



Speech by  
**Mrs NITA  
CUNNINGHAM**

**MEMBER FOR BUNDABERG**

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Hansard 20 July 2000

**BUDGET 2000**

**Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM** (Bundaberg— ALP) (1.04 a.m.): I have a great deal of pleasure in speaking to the Appropriation Bills and highlighting some of the benefits for my electorate of Bundaberg. This Budget, the third for the Beattie Labor Government, is indeed another sound Budget—a Budget for all Queenslanders, a Budget that delivers on the Government's key priorities and continues toward our 5% unemployment target with a range of measures to provide jobs and job security. It again offers unprecedented support for rural and regional Queensland and provides opportunities for us all to meet the challenges of the future.

My electorate of Bundaberg has achieved many positive gains. Its Base Hospital, which has been consistently under attack from the Opposition during the past two years, has not gained any capital works funding for new buildings in this Budget because its \$26.7m redevelopment is now complete and was officially opened just two months ago. In this regard, the Budget now focuses, and rightly so, on the other 187 public hospitals in Queensland, many of which are still waiting to have buildings replaced that should have been done 20 years ago.

Health continues to be a priority for this Government. This financial year, Queensland Health has a total estimated operating budget of \$3.8 billion, an increase of 3.4% over last year's expenditure, which includes major health expenditure of \$1.9 billion on acute inpatient services, a further \$898.5m for community health and non-inpatient services, mental health funding of \$363.6m and \$192.5m on public health services—a proud achievement. The Bundaberg Hospital will benefit from a Statewide increase of \$1.4m for the medical aids subsidy scheme, the spectacle scheme and the patient travel subsidy scheme, an additional \$2.5m for cancer treatment services, including radiotherapy, and an extra \$600,000 for breast and cervical cancer screening.

There is \$12.7m more this year for Home and Community Care services, including an additional \$4.5m State contribution for a service that is so very valuable in our community because of its many aged people. As in all hospitals, public and private, problems do arise from time to time at the Bundaberg Base Hospital. To the credit of this Government and the Minister and to the credit of our Base Hospital staff, these problems are addressed on a daily basis. Our services will continue to improve as we take advantage of the increased funds and new services being offered in this Budget.

However, headlining the funding initiatives for Bundaberg is an allocation of \$9.5m for the acquisition of land for water infrastructure in the Bundaberg district. Water is indeed the major issue in our district. The Government is aware of the desperate need for more water infrastructure. Although this infrastructure is not going to be built in my electorate of Bundaberg, the people of our district and region have been waiting for 20 years for another dam. They have become weary of waiting while nothing has happened. They are now relying on me and this Government to provide the water that is essential to allow for new industries, the expansion of existing industries and to provide jobs in an area that is plagued by one of the worst levels of unemployment in Australia.

I congratulate Minister Rod Welford on the very successful launch of the draft Burnett WAMP in Bundaberg just three weeks ago. After the public consultation period is complete, this WAMP will provide the blueprint for the planning of a secure, sustainable water system for Bundaberg. With more than 30 dams, weirs and barrages already on the Burnett, most people in Bundaberg appreciate the importance of getting it right this time. They appreciate that we have to go through the proper

processes to ensure that the life of the river is protected and that there continues to be a flow in that river to protect the environment and to protect our fishing industries.

This Budget also provides another \$920,000 out of a total of \$5.4m committed by this Government to the proposed food precinct and new Bundaberg industrial park. This proposal will take advantage of all our food industries—the enormous fruit and vegetable industry throughout the district, our fishing industry, soft drink manufacturers, our rum and other food industries—and has the potential to turn the negative closure of our abattoir by the previous Government in 1997, resulting in the loss of all 25 jobs, into a positive project that can be a hive of industry with the opportunity for hundreds of new jobs.

I strongly believe that our horticultural industries in Bundaberg have a great future. The establishment of this site gives Bundaberg the best opportunity it has had for a long time for industrial growth and new jobs.

However, the primary focus of this Budget is the people of Queensland. Whether it is the commitment of putting families first or the determination to provide jobs, the focus is clearly on our people. It is indeed a Budget for people.

This Budget delivers on our key policy priorities. It fosters continued strong economic growth for the State, particularly in our regions. It promotes stability and security. It delivers for our children through its commitment to education. It delivers for the health of Queenslanders. It delivers for Queensland families by providing jobs and support and, importantly, it does all of these things by managing responsibly and living within our means.

