



Speech by

**GARY FENLON**

**MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES**

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Hansard 20 July 2000

### **BUDGET 2000**

**Mr FENLON** (Greenslopes—ALP) (3.20 p.m.): I rise to support the Appropriation Bill 2000. This is a Budget for people. It is a Budget that will directly assist all citizens in our south-eastern suburbs. It is a Budget which is prudent, responsible, balanced and is a no-frills Budget appropriate to these economic times. It is a balanced Budget having a net operating surplus of \$29m as part of aggregate general Government expenses of \$18.15 billion. This reflects an increase of 4.5% in general Government spending. It is also a Budget with balance. I use the word "balance" because balancing conflicting and competing demands effectively has been a hallmark of this Government under the Premiership of Peter Beattie. This Budget continues that success in striking a balance between some of the most difficult demands expressed by the various groups in our society. Peter Beattie has listened to the Queensland electorate carefully and has successfully recognised and reconciled many of these issues.

We have already seen the establishment of the South East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement and the State's cleaner energy policy, and that creates a sound balance between economic issues and job creation on the one hand and important environmental issues on the other hand. This Budget continues in that vein with seven key policy priorities which are a prime focus of this Budget. Those policy priorities are creating more jobs for Queenslanders, skilling Queensland as a Smart State, building Queensland regions, the achievement of safer and more supportive communities, fostering a better quality of life, valuing our environment and keeping a strong and stable Government leadership. It is a Budget which not only addresses the big picture issues such as attracting major projects to Queensland and getting our general economic setting right but also ensures that the fine detail of services in our suburbs is well addressed.

I now turn to some of the specific issues in our local suburbs before returning to some of the more general issues which will benefit the Greenslopes electorate. First, I am very pleased with the announcement made by the Government this week in relation to what has been known as the Coorparoo TAFE campus, including the Queen Alexandra Home Community Centre. Some \$9m will be invested in this campus with substantial benefits for all our local schools and business community and wider community as a result of this initiative. It will boost virtual schooling throughout Queensland and revitalise the heritage listed building at Coorparoo which has been the soul of the suburb. The Queen Alexandra Home Community Centre and adjacent buildings will be upgraded to house Education Queensland's AccessEd. By doing so, we have honoured an important State election promise to upgrade the historic building and adjacent buildings so that it becomes a community and educational precinct.

The site will accommodate three previously separate units of AccessEd into the one site. The \$9m to be spent at the campus will be a much-deserved injection into the local economy. With a significant number of workers employed during the construction stage and more than 100 new employees in the area when completed, local businesses will feel a very direct benefit. Importantly, the Education Minister and Premier have given an ironclad guarantee that public use of the Queen Alexandra Home Community Centre will continue, and a community advisory council will be established to liaise with the Government to ensure the best usage of this facility. The centre's location, which is practically in the centre of the Coorparoo State School campus, is a very appropriate site to be used as

a branch of Education Queensland, especially AccessEd, which is directly involved in the production of curriculum resources for schools.

I will encourage all our local schools to have direct involvement with these very exciting opportunities that will now be readily accessible to all members of our community. AccessEd is part of Education Queensland that improves student and teacher access to education resources and information by producing videos, CD-ROMs and distance education resources. AccessEd is leading the rest of Australia with its virtual schooling approaches. The Education Minister has assured me that the site and its history will be treasured by Education Queensland and regular attention will ensure that it is maintained in excellent condition. This new facility will help equip Education Queensland to deliver education programs into the 21st century.

I now return to other education issues. Education is a fundamentally important issue to the people of the Greenslopes electorate. We have seen a demographic transformation in our suburbs as older citizens move on and are replaced by young families with school-aged children. With this clear trend sweeping through our suburbs, we must be not only cognisant of the pressures of our schools and their facilities but also vigilant in providing high quality education that is going to effectively meet the needs of our young people for the future. That is why we have seen such substantial amounts of money spent in our primary schools through the Building Better Schools program to comprehensively upgrade all of our primary schools in recent years.

In this and future Budgets we will see an equally revolutionary change that will sweep through our secondary schools. We will see funds spent in our secondary schools, the likes of which have not been seen for generations. The refurbishment part of this program has been announced already for Camp Hill State High School and Holland Park State High School to the extent of \$700,000 for each of those schools. We will soon be announcing the exact level of funding for renewal of the Cavendish Road State High School and the Coorparoo Secondary College. Every student in our schools will be further assisted by the Government's objective to enhance learning outcomes through information technology. In this regard, we have exceeded our election commitment to put in place one computer to every 7.5 students by 2001. This target has already been achieved and we will now move to establish one computer for every five students. This will be achieved in secondary schools in 2001-02 and for Years 3 to 7 by 2003-04. To this end, \$5m will be allocated this year as part of a four-year \$40m program.

