



Speech by

KAREN STRUTHERS

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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BUDGET DEBATE 2001

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (12.31 p.m.): To judge this budget, all of us as honourable members need to put ourselves in the shoes of our constituents, not simply in our 'party' shoes. The taxpaying public will be looking at the budget to see if the government has managed the books well and to see if essential services such as health, education and police have been well supported. Overall, they will be judging whether their hard-earned dollars have been well spent. In the shoes of my fellow taxpayers I can confidently give this budget a tick on all three areas. In my 'party' shoes I can also walk tall as a member of this Beattie Labor government, knowing that this budget is both fair and economically sound. Our government has continued to set the economic levers to keep us on track for ongoing economic growth throughout Queensland.

I therefore rise to support these appropriation bills and to congratulate the Treasurer, the Honourable Terry Mackenroth, on his first budget. I also commend members of the Cabinet Budget Review Committee for their part in delivering improved services and a solid foundation for economic growth in Queensland.

I have sat through a few budgets now and I sat through the budget reply from the Leader of the Opposition today. He has talked about vision. He has criticised us for not having vision. I am sure it is disappointing for him to see that his vision is not supported by his own team. This is the main game here today—the budget reply speech from the Leader of the Opposition. He has one colleague sitting next to him now. There were two or three of them alongside him five minutes ago. It is not good enough. If I were the leader of that team I would be very disappointed about my vision. I would be worried that if I did not even have my own team's support, then how could I expect the public of Queensland to give me their backing? The public of Queensland deserve a healthy democracy. They deserve a healthy opposition. Sadly, they do not have it.

Mr Wilson: Where are they?

Ms STRUTHERS: That is right. Where are they?

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Ms STRUTHERS: That is right. In judging this budget I dug deep into past budget papers. I looked at the final years of the National Party, 1988 and 1989, to assess the progress that has been made in the past decade or so, predominantly a Labor era in Queensland politics. Guess what I found? It would come as no surprise to most of us that I found evidence of severe neglect.

Let us look at employment and training programs. In the appropriation for 1987-88—Joh's last stand as Premier—employment initiatives and promotion of training totalled a disgraceful \$2.17 million.

Mr Mickel: The worst in Australia.

Ms STRUTHERS: That is right, the worst in Australia. The level of TAFE funding and number of TAFE places available to people were the worst in Australia. The actual expended for that year was even lower, at \$1.8 million. I scanned the budget papers and saw that the allocation required for the 1988-89 year was blank. There was no money there at all!

In the pre-1989 era the Queensland National Party government was failing to train our young people and workforce for the rapidly changing global economy. The National Party government was failing to give people out of work a leg up into the workforce. Joh boasted about the number of cranes on the Brisbane skyline as a sign of progress, but he was doing little to enhance the brains and skills of our workforce. This was being left to the initiative of individuals and industries.

In comparison with the 1980s, in our 2000-01 budget employment initiatives total \$107 million, and vocational education, training and youth totals \$724.5 million. State government training and employment initiatives of this magnitude are an essential foundation for a strong and sustainable economy. One of the first actions of the Howard federal government was to rip \$1.2 billion from labour market programs. This is the sort of action we get from conservative governments. They talk about caring about young people and caring about jobs, but their actions do not match their rhetoric.

I do not raise this comparison with the 1980s simply to have a go at Joh and the National Party—it is a past era—but to draw attention to the fact that the National Party government was failing its own constituency—failing its own mates—and continues to do so. The conservatives, the so-called natural friends of business and the rural sector, were letting their mates down then and they continue to do so. This budget and the previous Labor budgets of the past decade demonstrate without doubt that Labor has been the champion of industry and the champion of the bush in Queensland. The Labor Party is a party and a government for all people, and will continue to be for a long time in Queensland.

I have proudly boasted that the Algester electorate is an economic hub of south-east Queensland. Industries in my area and around the state can draw on a highly skilled workforce because the training sector, including TAFE, has been well supported by Labor governments during the past decade. Young people in my area can look forward to school-to-work pathways, including vocational training in schools. It is our Labor government that has made a genuine attempt in this and previous budgets to create more apprenticeships and traineeships.

