



Speech by

Hon. JUDY SPENCE

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

Hansard 3 May 2001

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services) (2.50 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to speak in the Address in Reply debate in the 50th Parliament. This is my 12th year as a member of parliament and it is the fifth occasion on which I have acknowledged the support that I have received from the people of the electorate of Mount Gravatt.

As I look around this chamber, I think that this is undoubtedly going to be the best parliament that I have been a member of in the past 12 years. I look around at the 89 members and note that we have 66 Labor members. That will undoubtedly make it a superb parliament. Of course, it is a parliament that for the first time is starting to fill up with women. I am proud to be able to say that women members in the Labor Party constitute 41 per cent of its total number. Certainly one of my motivations in seeking to be elected to parliament was to advance the cause of women. It gives me a great deal of satisfaction to see that, over the past 12 years, we have steadily increased the number of women in this place with each election.

Mr Reeves: It must be due to your good work as minister for women last parliament.

Ms SPENCE: I thank the member for Mansfield very much. I acknowledge that interjection.

Not only have we come a long way in this parliament; we have come a long way in the electorate of Mount Gravatt as well. It gives me satisfaction to look back at some of the achievements of the past few years, particularly during the term of the Beattie government. The Secondary Schools Renewal Program is achieving much in my electorate. It has brought large amounts of money to many of the high schools in the Mount Gravatt electorate. We have seen over \$3 million committed to the refurbishment of MacGregor State High School. Over \$3 million has been committed to the refurbishment of the Sunnybank State High School. \$750,000 has been committed to the Mount Gravatt State High School. That school will be building a new hall, which is something that I have been trying to help them achieve over the past few years. I am pleased that the Beattie government has provided the money so that that school—which is one of Queensland's oldest and most distinguished high schools—can finally get a hall.

Also, Cavendish Road State High School has received \$5.8 million for major refurbishment work. I was pleased to deliver a new amenities building, painting and refurbishment recently at Warrigal Road State School and painting and new pathways to Robertson State School. We have also just had \$100,000 committed for the refurbishment of MacGregor State School's administration block—something that was long overdue.

Having been a high school teacher before entering this place, I believe that education is one of the most important issues in the electorate. The people of Queensland have undoubtedly given the Beattie Labor government a tick with respect to the work that we are doing in our state schools. This work involves not just the refurbishment of schools and the building of new schools throughout the state but also attention to issues of importance such as the curriculum, discipline and ensuring that we have good teachers in our schools.

Having seen how hard the teachers in my electorate work, I have to say that I was very pleased that the teachers received a pay rise last year. It is not a nine to three job. They take their job very seriously, and in many respects it is getting more difficult year by year as we impose more

responsibilities on our teachers. Teachers tell me that it is undoubtedly more challenging in the classroom these days. Teachers certainly deserve that pay rise. I believe that, if we want to ensure that quality people enter that profession in the future, we have to pay them what they are worth.

I now move on to other significant achievements of the past few years in the Mount Gravatt electorate. Most recently, of course, we saw the opening of the new busway, which stretches from Eight Mile Plains to the city. I have had the good fortune to travel on that busway twice now and I am very impressed. It now takes only 16 minutes to get from Garden City to the city. Although I cannot travel on that busway every day to come to work for many reasons, as I sit there in the traffic on the South East Freeway in the morning—and sometimes it takes me an hour to get into the city using that freeway—I think to myself that the busway will be a huge improvement for people living in the suburbs of the Mount Gravatt electorate.

I thank the residents of the Mount Gravatt electorate who live along the busway because they have had to put up with three years of disruption to their homes and lifestyle while this busway was being built. Some have been affected more than others, but I believe that Main Roads and Queensland Transport have done a very good job in consulting and listening to the concerns of those residents who live along the busway and trying to improve their situation while it was being constructed. Generally those residents have been very tolerant and very understanding and have seen that they would have to experience some pain during the construction phase for the greater good, which was the improvement of public transport in this city. I would personally like to put on the public record my thanks to all those residents for their patience over the past three years.

Another great achievement of the past term of the Beattie government was its support for the construction of a new environmental centre built at Griffith University. This is the Toohey Forest Environmental Centre. Although initially a project inspired by the university and the Toohey Forest Protection Society, it is a project that has had a lot of support from this state government. We contributed a significant amount of money in capital works to see that the centre was built. Now we have contributed two full-time teachers to that centre. Even though the centre is located in the grounds of Griffith University, it is not for the exclusive use of the university. Indeed, our local children on the south side of Brisbane will be able to go to the centre and learn about the environment first-hand. I think it will be a very important resource for environment education in the future.