Other highlights of the \$171m increase on last year's Education budget include 800 new teachers, who will be employed to reduce class sizes and augment services for students with disabilities and behaviour management, and \$1.7m to be allocated for the New Basics program, with 12 schools commencing trials over the Budget period. Some \$114m was allocated for literary initiatives, bringing a total three-year program to \$336m. This program has already shown results in an improvement in the performance of Year 3 students' tests. Some \$16.3m has been earmarked this financial year for extra teachers and teacher aides to work with students with disabilities. This builds on the \$35m four-year Education For All initiatives which have already produced extra support for school students with disabilities. This Budget also delivers on a commitment to build on successes in behavioural management in schools with its \$17.5m program and in helping school students with risk of suspension or expulsion.

Health is a very important concern of all local residents. I am therefore very pleased with the Budget announcement that a new breast screening service will be established at Coorparoo. This will be one of two new breast screen centres established in Queensland as a result of this Budget at a cost of \$600,000 to address breast screening and cervical cancer screen services. This is part of a Statewide objective of reaching a target of screening 170,000 women this financial year. I welcome this very positive health initiative in this year's Budget. Breast cancer is the number one cause of cancer-related deaths for Queensland women. Early detection through screening is one of the best ways of preventing serious problems. This service will be welcomed by women in the area.

Local people will also benefit from the Statewide funding increases totalling \$1m for the medical aids subsidy scheme and the spectacle scheme. Health services available to our local community will be substantially boosted as all our metropolitan hospitals near completion of their rebuilding. I am very proud to see the end of this process as I was part of the Labor Government which commenced this major hospital rebuilding program in the early 1990s. The residents that I represent use the services of many of our metropolitan hospitals such as the Royal Children's Hospital, and indeed all of these hospitals have been subject to redevelopment.

The rebuilt Princess Alexandra Hospital will provide a staggering leap in the level of service delivery to local residents. I visited the hospital last Saturday for its open day and toured the new facility with the Health Minister and director-general. I was told that the new facility would be second to none. After inspecting it first-hand, this claim is certainly convincing. The old Princess Alexandra Hospital was well beyond its use-by date. The new hospital, with a total budget of \$322.3m, has a Budget allocation for further spending this year of \$55.47m.

In total, this has been a massive project. We are now more than halfway through the \$2.8 billion Statewide health building program. It is the largest construction program outside the Olympics. I was informed at the Princess Alexandra Hospital that the changeover from the old hospital to the new facilities will be completed by about March 2001. This is something that our entire community can look forward to in terms of providing high quality medical care for south side residents. However, it is not just hospital services that are important. Care of patients in their homes is also extremely important in our modern health-care system. That is why there will be \$12.7m more in Home and Community Care services, including an additional \$4.5m State contribution.

While as a State Government we must pursue major projects and attract many forms of investment and resultant job opportunities to Queensland in general and Brisbane in particular, the economy today still relies upon an undercurrent of Government sponsored capital works. These capital works are, in a sense, a motor to drive many other economic activities and interests in our regions, but they will obviously also provide a boost to the various relevant services they create. Specific capital works that will affect the Brisbane metropolitan area include \$156m for the South East Transit Project as part of an overall Main Roads budget of \$190.59m. This budget is for the construction of a busway between the Brisbane CBD and Eight Mile Plains and transit lanes between Mount Gravatt and Springwood.

Other capital works within the Brisbane area are worth approximately \$2 billion. They include: \$57.271m for the Roma Street development; \$19m for the inner-northern busway; \$62.4m for the South East Transit Project; \$4.709m for public transport; \$15.37m for the South Bank pedestrian and cycle bridge; \$4.983m for the millennium arts project; \$4.1m for the Cultural Centre precinct; \$9.9m for the Arts Queensland Empire Office Furniture building; \$1.54m for Queensland Performing Arts; \$42,000 for the Queensland Museum; and \$350,000 for the Queensland Art Gallery.

There is also \$246.796m total Health capital works spending in the Brisbane region; \$33.297m total Police capital works spending in the Brisbane region; \$81.095m total Education capital works spending in the Brisbane region; and \$114.695m total Housing capital works spending in the Brisbane region. This is part of a record capital works budget of \$5.29 billion, which will support over 61,000 full-time jobs across the State. Under this Budget 31,000 jobs will be created, making Queensland the jobs engine of the country. This Budget provides for \$90m to be invested in the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative, which is now a \$363m program funded until 2003. Jobs growth will be driven by \$10m for the community training partnerships program and \$8m for apprenticeships.

