



Speech by

**JAN JARRATT**

**MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY**

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Hansard 5 June 2003

**STATE BUDGET 2003-04**

**Ms JARRATT** (Whitsunday—ALP) (5.17 p.m.): Earlier this week I saw a television report on the atrocities occurring in the Congo where men, women and children are literally being slaughtered in their hundreds. This was followed by a report on the uncertain future of political opponents to President Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. Like any fair-minded person, I was deeply moved by the plight of these people and I was drawn to reflect on the stark contrast that separates their lives from ours. It is easy to say that we are just lucky to enjoy a democratic way of life that upholds our right to political expression and protects us from the vagaries of political despots, but I think there is much more to it than that. One of the common threads that runs through healthy democratic societies is a universal access to a quality education and an inclusive social policy.

The budget delivered by the Treasurer this week is a clear demonstration to the people of Queensland that the Beattie government is not just serious about maintaining a healthy economic position but, equally importantly, we are committed to improving our social and environmental capital as well. To put it another way, this budget responds to each element of the triple bottom line. It is a smart budget for a Smart State.

For the electorate of Whitsunday, this budget contains funding to ensure the delivery of all election promises as well as supporting our continuous community building activities. In particular, I welcome the budget's focus on providing increased funding for health. Depending on where they live, people in the electorate of Whitsunday access the services of either the Townsville, Mackay or Bowen Health Service District. I am therefore more than delighted to note that these three health service districts will share in an additional \$5.6 million.

This includes \$1.3 million additional funding for cancer treatment services, \$2 million additional funding for renal dialysis services, \$500,000 additional funding for cardiac services and an additional \$363,000 for funding of community mental health. In addition, both hospitals in my electorate have been allocated funding for state-of-the art health equipment to a total value of \$201,000. This equipment will make the jobs of the dedicated health staff at both Bowen and Proserpine hospitals just that little bit easier, as well as improving the range and quality of the service available to local residents.

As a former teacher, I am keenly interested in the education of our children and young people. As I said at the beginning of my speech, I believe that universal education is one of the key elements in the creation of a robust democracy. We are fortunate in this state that we have a system of compulsory education that ensures at a very minimum that every child has an opportunity to develop their skills and talents to allow them to be active and informed citizens. Having said that, I know from my own experience that teaching is not always an easy job. Some students are simply more challenging than others, so any decrease in the teacher to student ratio or any increase in support staff numbers, including behaviour management and special education personnel, should be loudly applauded, and that is just what this budget does. Some 636 new teachers will commence work in 2004. This will cost the state around \$42 million each year, but it will be money well spent.

I know what a positive difference the extra teachers appointed this year have made to schools in my electorate, particularly in Bowen, where children of seasonal workers can now be more easily absorbed into existing classes. I also welcome budget confirmation of \$1.3 million in funding for airconditioning of Bloomsbury, Hampden, Narpi, Bowen, Cannonvale and Proserpine state schools and Bowen and Proserpine high schools. I know from my conversations with local teachers and students

that airconditioned classrooms are worth their weight in gold, so I applaud the Minister for Education for continuing with this program.

Finally on the topic of education, I want to acknowledge and welcome the funding approval for repainting of school buildings at Bucasia and Proserpine state schools and repainting and reproofing at Eimeo State School. The Triple R program has been a huge success. Many schools in my electorate have experienced the boost in morale that a fresh coat of paint can bring, and I know that the three schools just mentioned will be no exception.

As I have explained at other times, the electorate of Whitsunday is characterised by its diversity. Each urban area within the electorate has its own specific personality and needs. Bowen, for instance, is emerging from a period of economic difficulty into an exciting period of growth and community development. While many factors have contributed to this turnaround, it was the Beattie government's \$10 million contribution to the local council several years ago that kick-started the process by creating jobs and giving the town a facelift. I have every confidence that Bowen's best years are ahead of it. This year's budget continues the Beattie government's tradition of support for Bowen by providing funding to support the town as a tourist destination. I am particularly proud that we are getting behind the annual Bowen Fishing Classic with a \$15,000 grant through the Queensland Events Regional Development Program. Whether we think of Bowen as the top of the Whitsundays or the Whitsundays as Bowen South, one thing is clear: both areas will benefit from this government's ongoing commitment to the funding of destination promotion.

