



Speech by

RACHEL NOLAN

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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BUDGET DEBATE 2001

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (10.37 p.m.): This is a good budget for Queensland and a very good budget for Ipswich. For many years Ipswich was neglected. The thinking was that it was close enough to Brisbane that Ipswich people could access services there. Under the long decades of National Party government Ipswich was not just ignored but also punished for its Labor heart. National Party governments built jails and mental institutions in Ipswich and constructed bypasses so that travellers could go around. This trend began to change under the Goss government, but it has really been turned around by the Beattie Labor government. Now, for the first time, Ipswich's identity and importance as an independent major provincial city has been recognised.

Ipswich is Queensland's fourth biggest city. It deserves, and it is now getting for the first time, its fair share of the dollars and its fair share of the services. This cultural shift can largely be attributed to my predecessor, David Hamill. David was an Ipswich lad to the core. He was born there, he grew up there and, despite the many opportunities life presented him, he never left there. David represented Ipswich well for 18 years, and when he became Treasurer he put some money not just where his mouth is but where his heart is. Now that that cultural shift has been made, I will see that we continue to be recognised. This is a good budget for Ipswich because of its priorities. It delivers on the key areas for me as the member for Ipswich—regional economic development and hence jobs, education, health and social services.

Ipswich is a city that is undergoing an enormous economic and social change. It has always been an industrial city, but an industrial city is not much good without industry. Our woollen mills are gone, only about 100 people work in each of our mines and our power station, and the railway is not the employer it once was.

With leadership from state and local government we are getting new industries and becoming a genuinely smart city with jobs in education, IT, aerospace and tourism. Politically, a commitment to that change is a brave step. We talk about it for a long time before people see real changes on the ground. But I have given it a lot of thought, and it is clear to me that new industries and education are the only way forward for our city. This budget supports that transformation.

The clear highlight of Ipswich's budget is the \$8 million that will finish the workshops project and restore our city's industrial heart. There is also \$1.7 million committed over the next two years to run the workshops once we have built them. The workshops are due to open midway through next year. Having been involved with the project since the beginning, it is something I can now very clearly conceptualise and am looking forward to. The recent steam and steel exhibition, when more than 20,000 people turned up in a single day to explore the workshops site, is an indication of the community's support for the project. The workshops are the industrial heart of Ipswich. In its heyday more than 3,000 men worked there. When the workshops redevelopment is finished, there will be more than 100 permanent jobs in tourism and traditional steam loco maintenance, thousands of tourists will come, and parts of Ipswich will again wake to the sound of the morning hooter.

Ipswich's other significant industrial investment is the \$189 million CS Energy investment to build a gas-fired turbine at the Swanbank Power Station and, in conjunction with that, the three-quarters of a million dollars which the budget provides to upgrade the Swanbank road. A little more than a year ago Swanbank's future looked very bleak, with an ageing station becoming uneconomic compared to the

bigger stations in other parts of Queensland. With this investment Swanbank has a future as a clean, green, modern power producer and as an employer. With a gas-fired station, a huge traditionally industrial buffer zone around the site and excellent access to the National Highway, Swanbank would be a great site for industrial development. I will work to see these possibilities realised.

This budget is economically responsible and sees Queensland's sound economic situation maintained. That is a very good thing, but it is not an end in itself. Strong financials mean that we have the money for sustainable services, and that is what is happening in Ipswich as a result of this budget.

Health overall sees a six per cent funding increase, and the \$600,000 for the dialysis unit at the Ipswich Hospital will save dozens of Ipswich people the regular and painful trips to Brisbane for treatment. I have experience from Aboriginal communities in the territory of the strain that having no local access to dialysis puts on families and communities. Without dialysis, families either have to transport patients back and forth to the city where dialysis is available, or people who are unwell and sometimes dying are forced to leave their families for treatment. With this centre in Ipswich, that is being avoided. The fact that the project is being supported by the Ipswich Rotary Club indicates the level of community support.

In Ipswich in recent years big steps have been taken to bring health services to the community, particularly through the now well-established Ipswich Health Plaza and through our Women's Health Centre. This budget supports that service delivery. At the Health Plaza, dozens of people, including my neighbour Nick, utilise the cardiac rehab unit. It is an excellent service, and preventive measures like this are being supported through this budget.

The budget includes significant funding for local schools, including \$50 million over three years for school maintenance. Ipswich schools are older schools, and I will be making sure we get our hands on our fair share of that. In addition, there will be capital works spending, including \$145,000 to finish the new classroom block at the Blair State School, \$90,000 for the Bundamba State School, \$138,000 for the Ipswich West school and \$26,000 for Ipswich Central State School.

It is a fundamental matter of equity that we should not go down the federal government's track of institutionalising the divide between rich and poor with children as young as five who are just beginning school. This budget provides \$2 million for a first-class multimedia and performing arts centre at Bremer State High School, taking a step towards ensuring that local state schools have basic facilities equal to those of private schools.

I believe importantly in this budget there is a 12 per cent increase in funding for disability services. In Ipswich, as a result of the National Party governments' institution building, we have an historical legacy of a big population of people with disabilities. There are 25 per cent more Ipswich people on disability pensions than the state average. People with disabilities rely on government perhaps more than anyone else. As a member of parliament, I would find it very hard to look at a parent and tell them I cannot help with services for their disabled child. With this increase and the improvements that have been made in recent years, at least I will know that we are making real changes. \$600,000 is being provided for the new Jefferis-Turner centre, which will genuinely improve respite care for people with disabilities.

It is important to mention the \$300,000 in this year's budget to improve the Ipswich Watch House, finally bringing it up to the standards demanded by the royal commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody and making it easier for police to supervise prisoners.

Finally, Winston Glades residents will be pleased to know that this year there is funding to build the Ash Street lights. I doorknocked the area recently, and I know that Ash Street and Warwick Road is a dangerous intersection and that the lights are badly needed. I will do what I can to ensure that they are built as soon as possible.

This budget has been well received in Ipswich. This morning I hosted a budget breakfast there which was attended by a good and diverse group of people. In Brisbane when you hold a budget breakfast you get businesspeople; in Ipswich you have a smaller but more complete community, with business people, local government, schools, academics, unionists and people from local welfare agencies. All of these branches of the community are affected by the budget, and in Ipswich all welcomed it. Ipswich people know that under the Beattie Labor government our city is finally being shown the respect it deserves as an independent and historically significant regional centre. I am very pleased to speak in favour of this budget, and I will ensure that while I am the local member recognition of our city continues.
