



Speech by

DESLEY BOYLE

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Hansard 5 June 2003

STATE BUDGET 2003-04

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (12.53 p.m.): I am pleased indeed to rise to support the budget. It is an excellent budget. So far as Cairns is concerned, I have to say that it is even better than I had hoped and others had hoped. I want to address first, however, some key elements of the budget that will benefit all Queenslanders before I speak in more detail about the benefits for Cairns. I want to recognise the tremendous boost that is being given to the Health budget, not only for this coming financial year but over the next four years. There is an increase in the Health budget of \$300 million or almost seven per cent, and that is just this first year. Over the four-year period there will be an increase in spending on health of over \$2.6 billion. This is what the people of Queensland want. They want the absolute best health services to be provided to people living anywhere in Queensland, and that means a lot of money has to go that way.

I also want to recognise the important increase in disability funding. It is a bit tough for people to see so much money going towards disability funding now, but it has to in order to redress the dreadful wrongs of the past—the massive neglect that occurred for people with disabilities over those many years of National Party governments. Of course it will provide them with support and caring, but it will do more than that: it will also give people with disabilities a better quality of life and within that the opportunity to work, to engage in further education and training, and to participate more fully in the lifestyle that most of us in Queensland take for granted.

I want to recognise, too, the importance of the \$100 million that has been allocated over the next four years for the Smart State strategy. I have to tell members that the Smart State strategy is really catching on in Cairns, because for a long time we have known that we had not only smart young people in our schools but smart businesses and smart initiatives in the arts. This is now a way that we can showcase those not just to people in Cairns but across Queensland. I am sure other communities are following similarly.

The budget for Cairns, though, is particularly good in a number of areas. It is certainly good in terms of tourism. I was a bit dismayed before to hear the remarks of the member for Caloundra, who was criticising our government for a lack of support for tourism. This of course was because she took it purely as though the way we support tourism is a matter of marketing and promotional dollars. While those dollars—very many millions of dollars—are indeed important for tourism and while there will always be calls for more millions we can spend, particularly internationally, in promoting Queensland tourism, at the same time what this government is doing is probably even more important than those marketing and promotional dollars—that is, putting in place the infrastructure that supports tourism, enhances tourism and encourages it. Cairns is a good example of where this government has been successful.

I know that some honourable members have already been to Cairns since the opening of the lagoon and the esplanade project. The upgrading of the esplanade and the building of the lagoon with a contribution of \$12.5 million from the Beattie government is a major contribution not only to the lifestyle of people in Cairns but also to tourism infrastructure. I was pleased to be with Steve Bredhauer, the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads, when he opened the Cityport development that is next to the esplanade development. That is increasing the wonderful marina and wharf facilities, the walkways and the restaurants around the seaport.

This first stage of Cityport has cost \$47 million. Yes, that benefits those of us who live in Cairns, but it is tourism infrastructure and should be counted as such. The Minister for Transport deserves particular recognition for all of the infrastructure components that he is putting in place. The parliament heard this morning of the coming of the tilt train to Cairns. That is tourism infrastructure and should be counted, in a sense, in the Tourism budget. Similarly, in other portfolios I am pleased to say that the infrastructure is clearly in place.

The most important thing to the people of Cairns in the present budget announced this week is the increase in health funding. There is an extra \$6 million in health funding for the Cairns health district. Of that, there is \$3.7 million in recurrent operational funding. That is a very big boost to the budget, particularly of the Cairns Base Hospital. The public has called for it and the staff have called for it, and they were right to do so. While there are some efficiencies undoubtedly that can be better put in place at the hospital and some money saved towards providing more and enhanced services, the boost from Queensland Health will help no end. Cancer treatment services, the emergency department and renal dialysis are some of the areas that will benefit. But the best news of all is the \$500,000 to start the rehabilitation unit at Cairns Base Hospital that has been so sorely needed. In fact, I am able to inform honourable members that the advertisement for the director of rehabilitation medicine at Cairns Base Hospital is in the *Courier-Mail* today. Queensland Health has taken that budget and is already implementing the increases.

