to provide the jobs growth of the future. We need to be supporting and creating opportunities in those areas that make the best use of job creating technologies. To do that we need educated and highly skilled workers. That is why the focus in this Budget is on increasing the use of and knowledge about information technologies.

I want to commend the Government also for the Smart State initiatives that have been outlined in the Budget papers, particularly those that will focus on enhancing the knowledge about information technologies in our schools. It is important to note that that is not going to be at the expense of the basics, because the Smart State initiatives provide around \$114m, which is targeted specifically at literacy and numeracy programs. With respect to the use of technology as a generator of jobs, I just want to give an example of a local company in my electorate that is an illustration of what can be done.

SECURITY MAILING SERVICES

Recently the Premier visited my electorate to open the new premises of a company called Security Mailing Services, which is located at Northgate. Security Mailing Services is a smart business. It is a business which has used modern data communications to develop a major stake in database management and software development in the country to service the mailing needs of major Australian companies. In fact, 60% of the company's revenue comes from interstate business. It has grown from having 14 employees in 1989 to having 180 full-time and 50 part-time employees in 1999. The growth of that company's business and the growth in employment is essentially as a result of the innovative use of information and computer technology. Its employment continues to grow on a monthly basis. Security Mailing Services is a fine example of a company that is making the maximum use of new technologies to grow its business.

With that sort of success in mind, it is pleasing to acknowledge the Smart State initiatives in the Budget. Particularly, we have allocated \$40m over a four-year period with the aim of providing at least one computer for every five State school students. The maximising of our understanding and use of computer technology is essential if we are to develop the skills and knowledge required to make companies such as Security Mailing Services the success that they have been to date.

BANYO UNIVERSITY

I now turn to some local issues. I am sure that many members of this House are aware that the Australian Catholic University is on its way to Banyo—in fact, to the Banyo seminary site in my electorate. I am very pleased to see that this Budget provides the first payment of \$1.33m out of a total \$6m allocation that will be provided for this great initiative.

I am particularly proud of the level of support that the State Government has provided to this initiative. We are still awaiting a firm commitment from the Federal Government to ensure that the university can locate here as early as possible. With the current funding, the university is expected to open its doors at Banyo in 2004. With substantial Federal Government funding we are hoping that that can be brought forward to as early as 2002.

The relocation of the Catholic University to Banyo will be a major step towards establishing the Banyo/Nudgee community as the educational hub of north Brisbane. When it opens, as I said, hopefully as early as the year 2002, children will be able to attend kindergarten, preschool, primary school, high school and university all within the one suburb and within walking distance of their own homes. I think that is a great achievement for our community.

Mrs Rose: Everyone will want to live there.

Mr ROBERTS: Everyone will want to live in Banyo as a result of that. This is an achievement which I hope and in fact intend to exploit as much as possible for the benefit of my constituents.

LOCAL SCHOOLS

There have been some other improvements to local schools recently. I acknowledge and thank the Minister for Public Works, Robert Schwarten, and his department for their assistance in a number of initiatives at local schools. To give a few examples: the Nudgee State School has had some very much-needed drainage work completed near the old tennis court; the Banyo State High School has a new verandah as the old one was in a bad state of repair; the Northgate State School has new classroom furniture and security grills; the Boondall State School has a much-needed bicycle platform; the Zillmere State School has had a driveway entrance and set-down area fully sealed; and the Geebung State School has had some sandpits at both the preschool and the school refurbished. These are all small projects, but their completion has enabled the school community to reallocate their much-needed maintenance funds to other necessary works.

POLICE CITIZENS YOUTH CLUB

The other big project in my electorate is the construction of a Police Citizens Youth Club at Zillmere. Funding for this was allocated about six months ago under the Community Sport and Recreation Facilities Program. After a series of negotiations, that funding has now been approved for use by the Police Citizens Youth Club to construct and manage what will be a major recreational facility for north Brisbane. While it will be located at Zillmere, the facility will service the neighbouring suburbs of Boondall and Geebung in particular, neighbouring suburbs of Aspley and Taigum, and nearby communities on the other side of my electorate such as Banyo, Nudgee, Northgate and Virginia. This recreational facility will be close enough for youth in particular to derive significant benefits from it.

The State has put \$1m into this project. We also have a commitment from the Brisbane City Council of \$100,000. I am looking forward to working with PCYC, which has an excellent track record of managing recreational facilities throughout the State, and my local community to develop a very strong

partnership. We know that this facility will do great things not just for our local youth but also for the broader community.

HOUSING UPGRADES

There has been a recent announcement in terms of improvements to public housing in the Zillmere area. In fact, \$1.3m will be allocated this financial year for the upgrading of a significant number of homes. A total of 50 in the Zillmere area will be upgraded. Twenty have already been committed from last financial year and 30 additional homes will be included in that program this year. The upgrade program will include the provision of refurbished kitchens and bathrooms, roof sheeting and external painting. Of course, the works undertaken will depend on the particular needs of each individual home. The briefing I have had from the department is that the project will target a discrete block of houses within the suburb in order to avoid the piecemeal approach of having upgrades that do not enhance the suburb in the way that this program can. I am looking forward to the next 12 months, when we can work with the community to ensure that that program delivers the maximum benefits.