On this topic, I proudly remind the House that Tourism Whitsunday is the current holder of the national tourism award for destination promotion. I have no reason to believe that this great track record is about to change. On the contrary, the General Manager of Tourism Whitsunday, Glen Ormsby, has just this week affirmed that operators in the Whitsundays were largely optimistic about forward bookings for the winter period. Much of this success is due to the professional way in which TW approaches its task. To that end, I want to place on record my gratitude to former CEO John Dean and to welcome Glen Ormsby to the position of general manager. In addition, I want to say thankyou to the former chair of the board of TW, Simon Latchford, for his enthusiastic support of his local industry. I welcome the new chair, Lyn Gregson, to the position and wish her well for her time at the helm.

I am proud that the Beattie government continues to support our tourism industry through financial support for RTOs, destination promotion campaigns and the various convention and incentive bureaux across the state. While this funding is really important, I have to agree with the member for Cairns, who earlier reminded us that the Beattie government also supports tourism through its commitment to infrastructure development. The development of six Great Walks throughout Queensland epitomises this government's commitment to infrastructure development that will boost tourism, which ultimately means jobs for local people. I could not be happier that our Great Walk of Whitsunday has received the balance of more than \$1.3 million in this budget. Work on the walking track for the Great Walk of Whitsunday has been under way for some time and will continue full steam ahead. This walk is set to become an icon attraction in the state, so I thank the Minister for Environment for his faith in our region and his commitment to the people of Whitsunday.

But wait, there's more! I was delighted this week to be able to inform Mayor Mario of the Whitsunday Shire Council that the Beattie government would contribute \$1 million as our share of the funding for the proposed Airlie Beach streetscape development. I applaud the council's commitment to the upgrading and beautification of Airlie Beach central. Together with other proposed developments in this area and the spectacular Airlie lagoon, Airlie Beach is fast becoming the must-visit centre of the tourism universe.

The southern extremity of the electorate of Whitsunday takes in the northern beach suburbs of Mackay city. The single biggest issue facing residents in this area is road access to the city. In the 2001 election this government gave a commitment to undertake intersectional upgrades and road improvements on Mackay-Bucasia Road over a five-year period. The good news is that the vast majority of this work is either completed or under way as we speak.

This budget delivers \$3.7 million that ensures the current work between Eimeo Road and Sologinkins Road is completed in the very near future. I need to place on record my appreciation to the people of the northern beaches who have shown enormous patience and resolve during the past six months while this section of roadworks has been under way. One of the major problems is that this road is the only route for traffic coming from the northern beaches into Mackay and there have therefore been some considerable delays to morning traffic as we all try to negotiate the road into town between 7 a.m. and 8.30 a.m. The roadworks are expected to be completed by mid-July, and I feel very confident that at that time we will all be able to say that it was worth the effort. In the meantime, I urge the Mackay City Council to give serious consideration to the construction of an alternative road into the city. I understand that this is part of its strategic plan, and I implore it to give urgent priority to such a project.

I am proud to say that this budget delivers funding to complete all election commitments to residents of the northern beaches. Earlier this year, together with the Minister for Emergency Services and my colleague the member for Mackay, I participated in the announcement of the securing of a site for a brand new co-located emergency services facility that will service a large section of my electorate, including the northern beaches. Located just off Mackay-Bucasia Road in Beaconsfield, this facility will accommodate ambulance, fire and emergency response services in a single complex. It will be the first of its kind in Queensland and will hugely enhance the response times of these services to the northern beaches. The really great news is that this budget has delivered the funding to complete the construction of the facility.

Also now funded in full is the proposed 24-hour police station for the northern beaches and North Mackay. The Minister for Police and Corrective Services has assured me that we are very close to announcing the location of the station, but in the meantime design work is well under way. This has been a great budget for Whitsunday and a great budget for people right across the state. I look forward to returning home to my electorate, where I can continue to share the good news with individuals and community groups from Mackay to Bowen. I commend the bill to the House.