



Speech by

## KERRY SHINE

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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Hansard 22 June 2001

### BUDGET DEBATE 2001

**Mr SHINE** (Toowoomba North—ALP) (2.46 p.m.): At the outset, I want to make a comment or two in relation to the remarks made by the member for Southern Downs in his contribution to the debate. He challenged the fact that Labor had delivered on its election promises. I ask the House to consider this: what would have happened if the National Party had been elected and had attempted to deliver on its promises? Members will recall that it promised at least \$1.7 billion in recurrent expenditure alone, as well as billions of dollars in capital expenditure. The result would have been bankruptcy. He also raised the need for a District Court judge in Toowoomba. I join with him in asking the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice to look at that issue. Clearly, the need for a judge must be balanced by court delays and the workload. There is no point in asking for a judge just for the sake of it. It has to be able to be justified.

It is a privilege for me to speak today as the new Labor representative for the seat of Toowoomba North in debate on the appropriation bills, the first budget of the Treasurer, Terry Mackenroth, who is now also Acting Premier. I congratulate him on its quality, especially as it relates to the delivery of just outcomes, particularly with respect to the areas of concern covered by portfolios which affect most Queenslanders—families, disabilities, education and health.

This budget provides for the expenditure of over \$5 billion with respect to capital works. As a member for one of Queensland's major regional centres, it was particularly pleasing to know that over 58 per cent of the capital works budget is to be spent in centres outside Brisbane. The budget is responsible, providing for a cash surplus of \$400 million, and predicts four per cent growth, as opposed to 3.75 per cent federally, and two per cent growth in the rate of employment. About 27 per cent of budget expenditure relates to capital works, well above the level of expenditure in the same area by other states. In furtherance of its commitment to social justice, increases in expenditure in some portfolios are as follows: health, 6.5 per cent; education, nine per cent; disability services, 11.6 per cent; and, families, 12 per cent.

At the same time, this is a budget crafted to encourage jobs by, for example, again lowering payroll tax from 4.9 per cent to 4.8 per cent. This, together with the level of workers compensation insurance premiums being lowered, maintains Queensland's enviable status as the low-tax state as well as the Smart State. Queensland business pays the lowest payroll tax with the lowest threshold and also pays the lowest rate of workers compensation insurance premium throughout Australia. These inducements to business should continue to promote investment in Queensland, which in turn leads to the provision of jobs. The part of the budget which quite justifiably has received the most accolades is that which established a fund of \$100 million for research and development, ensuring the continuation of our Smart State reputation.

I intend now to mention some of the highlights of the budget as they have local relevance. This budget continues the beneficial events occurring in and around the Toowoomba North electorate and our region generally. Confirmation of the announcement made at the community cabinet meeting held at Highfields earlier this month of the new Toowoomba police station appears. An amount of \$3.7 million towards replacing the police station, watch-house, district headquarters and regional office has been allotted. The full cost will be in excess of \$10 million.

Honourable members will recall my calling in this House for the replacement of the existing police station. It has been my top priority since the 17 February election, and I am elated that the work done, including repeated representations to the Police Minister, has paid off. The construction of the police station will provide an initial boost to the local building industry and jobs, but the long-term benefits to the Toowoomba and regional community will be immense. It would be reasonable to expect increases in the levels of both efficiency and morale as a result of eventually having all of the functions together in a modern, well-equipped and comfortable complex.

An announcement relating to a Suncorp-Metway call centre was also made at the community cabinet meeting. This represents great news for Toowoomba. The call centre will provide for some 300 jobs initially. I understand, however, that there are reasonable prospects for this number to increase to 500, consequent upon the Suncorp-Metway takeover of the insurance functions of AMP. The credit for the call centre coming to Queensland can quite properly be attributed to the government's efforts via the Department of State Development. It is yet another example of the Beattie government's proactive policy of encouraging new job-creating industry to Queensland. That Toowoomba was chosen over other places in Queensland is a triumph for our mayor, Councillor Di Thorley, who, together with the Department of State Development, secured the centre to Toowoomba. Toowoomba is indeed fortunate to have a mayor whose immense talent is only matched by her passion and powers of persuasion.