There is also a need in the Zillmere area to provide more seniors accommodation, particularly on the eastern side of the railway line. There are a lot of residents in that area who may wish to voluntarily relocate to smaller accommodation. Currently they may be in a home that has two or three bedrooms and a large yard that they are finding difficult to maintain. I have spoken with the department and am hopeful that at some stage—hopefully it will be this year, but if it is not then I will continue to push it—we will be able to achieve a suitable seniors development which will enable some of those people to relocate within the local area. That is an extremely important principle, because that is where their friends and their community networks are—their doctor, chemist and so on. That is the position I will be putting and discussing with the department.

In that regard, the department is undertaking consultation with the community. I know that to date it has met with an organisation which is well known to the Minister—that is, the Residents Action Group of Zillmere—in particular its president, Mr Jim Freilich. I am hoping to work closely with that organisation to ensure that these redevelopments proceed to the maximum benefit of the community.

COMMUNITY HALL—BANYO/NUDGE

Recently the Banyo community, with my assistance, commenced a program to raise funds to construct a community hall in Banyo. As our preferred site we are looking at the Banyo high school. Thankfully, as a result of the support of the Treasurer, we have been able to secure a commitment that 100% of the proceeds of the sale of some land which was purchased by the community back in the 1920s—it is situated behind the newly refurbished Anzac memorial in St Vincents Road—can be retained by the community, provided it is put back into the construction of a community hall. We will be working with the community over the next 12 months, two years or however long it takes to raise the necessary funds or be in a position to make application for dollar-for-dollar funding from either the Education Department or the Department of Sport.

NUNDAH BOTTLENECK

The Budget continues with funding for the Nundah bottleneck. It is very pleasing to see the signs going up and the work actually commencing. The real construction work will commence early next year. We will be working with the department to ensure that that goes as smoothly as possible.

NORTHGATE AMBULANCE

\$450,000 plus the price of land has been allocated by the Minister for Emergency Services for a new ambulance station at Northgate. I thank the Minister for that. Of course, she is more than welcome to come down and perform the opening.

Mrs Rose: I would be delighted.

Mr ROBERTS: We will make sure that the Minister gets an invitation. That relocation to Northgate will of course improve response times. Currently, the ambulance station is located next to Toombul Shoppingtown. There are some difficulties in terms of access to main thoroughfares. The relocation to Fraser Road in Northgate will improve response times and in fact improve the ambulance service in my community.

Additionally, a new fire station is being constructed at Hendra—not in my electorate, but it will, in fact, improve response times to Banyo, Nudgee, Northgate and other areas of my electorate when it is built. \$712,000 has been allocated for that. The current fire station is located in a difficult area in Nundah next to the railway line. The relocation to Hendra will provide it with better access to major arterial roads and main roads, which will improve the response times.

LOCAL RAILWAY STATIONS

The only other issues that I want to mention quickly are the improvements to some of the local railway stations. At Northgate, a lot of work is being undertaken at the moment. Local residents have just about had enough of it, but I am sure that they understand that, once the construction work is complete, it will deliver significant benefits for the area, particularly with the car parking. A lot of cars are parked on the street at the moment, and a lot of work is being undertaken at night. I know that Queensland Rail is working to ensure that that work is completed as quickly as possible.

New lifts will be installed at the Northgate railway station, which will be an aid to those people who have difficulty in climbing the high stairs. At the Sunshine railway station there will be a new platform and station building. There will also be a significant increase in the number of car parks. This will provide easier access to people, particularly in the Geebung area, and to the large industrial estate next to that railway station.

The Geebung railway station will receive a new footbridge and ramp access. There is an issue there which I have taken up with Queensland Rail. There are some difficulties in negotiating additional car parking spaces due to the encroachment of the third line which is being installed into the existing car park. I have asked Queensland Rail to give that matter priority to ensure that we can resolve negotiations with nearby land-holders to secure the parking space that will be needed. It is important that that car parking is made available there. Many of those people spend their money in the local shops. As I said, I have asked Queensland Rail to prioritise the resolution of that matter. As well, the Zillmere railway station is currently receiving new lifts. That will be well received by local residents.

Finally, in terms of the Banyo railway station—there is no actual work going on there at the moment, but I am putting in a bid for work. I recently made it clear to Queensland Rail that, with the relocation of the Australian Catholic University, there will be significant demand on the Banyo railway station. I have received an acknowledgment and at least a need to discuss that issue. Hopefully, I will be meeting with representatives from Queensland Rail over the next few weeks to discuss what improvements might be undertaken at the Banyo railway station. With those few comments, I commend the Budget to the House.
