



Speech by

DESLEY SCOTT

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Hansard 20 June 2002

BUDGET SPEECH 2002

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (8.59 p.m.): Nobody loves Woodridge like Labor. This region, which back in the sixties and seventies became a densely populated area with a high percentage of public housing and few services, has struggled with a perception of crime and disadvantage. In the past, we have suffered the pangs of high unemployment, social isolation and dysfunction, low school completion rates, and the ignominy of being tagged by the media as the receptacle of all that is negative in society. I am pleased to announce in this House today that a new day has dawned in Woodridge. In fact, I would be so bold as to say a high percentage of my constituents would choose to live in Woodridge above many other areas that may appear on the surface to be more desirable. I would like to ask you all to put away your previously held perceptions and take a fresh look at what is a vibrant, exciting, cohesive community, stepping out with renewed self-confidence to take on the challenges of the future.

Our Labor government has been able to deliver to my electorate much more than just dollars and cents. Through carefully designed policy, this community has been able to undergo a very exciting change for the better. Our community has been empowered to take responsibility for our own future—a very powerful tool—by a government totally committed to making a real difference in the lives of people who ask only for a fair go; a government which cares enough to set its priorities to lift the lives of struggling people.

I am delighted to take part in this budget debate and to outline the significant policies of this government which have delivered a degree of social equity and fairness to my electorate, previously only dreamed of.

I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated into *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Mr Speaker: Nothing demonstrates this government's commitment to the future of Queenslanders more than the recent announcements of major changes within our education system. Recent announcements by our Premier Hon Peter Beattie, Minister for Education Hon Anna Bligh and Minister for Employment and Training Hon Matt Foley, that the bulk of additional revenue gained from the GST will be used to enhance our education and training outcomes for our young people is indeed welcome. This will ensure that our young students reach their potential and are better prepared to make their way in this very challenging and changing world. I believe the present consultation process taking place with teachers, parents and students as well as the wider community, will ensure that our policies reflect the opinion of those who use the system and that we have the widest possible range of ideas to choose from. Last week I was privileged to attend the education forum for my district held at Woodridge High School. It is indicative of the importance placed on these forums, that Education Minister Anna Bligh was in attendance for two of the forum sessions. I believe education is the key that our youngsters need to unlock the door to a bright future. At the present time, many are falling through the cracks and are not completing their schooling, and are neither entering further training programs nor the workforce. These education and training initiatives are designed to ensure all of our young people are either furthering their education, entering an apprenticeship or training, or alternatively entering the workforce or indeed, a combination of these. I applaud these measures and look forward to the completion of the consultative period which is to determine the school leaving age and gather information from all who have an interest in this vital program. The trial over a two year period of the non-compulsory preparatory year will produce information which will enable our government to make an informed decision on how we are best able to lay a solid foundation for our young children prior to entering formal learning in year one. However, a wonderful revolution in education is already underway in my electorate and I would like to take this opportunity to commend my school principals and teachers for their dedication and commitment and the innovation I see in our schools. My Primary Schools are gaining a tremendous improvement in literacy skills at the year 2 level. The number of children requiring intervention has halved in many schools and Logan is recognised for its best practice teaching. Burrowes Primary School was recently featured in Education Views applauding their literacy program and the collaborative network of schools which share ideas and

professional development. Another hub of school principals and teachers meet regularly at Harris Field School where Principal Greg Dickman has been invited to write a literacy handbook for the state. My three high schools similarly have exciting programs. Woodridge High has undertaken an enterprise approach to learning which pervades every subject taught and therefore influences every student's results—and the improvement in results is quite amazing. Woodridge High's entry in the Awards for Excellence (Logan/Beauresort District) of their Enterprise School program was an outstanding entry and has been selected along with two other schools to progress to the next level of judging. Principal Helen Jamieson, Ms Kym Slater and their team of teachers are to be congratulated for their leadership in this whole-of-school initiative. I wish them well. Mabel Park High is progressing their POWER Program (also an Awards for Excellence entrant) designed to facilitate the re-entry into education of parents with young children, and has gained wide acclaim in both the Courier Mail and on Today Tonight. Jackie Grozinger, teacher/coordinator saw the need for a flexible program where young mums were encouraged to continue their education, but also learn some parenting skills and offer support to one another. This week, I had the privilege of presenting certificates at the Community Access School at Kingston College where many returning students are doing year 10 and 12 subjects and reassessing their futures. Some of these students have very moving stories to tell and many of them struggle to balance studies, work and family commitments. I applaud their efforts. This is a very special school with very friendly, dedicated staff. It is always an inspiration to see what is accomplished there. The future for education is an exciting one. In this budget, funds have been allocated to commence the prep trials and also some additional funding for repaints on a number of schools. Woodridge State High is allocated \$2.8m for school renewal and \$3.4m has also been allocated towards the first stage of the Browns Plains Campus of TAFE. I am sure my constituents in Crestmead/Marsden will welcome this new facility.