I turn now to issues relating to policing and crime. It was only in recent weeks that I toured the three principal police stations servicing the Greenslopes electorate with representatives of the Police Minister's office. I was keen to see what specific needs those stations had, but through the visits I was reminded again of the importance of keeping those particular stations intact in servicing the local communities to which they are so closely connected. We only have those police stations—they include Coorparoo, Camp Hill and Holland Park—because of the action taken by me and other local members who are part of this Government to turn around plans that had been put in place by the previous coalition Government to embark on a course of clustering those stations into one station distant from our suburbs and closing down those local stations. I affirm again here my complete opposition to clustering of police stations and the importance of keeping these specific local stations open and working closely with Neighbourhood Watch groups and other community agencies on a street-by-street, suburb-by-suburb basis.

This Budget allows this Government, under the Premiership of Peter Beattie, to tackle crime in Queensland's communities with a 5.4% boost to the Police Service budget. This will mean a net increase in police numbers of at least 325 officers, along with special commitments of \$20m for infrastructure development to speed up the 10-year capital works program and \$6m for additional security associated with the Olympic Games. This Government is continuing to support the expansion of DNA sampling and analysis with a commitment of \$1.9m and \$2.7m to continue the whole-of-Government speed management strategy. \$2.2m is allocated to continue providing operational training and equipment for police. Sixty additional civilian staff will meet general growth needs and replace police in non-operational positions.

The new innovation for Queensland of trialling electronic monitoring of prisoners on home detention is provided for by \$0.595m in this year's Budget and \$0.714m in the following Budget. Further additional funding under the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General will improve the court system for all participants, develop crime prevention and prison alternatives through programs such as the drug court and the state penalties enforcement registry and widen access to alternative dispute resolution services.

Supporting families and protecting children is also a major focus of this Budget. \$25m is allocated this year to continue to implement those Forde inquiry recommendations. This means the recruitment of a further 50 front-line child protection officers, in addition to the 77 front-line and 15 support staff recruited last year.

\$7.24m is also provided to support older Queenslanders. \$0.8m is set aside for a Statewide information support service for parents and families via the Internet and telephone. \$4.4m is allocated to community organisations for new and expanded early intervention and support services targeting families, vulnerable children and young people at risk. \$1.2m is allocated for an extended hours family and adolescent support service in Brisbane to help parents and teenagers in conflict or crisis. \$7.24m is allocated to ensure the growing number of older Queenslanders have access to their concessions. \$0.94m is allocated for new and upgraded support accommodation for homeless young people in high need areas. \$0.585m will give foster parents a 4% increase in foster care allowances to offset the impact of the Howard Government's goods and services tax.

A substantial injection of funds is also provided for disability services, which are doubled this year, bringing the total budget to \$18m. This will support more than 2,000 adults, families and children, fund more than 100 new and expanded services and provide more than 1,000 jobs. In particular, this increase will deliver \$12.4m in support for adults, including lifestyle support packages, post-school options and adults making the transition from institutional care.

\$2.3m is allocated to establish eight new flexible family support and respite services for people with a disability. \$1.8m is provided in support of children and families and \$1.6m is provided for community and infrastructure support for local area coordination initiatives, including a program to support people living in private hostels.

Our environment is also a winner under this Budget. It will create 180 new green jobs through our Better Parks program and up to 70 new jobs through our plan to create Queensland's own plastic recycling industry. A total of \$294m on environmental initiatives by all Government agencies represents a continuation of significant environmental reforms to protect natural heritage, improve quality of life and create long-term sustainable jobs. This commitment to environmental reform and sustainable economic development will underpin the many initiatives of this Government in pursuing State development.

Via a range of strategies under Deputy Premier Jim Elder's portfolio we will see a concerted drive to create more jobs and attract more business to Queensland. Some of the highlights of the strategy include: the Australia Trade Coast infrastructure development at the nearby Port of Brisbane with an injection of \$8.4m; e-commerce for the Smart State at \$3.3m; Queensland bio-industries assistance of \$1.6m; the South East Queensland Regional Forestry Agreement implementation at \$5m; sugar industry renewable energy of \$1.14m; Queensland Regional Food Processing Initiatives \$2m; and the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre at \$30m this year and \$102m the following year.

This is a fiscally responsible Budget. It will maintain Queensland's competitive tax environment. It will ensure that its level of service provision is sustainable by maintaining an overall general Government operating surplus. Borrowings and other financial arrangements will only be undertaken for capital investments, and only where these can be serviced within the overall operating surplus, consistent with maintaining our AAA credit rating. Our financial assets will cover all accruing and expected future liabilities of the general Government and we will at least maintain and seek to increase the State's total net worth.

I congratulate the Premier and the Treasurer on this highly responsible Budget. It is a Budget that addresses the social priorities and the need for economic growth. It is a good balance. I commend this Budget to the House.

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