



Speech by

## Mr BRUCE LAMING

### MEMBER FOR MOOLOOLAH

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Hansard 20 July 2000

#### BUDGET 2000

**Mr LAMING** (Mooloolah—LP) (5.39 p.m.): As far as the Sunshine Coast and the Mooloolah electorate are concerned, this Beattie Budget is a great disappointment. Where are the big projects necessary for the provision of infrastructure to lead the development of growth centres such as the Sunshine Coast? Where are the projects and increased services which would have created jobs in an area that suffers particularly from a lack of jobs? They are hardly to be seen. In the interests of fairness, I will acknowledge some of the Government's spending that affects my electorate. On paper, the proposed expenditure on the Caloundra and Nambour Hospitals looks attractive, but this is really carryover of projects put forward by the coalition and still not implemented by the Beattie Government. I note the proposed expenditure for the community mental health centre. I trust that the management of this facility will match the Minister's assurances.

Necessary expenditure in the growing education area includes works at Mountain Creek at both the primary school and the TAFE college. Mountain Creek is becoming an academic precinct. I appreciate the fact that I work well with Wayne Bradley from the TAFE college, Greg Peach from the high school and Randall Burow from the primary school. This area is one of the fastest growing areas of a rapidly growing region. There is no mention in the Budget of a new primary school in the Glenfields area either. I have written to the Minister about that. I remind him of the high enrolments at the Buderim and Mountain Creek Primary Schools.

**Mr Wells:** I am monitoring it very closely.

**Mr LAMING:** I appreciate the comments from the Minister that he is looking at that very closely. When populations rise, Governments must lead infrastructure needs, not follow them. I recall the situation that arose when it was proposed to build the Mountain Creek State High School. People who wanted to enrol their children at that school had to check if they could do that or if they had to use one of the many good private schools in the area. They did not know until after the cut-off time for enrolment at those alternative schools whether or not the Mountain Creek State High School was going to be built. I attended a Public Works Committee hearing to discuss that and put that viewpoint forward. I trust that that issue has been taken into account by Education Queensland.

Similarly, in the Emergency Services area, and I note the fact that the Minister is in the Chamber, there has been some expenditure to acknowledge our needs as a growing community. That acknowledgment includes a proposed relocated Buderim ambulance station and the completion of the new combined Maroochydore ambulance and fire station and a communications centre. I could hardly let the opportunity go by, however, without commenting that the increase in the fire levy in the Kawana area from \$67 to \$114.40 a year should only be implemented if it coincides with the provision of full-time officers at the Kawana station.

**Mr Robertson:** We will have this debate later.

**Mr LAMING:** We will. So much for the good news, but I suspect that Mooloolah is no worse off than other regional electorates. Let us look at what we should have got but did not. The most significant area of concern in many parts of the Sunshine Coast is roads and traffic. This is particularly the case in holiday areas such as the north and south coasts. As I have said on numerous occasions in the past and will say again, Governments have a responsibility to plan and implement vital infrastructure before traffic problems arise. No Government worthy of the name would allow a situation to arise where

hundreds of children could not fit into a school, and rightly so. But why should a Government knowingly allow a situation to arise where Main Roads cannot cater for a certain increase in vehicle traffic?

That is the situation in the central Sunshine Coast where the busiest road, the Nicklin Way, is rapidly choking up and there is no alternative north/south route. There is a role for local government to provide for local traffic, but it is a unique situation in that there is only one crossing. This is the sort of task that can only be taken on by the State Government. There is also an emerging situation on the Sunshine Motorway, which urgently needs four lanes north from the Buderim-Mooloolaba Road. Work also needs to be undertaken on the interchange between the motorway and Buderim-Mooloolaba Road. Why wait for our only arterial road north of the Mooloolah River to reach gridlock? There is also a considerable concern in the community with one access across the Mooloolah River in the case of an emergency in that area. Similarly, the Kawana arterial, which is languishing in its outyears, must be brought forward before the Nicklin Way grinds to a complete stop. That is what planning is all about. The process is there with the Roads Implementation Program, but the funds are not forthcoming. I again call for this project to be fast-tracked. I realise that it is expensive, but so are a number of other less urgent and less important projects.

I acknowledge the recent work on the northern end of the Nicklin Way. It was a real challenge to create a six lane road where there were previously four lanes. It is an extremely busy road. Up to 40,000 vehicles a year use that road. To try to do major works on that road was a challenge for the Main Roads Department and Connell Wagner. I compliment them on the fact that they were able to do that. There was dislocation and annoyance to neighbours, but it was done to the best of their ability. There were a number of consultation meetings with interest groups and neighbours. By and large, I believe that they have done their job well, and it is nearly completed. I commend them for that. It is a matter of priorities, and both of those roads deserve a higher priority.