I would also like to talk about something exciting that is going to occur soon in the Mount Gravatt electorate, and that is the building of the new state netball centre on Klumpp Road. A youth centre will also be built as part of that project. The member for Mansfield and I worked very hard during the past term of the government to lobby various ministers, particularly the Minister for Sport, to ensure that funding was committed to this particular project. While we hear a lot about Lang Park and the cost of that particular facility, I would like to remind all members that this state government has been the first state government in Queensland to devote significant amounts of money to netball, which we know is a most important and popular sport in this state.

The netball centre that already exists on Klumpp Road was built by the Beattie Labor government in conjunction with the Brisbane City Council. This new centre will be an addition to that and will mean that for the first time Queensland Netball will have its own state facility where the national league will be played and where netball will be televised. I am looking forward to working with Queensland Netball and the Brisbane City Council over the next few years in the delivery of this particular project.

Another achievement during the last term was the delivery of a new police beat shopfront to Garden City. The Goss government delivered a police beat shopfront to the Sunnybank Shopping Centre, one of the first police beats in Queensland. They have become more popular over the years because they are effective. The new police beat at Garden City has played an important role in ensuring that crime is reduced in that large shopping centre. From speaking with residents in my electorate I know that it has made a difference to the level of safety they feel when shopping at Garden City.

The Mount Gravatt electorate changed significantly as a result of the 2001 state election. It lost the suburbs of Holland Park and Holland Park West. I was very sad to lose those 4,000 constituents because I had grown up in those suburbs and attended primary school at Marshall Road State School. It was with a degree of sadness that I had to accept the decision of the independent umpire and pass those constituents and those suburbs on to my colleague the member for Greenslopes, although I am sure he will do a good job of representing those suburbs in the years to come.

The Mount Gravatt electorate gained the new suburbs of Sunnybank, Runcorn, parts of Eight Mile Plains and new areas of Macgregor. I look forward to getting to know those 8,000-odd new constituents over the years to come. I feel very comfortable with the fact that the electorate has been expanded to the south, because I live in that part of the electorate and my children go to Warrigal Road State School and play in local sporting clubs located in these new suburbs such as Rugby Union at Sunnybank and soccer at Souths United.

One of the strengths of the Mount Gravatt electorate is that it has a community which is actively engaged in social capital. It has many community organisations made up of volunteers who give enormous amounts of time to improving the amenity and the quality of community life in the Mount Gravatt electorate. It has two very good neighbourhood centres, the Mount Gravatt Neighbourhood Centre and the Sunnybank Neighbourhood Centre, which are well staffed with committed people and which receive significant support from the state government. It has a number of sporting groups made up of dedicated volunteers, particularly those who run the enormous amount of youth sport in the area. It also contains churches which represent just about every denomination. It has a number of seniors groups running social activities and advocacy on behalf of the seniors in the area. As the Minister for Families, I have responsibility for International Year of the Volunteer money allocated by the state government. I look forward to honouring the volunteers in my electorate later this year when those worthy people who do so much work in our community are presented with medals and certificates.

It is appropriate during the Address in Reply debate to thank a number of people. I particularly thank my campaign manager, Mike Nichols, and the Mount Gravatt and Robertson/MacGregor branches of the Labor Party, both of whom worked tirelessly during the campaign to ensure a Labor victory in the seat of Mount Gravatt. I also acknowledge the hard work that the new member for Springwood, Barbara Stone, who was previously my electorate officer, has done on my behalf over the last three years. Electorate officers are even more important to ministers than they are to backbenchers, because ministers are often not in their electorates on a daily basis. I thank Barbara for the hard work she has done in the community.

I also place on record my thanks to my husband, Heinz, and my children, Lucas and Jack. Jack was not born when I entered parliament 12 years ago but turns 11 next month. He knows nothing other than to have a mother who is a working member of parliament. I am pleased to report that both he and Lucas have so far turned out to be very normal and happy children. It is possible to do both jobs, however it would not be possible to do it without the support of a partner. I particularly acknowledge the great assistance I get from my husband, Heinz. I also thank my mother, Gwen, who worked very hard on my campaign.

It is moments like this that make one reflect on why the Beattie government won office for a second term. Indeed, the support of Queenslanders was overwhelming. I now hold the electorate of Mount Gravatt by 64.5 per cent, the biggest Labor victory ever seen in this seat. When I was elected to parliament 12 years ago I was 32 years old and the Mount Gravatt electorate had not been a Labor electorate for all that time—that is, 32 years. It is now truly a Labor electorate. Part of the reason for that is that Queensland is more comfortable with Labor governments and has seen how good Labor governments, such as the Beattie government, genuinely listen to Queenslanders, deliver good service and provide a government they can be proud of.

It is a custom of mine to have my speech in the Address in Reply debate printed and delivered to my constituents in Mount Gravatt. With that in mind, I finally acknowledge their support and say to them that I look forward to working with them during the next three years and delivering outcomes to them on issues of importance.