The Honourable Robert Swarten is committed to apprenticeships for young men and women in Q-Build, while the conservatives want to sell off Q-Build. He and other ministers are committed to jobs and apprenticeships for young indigenous people. The Department of Employment and Training, under the direction of the Honourable Matt Foley, is instigating innovative youth employment programs, programs for mature age people and the worker assistance program for workers displaced due to the closure of industries in regional and metropolitan centres. These are the sorts of programs Labor gives priority to.

The Algester electorate is generally well serviced, but I know from getting around my area that many locals have been calling for improvements to some of our schools, from basics such as new toilet blocks at Algester and Forest Lake to new computers and buildings; more police and less crime and graffiti; more job opportunities; quicker access to the QE II dental clinic; road improvements; and decisive action to fix the drug problem. These are the sorts of issues common in other parts of the state.

Although there is always more work to be done and more services needed, I can proudly report good news to my local residents. This budget secures the future for the new P-12 Calamvale Community College, with an initial allocation of \$16 million. The Forest Lake State School will also receive \$1.226 million for a new double-storey general learning area block, and the new Forest Lake State High School is on track, with a \$12.331 million allocation. Locals will also be encouraged to know that funds have been allocated for the new Calamvale police station. On the health front, the QE II Public Dental Clinic will share in the additional \$5 million to reduce wait times for public dental services—

Mr Mickel interjected.

Ms STRUTHERS: It is a great TAFE facility in Browns Plains that the member for Logan has. I assure other members of that. There is also a replacement ambulance station to be built at Durack.

As members would know, the Algester electorate is not only a significant economic hub in south-east Queensland, it is also an important transport hub. While this activity keeps our area on the move, it also has the consequence of adding traffic congestion to our local area. This budget brings welcome news with the allocation of \$1.8 million to complete the asphalt resurfacing of Mount Lindesay Arterial Road between Compton Road and the Browns Plains interchange. I will also continue to work on constructive solutions to congestion and heavy vehicle use of local roads, with trouble spots being Forest Lake Boulevard, Johnson Road and Ritchie Road at Pallara.

Mr Mackenroth: The opposition are so interested in this parliament. There's not one of them left!

Ms STRUTHERS: That is right. I remind the Queensland public that there are hardly any bodies on the opposition side today during this budget reply debate. That is how much they care about the budget of this state and the vision for this state.

On the jobs front, the expansion of the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle jobs program and the launch of the new programs targeting mature-aged people will be a great benefit in my area. The suburbs of Calamvale and Parkinson in my electorate are growing rapidly. It is encouraging for me as the state member to know that service infrastructure is keeping pace with this population growth.

I want to pay tribute to the Calamvale Community College reference group members, including parents, local residents such as Bruce Burns, and Education Queensland staff—Sue Bremner, Neil McDonald, Keith Cordwell, Paul Kidston, Ken Walker and others—who have devoted a great deal of time and energy to design and plan for the new school. The foundation students, parents and staff will be very proud of their new school. Those who view private schools as being of a higher standard than public schools will need to rethink their position, particularly when they see the Calamvale Community College in action. I also want to commend Jan Kazakoff and staff of Algester State School for participating constructively.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Ms STRUTHERS: Yes, Jan is great. The member for Logan had her previously in his area. They are participating constructively in the development of their soon-to-be neighbour, the Calamvale Community College. The Algester school community, though, are worried that the emergence of a new state-of-the-art school in their local patch will render their school a poor cousin to the new kid on the block. This is a valid concern. Most members have done the loo tour of their schools. Algester has a block in a poor state of repair. Other problems with that school need attention. The Algester school community will need the support of Education Queensland to differentiate itself from its new neighbour and maintain its outstanding reputation for quality teaching and education.

When operational, the new Calamvale Police Station will increase the capacity of our community to clean up and prevent crime. Some interested locals, though, have sought my support to ensure that the new station secures its own additional policing resources; that it not be a case of robbing Peter—the Acacia Ridge Police Station—to pay Paul. I will continue to put these concerns forward to the Police Minister.

While on the crime-fighting front, I would like to give recognition to Noel Ryan and his Sunnybank Hills Neighbourhood Watch, Vyv Dance and the Forestdale Neighbourhood Watch, and the Parkinson and Acacia Ridge groups. These voluntary community groups are very effective in working with police to deal with crime, and importantly they help to build a strong local community spirit and camaraderie.

I am very proud to be the member for Algester. I give my commitment that I will continue to push for a fair share of future budgets to make our local community even better and to ensure that our community continues to be an economic hub of south-east Queensland.
