



Speech by

Mr JIM PEARCE

MEMBER FOR FITZROY

Hansard 20 June 2002

BUDGET SPEECH 2002

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (5.59 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to speak to yet another Labor government budget that delivers for families and a quality of life for all Queenslanders. I congratulate the Treasurer on a budget that recognises the difficulties faced by those who for one reason or another are disadvantaged and find life just a little bit difficult, just a little bit harder than most.

Before I comment on a few of the budget initiatives, firstly, for the information of members I want to refer to the importance of the Fitzroy region to the economic viability of the state. The Fitzroy regions covers 122,972 square kilometres, or about seven per cent of the state. So it takes up a large area. It includes the cities of Rockhampton and Gladstone as well as the shires of Banana, Bauhinia, Calliope, Duaringa, Emerald, Fitzroy, Jericho, Livingstone, Mount Morgan and Peak Downs. My electorate covers a large portion of the Fitzroy region, but it also covers part of the Mackay region.

The region is about to move into a period of rapid expansion with the pending construction of the Australian Magnesium Corporation plant adjacent to the Stanwell Power Station. I am pleased to see that the budget makes an allocation of some \$6 million for the construction of a spur line that is necessary for the movement of product to and from the new magnesium plant. The flow-on effect of that magnificent AMC magnesium plant will not be appreciated until we have the opportunity to see the light metals industry develop around the magnesium plant. It will take a few years for that industry to be constructed and to be in a position to start production. But then we will see a flow on of other industry established in what is called the light metals industry park. It is really exciting stuff. Most importantly for me is the promise of jobs for people in the area. With a booming coal industry and increasing growth in exports for the rural sector, central Queensland is certainly a great place to live. It is a region of prosperity and it is one that people can feel confident to invest in.

As I said before, I am excited about what is happening in the region. I admire and I respect the enthusiasm and drive of the people who are working to make things happen in the region. The Fitzroy shire, the Rockhampton City Council and the other shires of the region are having their say and are being involved. They are all committed to the future development of the region and the prosperity that it will bring for so many.

I want to touch on a few items that people in my area would like to know about, particularly matters that relate to the coal industry. It is interesting to learn—and members of this place would appreciate this—that the Fitzroy region is a high producer of coal. In fact, it exports some \$2 billion of coal through the Gladstone coal loading facility. We have to give a lot of credit to the motivated, efficient work force that we have throughout the Bowen coal basin. They are a committed work force who are prepared to go out and live with their families in the coal towns and put in the effort that is required of them in this new environment where people are required to work 12-hour shifts and put most of their lives into the job at the mine site.

The gross value of agriculture production in the Fitzroy region for the 1999-2000 financial year is impressive and highlights the valuable contribution the region makes to the financial strength of the state. Given the time restrictions upon us all, rather than go onto the next part of my speech, I ask permission to have that incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

I will now touch on just a few areas of the Government's responsibilities to the people of Queensland.

The provision of new and improved infrastructure is critical to the development of the Fitzroy Region.

Funding for road infrastructure is welcomed, with Budget Papers indicating that \$3.28M will be provided to complete widening of existing pavement on two sections of the Fitzroy Development Road—better known as the Dingo Mt Flora Road.

Works on the single lane section between Bore Creek Floodway and Cosmos and the section north of Valkyrie State School are scheduled for completion by the end of this year.

The completion of the widening of existing pavement will mean that more than 200 kilometres of road between Dingo on the Capricorn Highway and the Peak Downs Highway will be a quality double lane bitumen road and will make travelling on that road much safer for motorists and will bring to an end almost two decades of road expenditure.

I look forward to the day that we lay the final strip of bitumen and I thank consecutive Governments, both Labor and National, for the ongoing commitment of funds.

\$2.1M has been provided in this Budget to cover the completion of rehabilitation and widening on the Capricorn Highway between Neerkol Creek and Spring Creek.

\$800,000 has been allocated to complete bitumen sealing and widening works between Kabra and Mt Morgan. The \$2M project is jointly funded by the State and Federal Governments.

Funds of \$79,000 have been provided in this Budget to Duaringa Shire to complete paving and sealing of the Bluff-Jellinbah Tip Site.

Banana Shire is to get \$100,000 toward the \$250,000 cost to replace the Dee River Bridge at Deerford.

Expenditure of \$1.5M will be made on other works including intersection upgrade and highway widening at Stanwell.

\$900,000 will be spent to improve flood immunity on the Ridglands Road between the old and new 9 Mile Road intersection.

Repairs to the Alma Creek Bridge on the Burnett Highway will cost approximately \$330,000.

\$150,000 will be spent to upgrade the Baralaba-Woorabinda Road intersection.

Safety and drainage improvements on a section of road commencing at Ranch Road on the Baralaba Woorabinda Road is worth approximately \$1.4M.

I move now to education spending.

Mr Speaker

The Labor Party believes that everyone is entitled to a high quality education.