Mr Speaker: A leisurely drive through my electorate at once alerts even the casual visitor to the fact that something special has happened in the area. It looks great. Trees, parks, gardens, streetscapes are all flourishing—residents are increasingly enjoying their own gardens and as one home owner remarked to me—"We now have to keep up with them"—our department homes are putting on a new bright face with renovations and new fences. Community Renewal with its innovative, community-driven projects and Urban Renewal which is upgrading the public housing are both making a difference, the equal of which has not been seen since the area was first settled. We have this government to thank for caring enough about marginalised communities to pump millions of dollars into them, but more than that, to have the foresight and the trust to allow those communities to decide what projects will best meet the perceived needs of the area. Community Renewal is a crime minimisation program and it is working. Crime statistics show a real reduction and our residents enjoy a community spirit which is quite unique. Our innovative bus project, the Blue Dash Shuttle, best expresses what community renewal can accomplish. Devised through a partnership between our three Community Renewal groups, Qld Transport, Logan City Council and our local bus company, it has provided a regular, friendly hail 'n ride service traversing the city along suburban loops with affordable fares. This project took 18 months to accomplish. There were significant challenges to source the correct style of bus, to outline routes and timetables, fares, driver training, designing brochures, publicity, the launch and then an ongoing management committee. There were times our community volunteers experienced frustration and feared they would not accomplish their goals. However, the day of the launch gave such a wonderful feeling of accomplishment to those who had worked so tirelessly on this project. They are a much stronger community because of their effort and resolve to get it right. I would here like to mention in particular the volunteers who saw the project through to completion—Noel and Gail Shaw, Eric Nielsen and Greg Pearson. Our community salutes you. Other Community Renewal projects of note include: free sports coaching for youngsters at All Sports Centre, Community Access Centre at Kingston College, our award winning fax back domestic violence program, Make and Do (MAD) Shed for hobbyists, Drug education in our high schools, expanded services at Logan Legal Advice Centre, flourishing Neighbourhood Watch groups, diverse activities at the Booran Park Neighbourhood Centre (community capacity building), Police and Young People support network, new parks and improved facilities in existing parks and gardens. That is a snapshot of Community Renewal in Woodridge and Kingston. Our community has been empowered and now has confidence to undertake solutions to its own problems. I wish to thank our Minister Hon Robert Swarten and all of his Community Renewal workers for delivering such an initiative and working collaboratively with our community. Many projects have been accomplished through partnerships between State Government Departments, our local council and many community and service organisations. We have learned of a new and better way to work and I am pleased that further funding has been allocated to both Woodridge and Kingston for the continuation of both Community and Urban Renewal.

Mr Speaker: Health remains a challenge for all governments. Today many people enjoy good health due to treatment with very expensive, high-tech equipment and survive well, where just a few years ago, their life would be shortened. Very premature babies survive, transplants are a daily occurrence and we are now entering an era of medicine which is starting to rival science fiction. Logan Hospital enjoys a high reputation in our community and will share in a \$6m allocation of funds to assist with their hospital services. A further allocation of \$1.5m will progress our new Community Health Building to the next stage of development. When completed it will cost in excess of \$7m and will be built on the present site on the corner of Ewing and Wembley Roads. I understand additional funding has also been given to reduce the dental wait time. Our dental facilities are stretched to the limit and are made worse by the complete failure of this Federal Government to carry any responsibility whatsoever. Mr Speaker: For many years, previous conservative governments have neglected funding to the area of Families, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Islander Services. Consequently our State has seen terrible neglect develop. It has now taken sometime for recent Labor Governments to achieve what is now a more acceptable level of support. I must say I am particularly pleased to see the 15.5% increase in funding for Families. I have always believed it to be far better to be able to offer positive support to families before serious problems arise and thereby avoid intervention procedures. Parents may be under pressure for all sorts of reasons. Some have little by way of parenting skills and may need training. It is paramount that we protect all children and where possible, to see children grow up with their natural parent/s. It has always been my wish to see far more family support workers in place, who can work intensively with families in their homes and become a mentor to ensure parents' skills are such that our children are given every opportunity to grow and reach their potential in life. I am pleased to see this as one of the important Families initiatives. However, Mr Speaker, when this cannot be so, our dedicated foster parents are ready to fill this role. Last year, a number of foster parents were recognised in my awards for volunteering. Theirs is really a labour of love, and often they have damaged young lives to repair. I am pleased that in this budget we have allocated additional funding in particular for those fostering youngsters over 11 years of age. Foster parents will also be given payments up front when children are placed in their care rather than having to pay out money for food, clothing and other expenses and claim a fortnight later. I am sure every foster parent at times feels overwhelmed by the enormity of their task and up until now, it has been a 24 hour a day, 365 day a year job (an unpaid job at that!). Recognition has been given that periods of respite may mean the difference between a foster parent deciding they cannot continue or being able to enjoy a break and thus recharge their batteries. However, I believe they should have respite available, simply because they deserve it. I consider respite as a long overdue initiative. It is to be hoped that these changes may encourage

