



Speech by

DESLEY BOYLE

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Hansard 21 June 2001

BUDGET DEBATE 2001

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (11.14 p.m.): I too am pleased to support the Appropriation Bills before the House and the budget of the second Beattie government. It is a very good budget indeed for Cairns and the far north; there is no doubt about that. However, unfortunately I am having difficulty getting the word out as a result of some misinformation that has given the wrong impression to many people in the far north.

A mistake was made in an article outlining the state budget in the *Cairns Post* on Wednesday of this week. The first paragraph of the article said that while the capital works spending for Cairns and the far north was quite substantial, it was over \$70 million less than had been spent on capital works in Cairns and the far north in last year's budget. That was, in fact, an error. It was an error easily made by a reporter who was, I suppose, surrounded by too many pieces of paper and too many books on the budget.

In fact, the situation is this: last year the capital works budget for the far north and the north west was \$545.6 million. This year, it is \$605.1 million for that large combined region. In the meantime, the budget just for the far-north region last year was \$437.1 million and this year it is \$471.8 million, which is in fact an increase of \$34.7 million. Therefore, the headline should have said that not only is it a big spend but it is also a big increase on last year's budget.

The other piece of misinformation was contained in the speech made by the member for Tablelands earlier this evening in the parliament. It seems that her attitude was very much that of not letting the facts get in the way of a good whinge. While she spoke about how most of the budget was being spent in south-east Queensland, she is in error. That is not so. In Budget Paper No. 2, under the section on the capital program, it is written that 58 per cent of capital expenditure is allocated outside of the Brisbane statistical division. Fifty-eight per cent is a clear majority not being spent in Brisbane.

In per capita terms, the member was also wrong. Expenditure on capital outlays is biggest in the Fitzroy and central-west region. The second-biggest per capita outlay is in the Wide Bay-Burnett region and the third biggest outlay is in the far-north and north-west regions. The figures tell the story. For Cairns and the far north this year the per capita spend is \$2,092, whereas in Brisbane it is \$1,352. Therefore, the member for Tablelands clearly has her figures wrong.

She also made the remark that the budget did not mention Golden Circle's plan for a fruit and vegetable processing operation in far-north Queensland. She is again in error. I refer her to the Minister for State Development's portfolio statement, on page 26, which states—

Ongoing assistance will be provided to Golden Circle with the planning for a major new North Queensland fruit and vegetable processing operation.

We have done very well in the city of Cairns, where approximately \$53 million is made available for capital works. Those include around \$3 million in education capital works spending, which is particularly welcome at the two older high schools in Cairns which need an upgrade of facilities. Both the Cairns State High School and the Trinity Bay State High School will have major new buildings within the next year. In the meantime, there is considerable Cooler Schools subsidy provided for Cairns West State School, Balaclava State School and Parramatta State School.

In relation to the arts, we are pleased to be planning to spend \$2.7 million on a Cairns centre of contemporary arts. We would hope to have this money spent before this budgetary year is over. In relation to primary industries, a northern fisheries centre is shortly to be constructed out in the Portsmouth area. It will also be completed within this financial year at a cost of some \$6.2 million.

The Families Department will be building a new diversionary centre. We have had only a temporary facility that is neither big enough nor properly designed. Instead, we will be seeing the construction of a \$1.3 million purpose-built state-of-the-art diversionary centre in Cairns.

\$5.1 million will be spent on the Cairns CBD revitalisation. Moneys will be spent on upgrading Shields Street and the city place to Spence Street. A contribution will also be made to the new waterfront plaza that will be part of the city port works, which will also get under way to the tune of some \$36 million over this next year. I am pleased to say that \$200,000 will be spent on the design and construction of stage 1 of the Woree industrial estate.

The public housing capital works program for the electorate of Cairns is almost \$5 million. Of this, some \$3 million will be spent on urban renewal programs, particularly in the large public housing area of Manoora. That, of course, is matched by continuing funding for community renewal. \$1.1 million over this next financial year will be spent. The program of urban and community renewal in Manoora has been tremendously successful. Already we have seen a rise in community confidence; improvement in training, education and employment; and a drop in youth crime in the area.

I am also pleased to say that we have already turned the first sod in the construction of a new state government office building in the city of Cairns. \$14.5 million will be spent on that project within this budget. The new office block will provide around 4,500 square metres of net lettable area over four levels. The project is expected to be completed in mid-2002 and along the way will generate 240 jobs. I am pleased to say that the building is locally designed and will become home for the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Natural Resources and Mines and the Office of Public Prosecutions.