I note with interest the Government's intention to increase police numbers by 357 across the State. I would like to think that this is a net increase and not a gross increase which does not take into account retirements and resignations, but we will see. Until the police staffing allocation model is rectified, the plight of the North Coast Region will remain iniquitous. If the Minister wants to rely on the model, can he explain why he continues to rely on a model that provides a police to population ratio in our region of one to 730 residents when the State average is one to 485? No, I am not advocating that any region be reduced to redress this iniquity. However, if the Minister is really funding a large net increase, much of that should be directed to those regions that are adversely affected by the model. However, this situation is not just affecting the North Coast Region.

Also, there is a huge need for water police facilities at Mooloolaba, particularly a better office which, in the medium term, should comprise a joint facility with the Queensland Transport Maritime Division and DPI Fisheries such as is the case at Cairns and the Gold Coast, where such joint facilities are working extremely well. I will be following up this issue in the near future. Also in the policing area, I have been requesting a police station at Buderim for some time. The Minister has acknowledged that this is under consideration, but I believe that it is now time for more serious consideration to be given to this project.

Although it could be claimed that it is not strictly a Budget consideration, I once again bring the situation of hoon drivers to the attention of the House. This problem is also not restricted to the Sunshine Coast. I have spoken about this issue with other members in settled areas of the State whose constituents are being driven mad by hoon drivers. This mindless activity by a selfish few causes danger on our roads and annoyance to the whole community. More police would help, but revised penalties might also be part of the answer. I am researching this situation and will return to this issue at a later date. While referring to traffic noise, I once again bring to the attention of the House, and more specifically the Minister for Transport, the issue of road noise on the small section of the Nicklin Way just south of the Mooloolah River. Noise tests in this area have long since proved that action should be taken by the department. I wrote to the Minister specifically on this subject prior to the Budget. Let us hope that it will be addressed.

I now turn briefly to the budget for Housing. Although there has been considerable chest beating in relation to the overall Budget—that it is for battlers, putting families first and jobs for the future—it is hard to identify significant initiatives. I note with interest that the public housing commencements figure of 500 dwellings is 280 less than the commencements in the last year of the coalition Government, which achieved 780. Not only that, this figure was only achieved by deferring 200 commencements from last year's target of 700. Whichever way one looks at it, it is either a decline in building activity by the department from 700 last year to 300 this year or a flat 500 for both years—well below the coalition's achievement.

The Minister's decision to hand over the responsibility for the maintenance of public housing to Q-Build is one over which we have long since agreed to disagree. The trial of this method in a couple of regions did not result in any formal assessment that I have been made aware of, so I can only assume that the decision had already been made. As I have said on a couple of occasions, if the trial was fair

dinkum, why not run a trial with Housing organising the maintenance of its own stock using Q-Build or private contractors, depending on the circumstances? I will be watching this development with interest, not only from the financial aspect but also from the viewpoint of service to tenants and the ease of administration through Housing area offices. I have had the opportunity to visit a number of community renewal programs and believe that well-planned and well-administered programs are important and effective. The member who spoke before me referred to the program at Garbutt. I have visited that area.

**Mr Bredhauer** interjected.

**Mr LAMING:** That is not true. We kept that program going right through the coalition's term in office.

Initial perusal of the Budget, however, indicates an underspend of \$5m last year. The increase of \$5.5m for this year's program means that some energetic input will be required to ensure that this target is met. This Government seems to be floundering in relation to the Community Housing Program. The 1999-2000 target of 221 dwellings was not achieved. Only 182 new dwellings were built. The apparent cut in this funding, from \$20.4m to \$17.9m, in 2000-01 would indicate an apparent inability to meet even last year's target this year. This must be very disappointing to those in that sector. In ATSI housing we see an underspend at \$33.1m of the budgeted \$37.1m in 1999-2000. The increased amount of \$41.4m budgeted for 2000-01 will require some good custodianship of the program, particularly prior to the onset of the wet season.

It is impossible not to relate underspending in these programs to lost job opportunities. The keynote of Labor's election pledge in 1998—jobs, jobs, jobs—can be seen for the rhetoric it really was. The coalition in office was presiding over the creation of about 60,000 jobs per year. This Government is barely managing half of that.

I know that percentages, participation rates and other statistics are thrown around in this place more as missiles than as pieces of information. I suggest that Government members and Ministers start talking to the many unemployed people out there and realise that they are not just statistics. The majority do not want welfare; they want jobs.

I did hear the Federal Labor spokesperson on employment, Cheryl Kernot, say that the Labor Party has now acknowledged that it supports the Work for the Dole program. It took a long, long time for the Labor Party to realise that it was a good program for unemployed people, to get them back into the work force and to give them a certain level of training and some prestige—that it really worked. Unemployed people appreciated the opportunity given to them, employers appreciated the opportunity given to these people and the vast majority of the general community supports this program. I note the silence of those on the other side of the House. Perhaps the State Labor Party is at last acknowledging the benefit of the Work for the Dole program. I anticipate that it will be supporting it at State level.

This is the third Beattie Budget that fails unemployed people and the people who might have employed them in small business. Let us hope that this Budget is the last from this Treasurer.

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