



Speech by

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM**

**MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE**

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Hansard 20 June 2002

### **BUDGET SPEECH 2002**

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (11.27 p.m.): I rise to acknowledge those new dollars that have been allocated to my electorate and also to raise the concerns of areas that have been overlooked. I would like to acknowledge the Minister for Health and the funding that she has allocated for the Boyne Valley Health Centre. Currently, Mary Tame has operated out of what is a very old building. She has operated a very good facility. She has operated a very compassionate facility. But I think that if most town or city people went and had a look at the centre that she is operating out of, they would probably be very disappointed. I thank the Minister for Health for the allocation of funds to allow a new centre to be constructed. I acknowledge that the Calliope Shire Council has allocated land and transferred the ownership of that land to the Department of Health to allow for that centre to be constructed. I also acknowledge that two new classrooms will be built at Calliope school. That is an indication of the growth in that region.

There was quite a significant amount of money allocated to port infrastructure, but it must be put on the record that those moneys that are allocated and expended by the port are also raised by the port through the users of the port facilities, particularly through coal export. Callemondah Rail is also listed as being a significant expender of finances. Again, I have to acknowledge that those funds are raised through the commercial operation of the rail. However, there are three crossings in my electorate that are not commercial lines and require boom gates. They are the only three crossings. They are in the middle of the town and they require boom gates. Currently, they have only lights.

The first is Scenery Street. Less than 100 yards up the rail from Scenery Street is a crossing with boom gates and lights. The second is Mercury Street and the third is Witney Street. Both of those crossings access the Kin Kora State School. Only recently a fatality occurred at Witney Street. An elderly gentleman, because of a lapse in judgment, mistimed his crossing of the railway line and that resulted in his death. I hope that the boom gates can be put in place before there is another tragedy. That tragedy was not the fault of QR or because of any problem with the structure of the line. It was a miscalculation on the part of that elderly gentleman. However, I hope nothing similar occurs before boom gates are placed on Scenery, Mercury and Witney Streets.

A great deal of attention has been focused on the additional funding for families, seniors and children. I do not think that any member would underestimate the importance and value of the family structure. In the main, members have grown up in, and benefited from, supportive families. We have benefited from the fact that our mums and dads provided a nurturing and holistic family situation in which to grow. As older people in our community, they deserve not only our respect but also our support. I commend the Minister for Families, Seniors and Youth on the new portfolio she has been allocated.

The additional funds, which have been spoken about, to ensure the safety of our children are well deserved. The damage done to a child who is affected by abuse is incalculable. The physical and emotional damage which stays with those people for their entire adult life cannot be costed. Irrespective of its philosophy, any sum of money expended by a government to support and protect children is not enough. I commend this government for the funds it has allocated to the protection of our children.

A number of matters were listed in the budget that were really rollovers from old budgets. They include the finalisation of the Gladstone State High School renewal program, the Tannum State High

School recreational facility and the multi-user sport facility. They were all announced in previous budgets. I look forward to the completion of those buildings.

This Queensland Budget allocated a global amount to ambulance and emergency services. I wish to bring into particular focus the Calliope Shire ambulance station. Jim Brodie has worked there for many years and he is an old-style ambulance officer who has a real care and compassion for all of the residents of the area he services. He deals with people from Alchera with great compassion. He was the ambulance officer who took my dad to hospital and I know that both mum and dad valued the care, compassion and support provided to them by Jim.

That station needs to be a two-person station. Jim has held that position as a single officer for many, many years. He attends everything from highway accidents to incidents at the aged care facility at the hinterland—and he does so alone. I ask the Minister for Emergency Services to give serious consideration to expanding that position to a two-officer station to provide some support and assistance to Jim Brodie, who is an excellent ambulance officer, and to recognise the expanding needs of that region.

A number of members have referred to the 69 new police officers for the Gold Coast. I commend them for that. The Gold Coast is certainly a growing area. More officers are probably needed on the Sunshine Coast as well.