additional families to offer to become foster parents, thus easing the load for the existing foster parents who sometimes in emergency situations may have several additional children requiring care, thus stretching their resources.

I am sure our Families' Child Care Workers will welcome this government's commitment to staffing increases and to upgrade and improve technology, thus enabling them to better manage their case loads, thus leading to improved outcomes. Additional funding will also be available to community based organisations who partner the department in delivering many of their services. Of particular interest to me is a joint initiative with Education Qld to introduce Youth Support Coordinators in selected schools to divert young people at risk of homelessness and early school leaving. I also note a number of expanded and innovative services to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, some of which have a particular focus on young people. There has also been a very firm commitment to the needs of the disabled and I thank the many individuals and organisations who form our army of carers. We honour your commitment and loving care.

All of these and other important budgetary decisions indicate the priorities of this government—to families, their health and safety and the education of our children and young people.

Mr Speaker: Today we have witnessed the swearing in of the Hon Judy Spence as the Minister for Seniors. This is an important symbol, and I hope that this will send a message to our valued senior citizens of the high regard we, as a government have for them, and our commitment to support and assist them. Of course, it is from their ranks that a high proportion of our volunteers come, and we thank them for not only their fruitful lives which have contributed so much to our country, but also for their ongoing efforts in our communities. I was very pleased to see a one-off increase of \$98,230 to the Home Assist program bringing the total for the Logan & Beenleigh District up to \$382,800. I thank the Minister for Housing for recognising this need at this time. Many of our seniors are now choosing to remain in their own home for longer and it is important that we have support services in place to assist them. I recently visited our local Home Assist Centre in Slacks Creek and would like to commend Ms Lesley Wilcox and her team for the excellent service they offer.

Mr Speaker: Logan City and my electorate in particular are in the very enviable position of having a falling crime rate. There are many complex factors involved, however, I would like to mention just some of these. Our Police are hard working and engage with our community on many levels. Many partnerships have been formed with Neighbourhood Watch Groups, Police/Community Consultative Committee, Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre, PCYC activities, a number of significant Community Renewal Projects such as the award winning Faxback Domestic Violence program and the Police and Young People Support Network. Our Station Road shopping precinct now has security cameras operating and graffiti is greatly reduced. Our city is looking good and our community members are confident and engaged in many activities in their city. The criminals are getting the message. We won't be dictated to and made to shrink away in our homes. No, all of our problems are not solved, but we have moved to a new positive phase in Logan. I welcome the Treasurers announcement to increase police numbers throughout the state, and also thank the Police Minister for fast-tracking our Marsden/Crestmead Police Beat. The Minister has recently informed me that the Police Beat will come into operation on or about the 1st July and will be staffed by one Sergeant and three Constables. These staff members will be in addition to existing staff in this Division. Another positive Policing initiative which will benefit the area is a dedicated Tactical Response Unit. Early results indicate a number of successful graduates from the trial of the Drug Court at Beenleigh and I am very happy that this will continue.

Additional funding has also been allocated to Employment Programs and results of our previous Community Jobs Plan funding has resulted in many of the participants finding fulltime employment. I applaud the many Smart-State announcements from our Premier which have seen large corporations relocating to Queensland and new industries, particularly in the new area of Bio-Tech setting up throughout our state. I believe our future looks bright and secure, and that this will lead to jobs. With our education reforms underway, many of our youngsters will find positions in a wide variety of commercial, industrial and high tech developments, as well as our many service organisations and government instrumentalities.

As the Member for Woodridge, I can confidently say this budget will make a difference in my electorate. I am proud to be a Member of a government which clearly has its priorities right and has delivered such a well balanced budget. This will ensure that not only is the economy on a sure footing to deliver growth, but it will also deliver social reforms which will touch lives and assist so many people who deserve our respect and care. I commend the Treasurer, the Premier and Cabinet for this budget with a big heart.