Students, regardless of their gender, race, geographical location, ability or disability, should not be disadvantaged by factors beyond their control or influence.

Education opportunities provide the platform for the Smart State agenda of the Beattie Government announced earlier this year.

\$158.3M will be allocated over 4 years for education and training reforms, including trials in 59 schools of full-time preparatory year for children before they enter Year 1 and 3,000 new computers, faster replacement of old computers and more teacher training in Information and Technology.

An additional \$60M will be allocated over 4 years for quality services to students with a disability.

The funds have been allocated for 382 new teachers in 2002-03, including 158 new teachers as a third instalment of the Government's commitment to deliver an additional 800 teachers over enrolment growth over 4 years and 224 new teachers to keep pace with enrolment growth.

Budget allocations at the local level include \$200,000 for Stage 2 of the amalgamation for Middlemount Community School.

\$41,670 for Blackwater North State School to build covered multipurpose courts.

More than \$1.6M has been provided for subsidies for schools in the Fitzroy Electorate under the cooler Schools Program.

Provision of \$195,230 has been made for Allentown State School; \$185,990 for Baralaba; \$400,840 for Bouldercombe; \$72,000 for Depot Hill; \$35,180 for Marmor; \$257,900 for Mt Morgan High School; \$324,530 for Parkhurst; \$69,000 for Stanwell and \$61,300 for Worraburra State School.

Approximately \$190,000 has been approved for maintenance works—repainting at Bajool, Bauhinia, Depot Hill, Mount Morgan, Port Curtis, Dysart High School, Dysart Primary and Middlemount Community School.

This allocation also includes a re-roofing project at Dysart High School and reticulation works at Blackwater North.

Mr Speaker

Law abiding Queenslanders rightly expect a safe and secure environment in which to live and raise their families.

The main areas of public concern are personal safety offences such as assaults, rapes, breaking and entering of homes, stealing and unlawful use of a motor vehicle.

Our Government has been making legislative changes by putting 300 extra Police a year on the job.

This year's Budget again prioritises improved policing with 307 new Police officers and 47 civilian support staff to be employed in 2002-03.

The focus of the Beattie Government's health care policy is on preventative services and building a community sector that supports our public hospital system.

Having communities take an interest and to play a role in the improvement of our health care system means that we are working together to improve quality of life for central Queenslanders.

Jobs for Queenslanders has always been a priority of the Premier.

Job opportunities come with the provision of infrastructure to support investment and development.

Our Government is committed to preparing people to take advantage of those opportunities by ensuring that people gain the skills for current and future needs.

\$1.6B has been committed to works funding for Transport and Main Roads. \$273.9M has been allocated for Education, such as new schools and maintenance. \$254M has been provided for Health and \$226M for law and order and public safety.

An allocation of \$97M has been made to train apprentices and trainees with \$2.5M for the Youth Access Program to support 2,200 students at risk of not completing secondary school in the 2002-03 financial year.

However it was interesting to note Minister Judy Spence's comments when she warned that total Disability Services Queensland funding of \$331M for the financial year commencing July 1 "was contingent on negotiations over the new Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement.

The big announcement of this Budget was the additional \$188M funding package over the next four years to help children and families in crisis.

This is great news for rural Queensland. The program will be invested in a range of prevention and early intervention strategies across the State and there is no doubt that the benefits will flow onto Central Queensland.

The funding boost will include the employment of more front line staff. In fact, as part of the increase to funding, we will see the recruitment of at least 66 new staff. This will include 46 who were committed under our response to the Forde Inquiry.

Some of the funding will be directed toward the expansion of community conferencing with young offenders. Every young person deserves a chance in life. We all make mistakes and that is why it is so important to have in place effective prevention and early intervention services.

I was pleased that the threatening drought was acknowledged by Government and that money has been set aside to assist our primary producers.

The Fitzroy Electorate encompasses some of the best grazing and crop growing country in the State, but without good seasonal rains, pastures fail as do important crops.

So it is essential that State Government be prepared to do what it can to help out during what are difficult times for the people who put quality products on our dining room tables.

The Grazing industry will benefit from the cooperation with Government in the Development of strategies supported with funding for enhanced Foot and Mouth Disease preparedness.

\$20M has been made available to assist cane growers with low interest loans.

There is additional funding to support foster carers who look after children with high and extreme needs which includes short term respite to give carers a break from the good work that they do.

There is a 6% increase in allowances for people caring for children and young people aged 11 years or over.

I welcome the Premier's decision to elevate the needs of older Queenslanders to Cabinet status with Queensland's first Minister for Seniors, Judy Spence, sworn in by the State Governor Major General Peter Arnison.

Mr Speaker, this is a responsible Budget. A true Labor Budget which focuses on Families, Education, Health and the development of job opportunities.

Queensland remains a low tax State with a Government committed to do what it can with the resources available to it to improve the quality of life for all Queenslanders.