**Mr Cummins:** Thirty on the Sunshine Coast.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM:** Good! I congratulate the member for getting 30. I just want enough officers at Tannum Sands to make it a 24-hour police station.

**Mr Cummins:** A lovely spot.

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM:** It is a lovely spot and it is a growing spot. At the moment, that police station is open only during daylight hours. Yet the greatest concern of many residents is occurrences after-hours, Friday night, Saturday night and Sunday. That centre needs to be considered as a 24-hour police station. I commend the Minister for Police for funding the completion of the new police station at Tannum Sands, which I believe will house 25 officers. We are now asking for a 24-hour police station because of the growth in that area.

May I take a moment to commend two police officers in my electorate? Darryl Saw, who is still domiciled in the Gladstone electorate, is a retired senior sergeant of police. This year he became a recipient of an Order of Australia medal. I cannot think of another more deserving person in my electorate. Darryl has been a police officer for almost 30 years. He has been a commendable officer and he is held in the highest regard. I pass on my congratulations to him.

Gary Harland was the inspector for the region and he has now been transferred to Mackay. He has received the Public Service medal. I congratulate and commend Gary for the service that he provides not only to our community but to the community in Mackay.

I will take a moment to commend the federal opposition and the federal Democrats for their opposition to the proposals to increase the cost of pharmaceuticals and to make it more difficult to qualify for a disability pension. Some speakers on this budget have focused quite significantly on the federal sphere. I do not intend to do that. However, I do commend the federal opposition and the Democrats for their opposition to the proposed changes to the pharmaceutical scheme and to the disability pension criteria. I hope they hold their ground and I hope that those changes which have been put up in the federal budget are defeated.

I turn now to transport. I commend the Minister for Transport for answering the question I asked of him today. It was an emotive question because route D has been an emotive issue in my electorate. I thank him for his directness this morning. I raise the need for the finalisation of the extension of Kirkwood Road and the need for funding for the Dawson Highway from Calliope right through to the range at Biloela. There are costs listed in the RIP for the next couple of years. I hope those costings will remain in place because a lot of people travel to Biloela for stockfeed and for various other reasons and, currently, the Dawson Highway is not coping well with that traffic. The road is very rough and it is quite dangerous when the edges of the road fall away. I look forward to the upgrading of the Dawson Highway from Calliope to Biloela for the safety of our residents.

I also raise with the minister an issue which has done the rounds of the table I do not know how many times. It does not matter whether one speaks to the Transport Department, the GPA or the Gladstone council—it is always someone else's responsibility. It is a small issue which will probably cost \$150,000, at the most—toilets at the powerhouse boat ramp. I raise this particularly because a lot of retired people love to go boating but find that they need these facilities for their comfort and in order to enjoy their fishing trip. I look to the Minister for Transport for some assistance in clarifying where that responsibility lies and the allocation of funds for toilets at the powerhouse boat ramp.

The Gold Coast *Bulletin* has been cited in this chamber on several occasions as saying that the Gold Coast gets the big rewards of having seven Labor members. That is very disappointing. Even

media outlets are now recognising that this government rewards people who are of a Labor persuasion. I would hope that governments, irrespective of their philosophy, would deal with issues on the basis of priority and need.

I thank the Minister for Housing, Robert Swarten, for arranging a housing plan briefing for me today with regard to Gladstone. The Gladstone-Calliope region has justifiably been identified as an industrial development area of significance. It has the infrastructure and the community support for significant industrial development. However, having been identified as a place suitable for industry and having been approved for industry development, the government must also play a part in ensuring that the infrastructure necessary to support that development is in place.

One of the greatest pressures that members of the Gladstone and Calliope communities are feeling at the moment is that caused by a lack of affordable housing. At the briefing today my overriding comment to the officers of the minister's department was that the housing assistance had to be established sooner rather than later. Shuffling paper and preparing reports will not help people who cannot get a house. We have waited for a long time for the growth management study from State Development to be finalised and released. It still has not happened. It was released at least one budget if not two budgets ago. The growth management study would enable the council, the state government and the federal government to better manage growth in our region. The management study has not seen the light of day. I hope that this housing plan will have a shorter incubation period and that it will actually provide accommodation units for people in need.

