



Speech by

PETER LAWLOR

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

Hansard 21 June 2001

BUDGET DEBATE 2001

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (12.50 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to speak in support of this budget. Let me say at the outset that it is ironic how different interpretations can be put on the same event or situation. The *Gold Coast Bulletin* ran its budget coverage under the banner headline 'Short Changed'. The *Courier-Mail*, on the other hand, ran its budget coverage under the headline 'Labor repays its heartland'. They cannot both be right. I certainly prefer the *Courier-Mail* headline and believe it is quite accurate—although, with 66 seats, the headline might just as accurately have said 'Labor repays Queensland'.

The 'Short Changed' headline could have been used often over the past 50 years but never was. For 50 years the Gold Coast was short-changed and neglected by its coalition representatives—the infamous six pack and others. There were rare exceptions to this continuous neglect, mainly brought about by the efforts of Merri Rose in Currumbin. This budget sets about redressing the neglect of the past 50 years, and of course, that cannot be done in one budget. But each Labor member on the Gold Coast is committed to working non-stop to ensure that Queensland's second largest city gets the attention and funding it deserves.

There are many positive aspects to this budget, and any member could wax lyrical for hours. In fact, one did. He was not quite lyrical, but he waxed for hours, anyway. I will not do that. However, I intend to highlight a few initiatives which impact directly on my electorate of Southport.

Health is a priority for the Beattie government, and the Gold Coast Hospital and health services generally are issues which greatly impact on Gold Coast residents, especially with its high percentage of ageing people. The Gold Coast Hospital will benefit by the purchase and installation of an MRI scanner at a cost in excess of \$2 million. This scanner will improve patient safety and provide quicker and more accurate diagnosis than traditional x-ray equipment. Last year, more than 120 patients had to travel, mainly by ambulance, to Brisbane for MRI scans. So this is a perfect example of the government's commitment to provide health services as close as possible to where people live.

An extra \$200,000 has been allocated towards improving ophthalmology services, including an additional four ophthalmological sessions a week at the Gold Coast Hospital. This will allow additional surgery for cataracts, corneal grafts, eye repair, correction and reconstruction. A further \$12.245 million will be spent as part of the \$54 million Gold Coast Hospital redevelopment project.

An extra \$50,000 will be provided to Mirikai for drug rehabilitation treatment, taking their current annual funding to \$375,000. This very worthy organisation is not located within the Southport electorate. However, Southport is not immune from the problems of drug abuse, and many of their patients come from my electorate.

\$30,000 will be provided to the Federation Clubhouse at Southport, operated by the Schizophrenia Fellowship, to employ a coordinator, and this will improve the independence and quality of life for people with a mental illness on the Gold Coast. The additional funding for Mirikai and the Schizophrenia Fellowship resulted from deputations to the minister at the Southport community cabinet held some months ago. This is further proof of the success of the community cabinet meetings, which was such a great innovation of the Beattie government—a government listening to the people.

In the area of sport, I am pleased to note that the Southport Gymnastics Club has been granted \$150,000 for extensions, which will allow them to conduct additional sports such as martial arts. More than \$30 million has been given to local authorities, sport and recreation groups since this program began in 1998.

In education, \$454,000 is provided for Keebra Park State School's renewal program and \$825,000 for phase 2 of the Southport State High School's renewal program. \$181,000 is provided for a two-space relocatable building for Southport State School, and \$13.2 million is set aside to purchase land for the expansion of Griffith University. That university will also benefit from the \$4.674 million for the Centre of Biomolecular Science. Griffith University can also be expected to take advantage of the \$100 million Smart State Research Facility Fund, which is designed to foster the development of technologies to fuel knowledge-rich industries such as biotechnology and advanced manufacturing.

In relation to transport, \$650,000 has been allocated to fund a feasibility study into the Gold Coast light rail project. This may open up tremendous opportunities for the region, and again it meets an election commitment made to the people of the Gold Coast. The government's commitment to public transport on the Gold Coast continues with an allocation of \$5.15 million.

From the Main Roads budget there is \$2.8 million, which goes to the Gold Coast City Council as compensation for the demaining of the Gold Coast Highway from Southport to Coolangatta. Road widening, signage et cetera in the areas of Central Street, Olsen Avenue, Nerang Street, Queen Street, Musgrave Avenue and Minnic Street totals in excess of \$2 million. Also under the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme, the Beattie government will contribute \$25,000 to the local authority to provide pedestrian signals at the Ridgeway Avenue retirement home in Southport. Almost \$4 million has been allocated for the public housing capital works program in Southport, and the maintenance program exceeds \$2 million.

Although the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre is not proposed for Southport, it is a project that is of the utmost importance to the Gold Coast, and \$30 million, as part of a \$100 million commitment, has been recommitted to this project. Other initiatives which will benefit Southport but which are not exclusive to Southport include:

- \$10 million boost in Legal Aid funding;

- \$2 million to be shared by Queensland's six convention bureaus, one of which is on the Gold Coast;

- \$656,000 will go to the Gold Coast Tourism Bureau;

- \$2 million in continued funding for a Training Track Subsidy Scheme, which will benefit the Gold Coast Turf Club;

- the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative will be funded to the extent of \$100 million, and that will assist in providing jobs and training opportunities for the residents of Southport;

- \$726.4 million is provided for vocational education and training, including \$538.8 million for TAFE Queensland—and Southport has several TAFE campuses; and

- 300 extra police officers statewide will also benefit Southport and the Gold Coast.

It is interesting to note, especially in the light of the *Courier-Mail* headline of 'Labor repays its heartland', that almost \$3 billion—or 58 per cent—of the capital works budget is to be spent outside Brisbane. Places such as the Gold Coast must be the heartland they have been referring to!

In summary, this budget is good for the people of Queensland, it is good for the people of the Gold Coast and it is particularly good for the people of Southport. I commend the budget to the House.