The further increases in the health allocation for the Cairns health district will be put to equipment. As well as that money, there are the increases that have been negotiated through the enterprise bargaining agreement. That will also mean additional dollars, particularly on staffing costs, into the Cairns health district. There are some other marvellous increases in families and disability spending, in state development and the development of business opportunities through an industrial park. There are increases in police and increases in teachers. There is spending at our schools such as Trinity Bay State High School and Cairns High School and also at our primary schools. There is also funding for a special education unit at Woree State High School. There is very much indeed that the people of Cairns have to be pleased about, not least of which is the spending in terms of sports.

We have some six international-standard sporting facilities in Cairns and we are adding to that number with a major allocation of \$450,000 for Cairns basketball to complete a project of four airconditioned indoor courts in the city of Cairns and a further allocation for stage 3 of Barlow Park works. Barlow Park will become our sports stadium of the future.

Sitting suspended from 1.01 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Ms BOYLE: I am pleased to continue speaking about the tremendous benefits in the budget for sporting facilities in Cairns. With the Cairns City Council we are creating a major stadium at Barlow Park. The amount of \$670,000 via a fifty-fifty contribution with the council to stage 3 will be much welcomed, as will the smaller but nonetheless important funding given to the Cairns PCYC and the Olympic Tennis Club.

Arts have not been forgotten in the budget. The \$2.4 million for the Cairns Centre of Contemporary Arts will provide for a facility which we hope will open in less than a year from now and which will be an important piece of infrastructure for the arts in Cairns. In addition, there will be \$180,000 in operational funding for local cultural organisations and another \$50,000 for regional arts development.

I am pleased, too, that the Minister for Housing is in the chamber as I am able to pay him a compliment on his contribution to housing right around the state. I especially say thankyou for the \$6 million that will be put into projects in Cairns. Funding of \$2.2 million will continue and complete the community renewal projects in Manoora. These have been a great success. Sporting and recreational facilities will complete the project over the next year. In addition, houses will be upgraded and new dwellings, which are sorely needed, will be constructed in this area.

Much is in the budget for business in Cairns—the development of the first stage of the Woree Business and Industry Park, the contribution in property works to the Hawker Pacific development at Cairns airport and some \$40 million of work at the Cairns airport in safety, security, expansions, terminal works and works on the infrastructure associated with the taxiways. There is also work at the Cairns seaport—a small but nonetheless vibrant seaport with a mix of activities such as tourism, fishing and trade. Those works and the further planning for the long-term works around the port will be matched by the next stage of the cityport development.

Cairns is also fortunate to have amounts in the budget for small organisations—valiant organisations such as the naval cadet organisation and the Coast Guard. We have not forgotten the TAFE and the perhaps less glamorous but important initiatives such as the recently commenced drug court program. I particularly wish to recognise the special grant under Local Government of \$1.95 million to the Cairns City Council for the botanic gardens and Tank Precinct redevelopment. The botanic gardens are beautiful tropical gardens visited by tourists and locals. They border the electorates

of Barron River and Cairns and are a facility for all in the region. I have no doubt that that money will be well spent.

We are fortunate in Cairns to have a fine Police Service. A front-page article in today's *Cairns Post* highlights its excellent work in Operation Bravo Flown. Three men and one woman will be charged with some 300 charges of break and enter, wilful damage and stealing. This is welcome news. This morning I noted also that a total of 22 juveniles and two adults are soon to be charged with 126 offences, including 58 break and enter offences. Our Police Service is doing as much as possible to combat crime and provide for a safe community in Cairns. Therefore, I compliment the Minister for Police and welcome the additional 300 police officers who will be around the state to further improve the safety of Queenslanders.

This is an excellent budget. I wish to conclude as I started: by commending the Treasurer and the Minister for Health on the new funding in the four-year plan for increased services in Health. In addition to those areas that I mentioned at the beginning of this speech, I am pleased to see increased funding that will reduce waiting lists, provide more assistance for home and community care, expand dental care and improve the waiting lists in that area.

I congratulate the Treasurer, the Under Treasurer and Treasury. The bottom line is that we are still the lowest taxed state in Australia. In Queensland we pay \$1,480 per capita in taxes compared with \$1,892 per capita on average in the other states. This means that taxpayers in other states pay 28 per cent more tax than Queenslanders. That is because we have a government that is managing its money excellently, providing the services that people need and keeping tight control over expenditure. I commend the budget and all of those involved in its preparation.