In the budget I looked specifically at the State Development portfolio to see what assistance has been made available to people in my region, again to be able to manage the industrial development that is not only occurring at the moment but which is also proposed. There appears to be no money for the Yarwun community—the people endeavouring to cope with the impact of the Stuart oil shale project on the airshed. Airborne emissions have caused many problems for their quality of life. The only amount of money I can identify which appears to be unattached is \$2 million.

The Minister for State Development visited my electorate several weeks ago. He did not pay me the courtesy of letting me know that he was coming. However, the residents did and they asked that I attend the meeting that the minister was to convene. The minister's response to their request that I attend was that if I was there he would be less than open. I found that comment disappointing, because I would have hoped that any dealings with members of my community or ministerial dealings with any members of communities across this state would be open, honest and accountable. I did not attend that meeting. Members of the community were told that a number of options were being considered in relation to their stress and the unsaleability of their properties. I cannot see in the budget where any money has been allocated to that matter.

In addition, the East End Mine Action Group—EEMAG—has been agitating, for want of a better word, for government assistance in recognition of the impact of the activities of Queensland Cement Limited on their farming activities. There is also no money in the budget in recognition of their stress. I ask the Minister for State Development to consider the allocation of funds to address instances where people are experiencing difficulty in selling or working their properties.

I acknowledge also the need in my community for aged care facilities. Independent units, boarding houses and medium and high-care units are also required. That has been confirmed by an independent study. The Health budget does not appear to have much for the Gladstone Hospital. We are a diverse community. We have a lot of young people, baby boomers and people who want to retire to the area. Over the last 10 years there has been a decline in health facilities in my area. The ICU has been downgraded to a high-dependency unit. The children's ward has been closed and now children are housed in adult wards, although I have been told that that is temporary. The accident and emergency unit is the only avenue available for people who want to see a doctor, albeit for a general medical need.

I call on the government to recognise that the fundamental needs of community members are public safety, policing, human health, hospital care, education for their children and the ability to live in a safe and supportive environment. I commend the government for the work it has done in funding training for the new industries that are coming. Apprenticeships are important for our community. TAFE based apprenticeships, school based apprenticeships and the Gladstone Area Group Apprenticeship Scheme all offer opportunities for training and the development of skills for a broad range of people. I look forward to the many opportunities that this training will afford and I look forward also to the matching funding that will be necessary for that training to be effective.

Speakers previous to me on this budget have said that this is a true Labor government budget. I take that to mean that it is for the workers. That is all I ask. I ask that workers in my electorate be afforded equal opportunity to access those things that they need. I have already mentioned policing, health and housing. That is all people in Queensland and Australia want—a fair go. The minister has announced \$60 million for students with disabilities, and I commend that. The minister has announced \$19 million over four years for emergency services, and I commend that also. It is concerning that

increased revenue has been identified from gaming machines and from other taxes. I ask that that additional revenue not go into glossy publications but into community infrastructure.

I also commend the Minister for Health for the additional funds that are going into the John Tonge Centre. I have seen several mothers in my office who have gone through significant trauma while waiting for official death certificates for their sons because of the backlog at John Tonge. It is not an experience to be envied and it is not an experience that any parent should have to undergo. I look forward to John Tonge being able to process all of the necessary documentation in a timely and compassionate manner.

It has also been stated in this House that Matthew Franklin called this budget a budget from the heart. I trust that the budget from the heart is effective for all members of our community in Queensland—not just those in Labor electorates. People right across Queensland, whether they be in urban or rural communities, contribute to our state and make it great. We do not need any discrimination between urban, rural, Labor or non-rural electorates. We need equity, fairness and we need to know that people in our community can feel safe, cared for and wanted.

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