In the budget it was announced that an amount of \$60,000 will be provided for the purchase of land for a new fire station at Highfields. My door-knocking activities prior to the election and my community activities since have reinforced in my mind the strong demand by Highfields, Meringandan and Blue Mountain Estate residents for the provision of adequate emergency services in the area.

Highfields is a most attractive part of my electorate. It was located in the former electorate of Crows Nest and, together with the Blue Mountain Estate, is situated in Crows Nest shire. It takes 15 to 20 minutes to travel from the Toowoomba CBD to Highfields. Therefore, it is quite understandable, and in my view particularly reasonable, that the residents are anxious for there to be police, ambulance and a full-time fire brigade presence in their area. I will continue to lobby strenuously for these services to be provided as quickly as possible.

The acquisition of land is, at last, tangible evidence of the success of these representations to date and indicates that the government is aware of the emergency services needs at Highfields. I have made constructive approaches to and have had fruitful discussions with senior officers of both the Police and Ambulance Services in Toowoomba concerning the Highfields situation. I am determined to work tirelessly over the remainder of my term to see these services become a reality. I believe that the fact I was successful in having Highfields made host for the last community cabinet meeting will prove in the mid and long term greatly beneficial to Highfields.

I would now like to turn my attention to other aspects of the budget which touch directly on Toowoomba North or the Toowoomba and Darling Downs regions as they relate to various government departments.

With respect to health, during the coming financial year significant amounts will be spent by way of capital expenditure—that is, in addition to recurrent expenses such as wages and maintenance. In Toowoomba North itself, an amount of \$7.147 million is being applied towards the redevelopment of Baillie Henderson Hospital. Construction here is due for completion and commissioning by December 2001. As well, the government has allocated a further \$567,000 towards the ongoing project of the state government nursing homes program.

I express my appreciation on behalf of the people of Toowoomba North for the fine efforts and dedicated application to their tasks of all who work in the various public health service outlets in our city. I would also like to make mention of the fact that, as a result of representations recently made by Toowoomba members of parliament and the Toowoomba hospice committee, the Health Minister has agreed to a request for recurrent funding. The amount being advanced is \$300,000 per year. Whilst this is less than the sum requested, it should enable those responsible to take the decision to proceed with construction as soon as possible. The group needs to be congratulated on raising \$1 million for the construction costs.

With respect to police, Toowoomba can indeed be content with the allocation of funds. I have already mentioned the \$3.7 million for the start of the new Toowoomba police station. I reiterate the need for a police presence at Highfields. My electorate has neighbourhood police beats which are proving successful and are extremely well received. I note that, in response to the success of the neighbourhood police beat and police beat shopfront programs, an amount of \$2.4 million is to be provided for 10 new beats and shopfronts over the next three years. This provision, I hope, will augur well for more of such in Toowoomba North, particularly at Highfields.

I would particularly like to pay tribute to all of those involved with the peace builders program currently at Rockville, Wilsonton State School and the Toowoomba State High School Wilsonton campus—particularly Helen Parker, Danny Tattam of Rockville State School, Councillor Bruce Hinchliffe

and Mr Geoff Holmes of Toowoomba City Council, Jenny Clarke of Education Queensland, and Gary Wells and Cam Crisp of the Queensland Police Service. Also, I commend the valuable and ongoing work performed by those civic-minded people involved with the various Neighbourhood Watch groups within Toowoomba North.

I will be keen to see that Toowoomba continues to receive its appropriate share of new recruits. I was pleased to take part in the recent welcome of seven officers to Toowoomba. As well, I have made representations to the minister, requesting him to supply police dogs to Toowoomba to assist the service combat the spread of drugs.