While the major priorities in Bundaberg are certainly water and jobs, health, education and housing are also high on the agenda, as are the environment and law and order. Education remains a key priority of this Government, and this year's Education budget provides for a net operating expenditure of \$3.4 billion. An additional \$16.3m per year is being provided to enhance the provision of services to students with disabilities. A further \$1.2m is allocated for school transport services for students with disabilities.

The Minister is well known for his support of tertiary education, and I commend him for his commitment to all levels of education in Queensland. In Bundaberg, \$357,806 has been budgeted to complete works at the Kepnock and Norville schools, and I am continuing discussions with the Minister regarding expenditure under Education Queensland's capital works program for this financial year, particularly in relation to capital projects at the Norville and South Bundaberg schools and at the Branyan Road State School, currently in the Burnett electorate.

**Mr Wells:** They will be fruitful discussions.

**Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM:** I thank the Minister.

The Bundaberg State High School's multimillion-dollar renewal program, which has previously been announced, could be started by early in the new year if detailed proposals can be completed by the school before August. This Bundaberg high school is the oldest secondary school in Bundaberg. It has a fine tradition to uphold. Many of its students have gone on to be leaders in the professions, commerce and industry, sport, music and the arts in Bundaberg, Queensland, Australia and the four corners of the world. This renewal program will preserve the school for many years to come.

Fundamental to ensuring a better quality of life for Queenslanders is the provision of safe, secure and affordable housing to those in need. This Budget continues to deliver on much-needed investment in public housing. \$87.9m is allocated for public housing construction and \$78.5m is allocated for public housing upgrading. In the Wide Bay/Burnett region, \$7.7m has been allocated for additional affordable housing upgrade and maintenance projects, including the provision of eight seniors units in Bundaberg for Bundaberg Legacy. Again, the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing is well known for his commitment to his portfolio, and this Budget will certainly make a huge difference to the quantity and quality of public housing throughout Queensland.

I am pleased to see the emphasis that is being placed on the preservation of the environment, with an increase in the operating budget for the Environmental Protection Agency, additional spending on the maintenance and enhancement of the State's national parks and the emphasis on the Beattie Government's commitment to vegetation management and the regional forestry agreement.

While rising interest rates and the impact of the GST are having a negative impact on investment decisions and small business confidence, they have also had a severe impact on those people in our communities who give their time freely to help others. On behalf of so many of these groups in Bundaberg, I thank this Government for recognising the invaluable services that charitable and non-profit organisations provide and for sharing the organisations' concern about the harsh burden the Federal Government's GST is placing on their activities. To overcome this, the Budget provides for all State Government grants paid to GST-registered charities and not-for-profit organisations to be increased by a full 10%. This is being welcomed by groups in Bundaberg and throughout Queensland.

This is indeed a Budget for the people. In putting families first, this Government recognises that support of families is of critical significance for the future of our society. The people and the families in Bundaberg will share in the benefits of the \$4.4m for community-based services to provide prevention, early intervention, family support and placement services and the \$2.9m to ensure that Queensland Government concessions—for example, rates, electricity and rail travel—are sustained for eligible pensioners. There is an additional \$9m to support people with disabilities, their carers and families. There is \$12.4m for additional adult lifestyle support packages and the numerous funding initiatives that are now available in Putting Families First, a policy that will increase funding for Education, Health and Families and Community Care.

In Bundaberg we will welcome the \$1.07m to be spent on roadworks this year, the \$70,000 for land to relocate an ambulance centre, the \$950,000 under the Regional Communities Program to build a PCYC, and we will welcome a share of the proposed 357 new police officers and the 1,000 new staff to be employed in Health across Queensland.

The new State Purchasing Policy will give our businesses and suppliers in Bundaberg a better opportunity to share in the \$5 billion spent each year by the State Government, and we will have a share of the \$450m to be invested in training programs in jobs for the future. This Government can feel very proud of the 82,000 jobs that have been created since it came to office in 1998.

The Beattie Government is providing the people of this State with strong, stable and accountable government. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to support a Budget that delivers a black bottom line, record capital works and no new taxes or charges and embraces the hallmarks of the Beattie Labor Government—vision, leadership and responsibility. As we embark upon a new millennium, it is these qualities that will secure Queensland's future prosperity and our quality of life. I congratulate the Treasurer on a fine Budget and finish by quoting Mr Rick Shepherd of Standard and Poor's, who said yesterday of Queensland's budgetary position—

"At the general Government level the balance sheet is just so strong it's quite unbelievable."

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