My compliments must also go to the Minister for Transport who, in all divisions of his budget, has taken account of the needs of Cairns and the far north. In the sea port, as I mentioned earlier, we have the wonderful roll-out of the city port project to the tune of \$35.7 million. It will make such a difference to the sea edge of the city. As the saying in Cairns goes, it will change forever the face of Cairns.

In the area of public transport, I am pleased to say that \$300,000 will be spent on a major refurbishment of the Cairns customer service centre. There will be \$250,000 spent on wheelchair accessible bus upgrades. The disability sector particularly will be pleased after having worked hard to communicate the need for this to those in Brisbane.

As far as the sea port is concerned, \$2.4 million will be spent on infrastructure improvements and another \$1.1 million will be spent on general purchases of plant, equipment and information technology upgrades at the Cairns Port Authority.

Rail, of course, is another exciting story. The completion of the Cairns tilt train project draws nearer all the time. Over this next year we will spend \$46 million on the construction of a suitable train and \$105 million for track renewal works between Rockhampton and Cairns.

We have also done well in the area of Main Roads. \$1.3 million will be spent on resealing the Captain Cook Highway in the city area. Those in the western suburbs of Cairns will be very pleased with the \$572,000 allocated for resealing work on Anderson Street. Additionally, there is money to be spent on further work for Sheridan Street and also for some bikeways. This, too, will be welcomed by the enthusiastic children as well as commuters who are frequent bicycle riders in the city area.

I am also pleased to see the increase of some \$36.1 million in disability funding. It does support the promises—the commitments—made in our last term as well as at the time of the last election. That will include such things as an extra \$6.3 million for individualised packages, increasing the total number of adults who have received support under this program to over 1,000. It will include support for approximately 100 additional families with children with a disability through individualised support as well as full operation of nine new family support and respite services across the state of Queensland to provide support for 400 families.

I am particularly pleased to recognise the good work done by the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy Development in Cairns, led very ably by the manager, Olive Monkerud. Her good work has been supported by an increase of 17.9 per cent in the budget for DATSIPD. That, too, will be good news for indigenous people living not only in the Cairns area but throughout the far north.

Cairns business will be pleased to hear of the \$21.5 million allocated to enhance water, sewerage and housing subdivisions in the Torres Strait as well as \$15.3 million matched by the Commonwealth for other infrastructure funding in the Torres Strait. While that will provide lots of local

jobs and additional training opportunities for people in the Torres Strait, many Cairns construction businesses will probably also benefit in gaining the contracts to oversee that work.

It is really important, too, to congratulate the Minister for State Development on the refunding of the Cairns Regional Economic Development Corporation consisting of \$250,000 each year for the next four years. That will give them some security to continue the fine work that they have started in clustering, in regional business development and in expansion of new business initiatives in the Cairns area.

Tourism funding to the 14 regional tourism organisations has been increased. Tourism Tropical North Queensland will receive an additional \$35,714 this year. Of course, tourism is the lifeblood of far-north Queensland.

I am aware that other honourable members in this House would prefer to go to bed than hear the wonderful news for Cairns, but it is indeed important for the people of Cairns that this is put on the record.

My congratulations go to the new Minister for Innovation and Information Economy on his granting of \$1 million for IT&T scholarships in multimedia. Information technology services is one of the key areas of economic diversification for the far north. Those scholarships will be particularly welcomed by so many young people who would love the opportunity to break into that field.

The employment programs are excellent programs, and I have no doubt that we will achieve our target of an extra 28,000 jobs over the next three years. In particular I would like to recognise the tremendous funds available now through the specific programs targeting mature age workers and migrants as well as long-term unemployed people.

In the suburbs of Cairns the budget portfolio that matters most of all is the Health budget, and there is extra good news in the Health budget. Not only do we expect to complete, for some \$12.5 million, the redevelopment of the Cairns Base Hospital, not only have we allocated over \$1 million for a new plane for the Royal Flying Doctor Service to support services right across the north Queensland region, but there are also additional funds to reduce elective surgery waiting lists and to reduce waiting lists for oral health services. I suspect that all the millions, notwithstanding this news, will be very well received in the suburbs of Cairns.

I must finish tonight by congratulating and thanking those who work for the public sector in Cairns offices for all their hard work. It is through their hard work, through their information, through their support in the public sector that I am able to do my job. We in Cairns and the far north have scored very well this year. My thanks go to those people. I look forward to working closely with them to implement this fine budget for Cairns.