With respect to education, \$9.36 million is to be spent in the Darling Downs and south-west region to meet education needs. Included in this sum is \$173,000 for a relocatable building at the Toowoomba East State School and \$809,252 for phase 2 of the Toowoomba State High School's renewal program.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of this job is the contact one has with the schools, both state and private. Each school has its needs, and I certainly will be doing what I can to assist each school community to achieve their realistic aims. To that end I have made every endeavour to visit each school P&C and P&F meeting to gain a knowledge of the needs existing.

The government puts at the top of the list the education needs of our children. To maintain Queensland's reputation as the Smart State this priority will be kept. I have met a great number of the teachers within the electorate. One cannot help but be greatly impressed by their ability and dedication, and I extend to them the sincere appreciation of the people of Toowoomba North.

The importance of the activities of the Department of Employment and Training in the preservation of Queensland's reputation as the Smart State is self-evident. In Toowoomba North we are indeed fortunate to have a fine institution in the form of the Southern Queensland Institute of Technology. I am very happy to point out that \$2.449 million is to be spent at SQIT for the relocation and construction of its horticultural facility from Wilsonton to the Bridge Street campus. A further \$300,000 has been allotted to complete the redesign and refurbishment of its client services and hairdressing training facility. The staff of SQIT have to be congratulated on their many outstanding achievements. I was recently shown over the complex and was most impressed by what I saw, particularly the enthusiasm demonstrated by the staff, and indeed the students and apprentices, in the undertaking of their tasks.

A sum of \$2.379 million in total funds for the public housing capital works program is to be spent in the electorate. As well, \$1.158 million for maintenance, providing ongoing employment, is provided. I am particularly pleased to see that 19 new rental dwellings will be commenced, at a total cost of \$1.4 million. I congratulate the minister, the Honourable Robert Swarten, for the admirable initiative. The electorate fares well also with respect to the community rent scheme in that the expenditure under this head will be \$386,000 for a total of 64 managed properties.

With respect to public works, Toowoomba also did well. By way of example I note that the amount to be spent for backflow prevention devices for the three Toowoomba electorates is \$87,000. Of particular note is that the department will in our region take on seven apprentices in the 2001 apprentice intake, taking the total to 23. I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

#### TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS AND ARTS QLD

In this budget in the Darling Downs and South West Region a total of \$37m is to be spent for Queensland Rail projects and a total of \$62.6m for roads. Of particular significance is the expenditure of \$5m on the Queensland Heritage Trails Network in our Region. This will be a fantastic boost both for Tourism and Employment.

#### STATE DEVELOPMENT

I have earlier mentioned the major State Development initiative with respect to the Suncorp-Metway Callcentre. This Department was also recently instrumental in saving scores of jobs of TYCO employees and was instrumental in keeping that Company in our region. The Department has and will play a crucial role in the redevelopment of the much needed Industrial Park at Charlton/Wellcamp. This will be of particular importance in the context of the Second Range Crossing. The Department works closely with the University of Southern Queensland, particularly in encouraging partnerships between the USQ and industry with respect to research and development. The Beattie Government has allotted \$100m for such research and I will be doing my best to see that the USQ secures its fair share of that funding.

I am keen to see the involvement of this Department on behalf of the Government in such visionary projects as the development of the International Gardens/Quarry Gardens, as I am in promoting a vision of Toowoomba in the Premier's recent words, "a University Centre of Excellence".

Unfortunately, time does not allow me to further itemise the contents of the Budget.

Mr Speaker, overall the 2001-02 Budget provides for a total capital works spending of more than \$237m or \$1.044 per person in our region. I look forward in the ensuing budgets of this government, to ensuring that Toowoomba North receives its just share of the many progressive initiatives of the second Beattie Government.

I congratulate the Treasurer in particular and the Beattie Government in general on the attainments set out in the Budget and commend the Bill to the House.

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