



Speech by

Mr JIM PEARCE

MEMBER FOR FITZROY

Hansard 29 May 2003

STATE BUDGET 2003-04

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (4.10 p.m.): It is a pleasure for me to rise today in support of the appropriation bills before the House. The Fitzroy electorate is the seventh largest of the 89 electorates represented in the Queensland parliament. Based on coalmining and primary industry, the Fitzroy electorate and, in fact, the region can rightly claim to be a major contributor to the state's economy. This is sometimes used as justification for many people in the region to call for a greater share of the budget dollar. Of course, as the local member, I would accept with much pleasure if more funds were allocated to the central Queensland region. However, in saying that, it is important that the people of the Fitzroy electorate understand that government is aware of the contribution made by the regions to the wealth of the state. In fact, in this budget, 62.5 per cent of capital works funding is for the regions outside the Brisbane statistical division.

In my contribution to this debate I will spend some time on how funds are distributed in electorates like Fitzroy and how the people benefit over and above the big announcements made on budget day. I will then come back to the appropriation bills now before the parliament. First of all, let us take a quick run around the Fitzroy electorate. It boasts the major centres of Dysart, Middlemount, Blackwater, Moura, Mount Morgan, Gracemere, South Rockhampton—including the suburbs of Depot Hill, Port Curtis, and Allenstown—as well as the Aboriginal community of Woorabinda. Smaller rural communities within the electorate include Marmor, Bajool, Bouldercombe, Ridgeland, Alton Downs, Dalma, Westwood, Stanwell, Gogango, Duaringa, Dingo, and Bluff, which is the home town for train crews on the coal haulage line. If we look further south, there are the communities of Baralaba, Bauhinia, Banana, Goovigen, Jambin, Wowan, and Dululu and to the north of Rockhampton, the major housing developments of Glendale and Glenlee.

There are more than 50 schools servicing the students who come from within the boundaries of the Fitzroy electorate. There are five state hospitals, 11 police stations, 10 ambulance stations, six fire stations and several dozen rural fire brigades. Major state roads include the Capricorn Highway, Burnett Highway, Dawson Highway and Dingo Mount Flora Road, also known as the Fitzroy Development Road. Five whole shires and four part shires are situated within the boundaries of the Fitzroy electorate.

Before I go on to highlight how spending has benefited the people I work for, I want to congratulate the Hon. Terry Mackenroth, the Treasurer, for delivering a budget that focuses on the vision of a Smart State by meeting its obligations to current and future generations of Queenslanders. Putting money into health, education, families, housing, law and order, and jobs is what Labor governments are all about. I am proud to be a member of a government that puts dollars into improving opportunities and quality of life for all Queenslanders.

As a former mineworker and labourer, I have a great deal of satisfaction when I see that unemployment in Queensland has been reduced to low levels not seen for 13 years. This is despite more people than ever moving to Queensland over the last 12 months—some 36,500 from interstate, which is the highest level in more than six years, and some 26,000 international migrants. For Queenslanders, it is comforting to know that the state's finances are healthy with a cash surplus and that this government has maintained Queensland's AAA credit rating. It ensures that Queensland remains a low-tax state.

Bringing down a budget that delivers to all Queenslanders involves much more than what the Treasurer has presented to the parliament and what can be gleaned from the budget papers. It is also

about how each of the government agencies disburses those dollars through the various programs over a financial year. To demonstrate just how that happens, I will identify how some of the dollars allocated in last year's budget benefited the people of the Fitzroy electorate. The following are examples of where taxpayers' dollars are spent over and above those funds required for the wages and resources of people employed in the delivery of state government services. I am pleased to have been able to play a part in securing the funding for many of these projects by providing the link between the community and government.

Given the time limits I wish to have the rest of my written speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Education

- \$224,248—ICT funding for 36 state schools;
- \$154,000—additional ICT funding for 36 state schools;
- \$2.5m—Round 4 Cooler Schools Program—12 schools;
- \$52,000—Bajool SS—School Improvement Assistance Scheme;
- \$8,000—Dysart SHS—upgrade car park;
- \$20,000—Gracemere SS—tennis court;
- \$6,600—Marmor SS—concrete path;
- \$4,200—Moura SS Special Ed Unit—new fence;
- \$15,000—Bouldercombe SS—Solar Schools Program.

Employment

- \$20,000—Green Trainees Project—Moura, Theodore, Woorabinda;
- \$137,810—Skilling Mount Morgan Project.

Environment

- \$10,000—Community Cultural Heritage Grant—Gracemere Homestead.

Families

- \$122,000—DV & Court Support Services;
- \$4,000—Emergency Relief Funding—Blackwater;
- \$18,300—Disaster Relief Assistance following flooding—for families in Fitzroy, Banana and Miriam Shires.

Health

- \$11,000—Blackwater Medical Centre—carpark sealing;
- \$47,338—Banana Health Service District—bonus funding to upgrade accommodation for Qld Health staff;
- \$40,700—Central Highlands Health Service District—bonus funding to upgrade accommodation for Qld Health staff;
- \$74,400—Moranbah Health Service District—bonus funding to upgrade accommodation for Qld Health staff.

Local Government

- \$10,500—Banana SC—new public toilets Dululu;
- \$6,400—Mount Morgan SC—Capital Works Subsidy Scheme—sewage works;
- \$300,000—Fitzroy, Mount Morgan, Duaringa, Banana, Broadsound, Woorabinda Councils—RLIP Funding.

RLIP projects funded include major redevelopment of Baralaba RSL Hall; upgrading of grandstands at Mount Morgan swimming pool; community access pathways in Bouldercombe; lighting for the Gracemere Sports Club's football field; improvements to local halls including Bajool School of Arts, Alton Downs, Stanwell, Kalapa, and Wycarbah.

Main Roads

- \$6.6m—Leichhardt Hwy works/new bridges over Dawson River;
- \$15.4 million (total works)—completion of 2 lane seal Fitzroy Developmental Road between Dingo and Mount Flora;
- \$500,000—Kabra-Mount Morgan Road upgrade;
- \$800,000—Rockhampton-Ridgeland Road upgrade;
- \$90,000—Moura street lighting project;
- \$1.5 million intersection upgrade/widening Capricorn Hwy at Stanwell;
- \$2 million widening Capricorn Hwy, btwn Neerkol Creek & Spring Creek;
- \$330,000—repairs to Alma Creek Bridge on Burnett Highway;
- \$150,000—upgrade intersection of Baralaba-Woorabinda Road adjacent to Dawson River;
- \$1.189 million—38 kilometres of bitumen reseals on sections of Dawson, Capricorn and Burnett Highways;
- \$160,000—upgrade truck parking facilities Dysart-Middlemount Road.

Natural Resources

\$2,000 maximum subsidy each—for 19 Bajool residents—for rainwater tanks.

This subsidy was to assist residents who lost water supply from a reticulated system operated by Cheetham Salts which was no longer prepared to provide the water supply because of litigation concerns.

Sport and Recreation

- \$40,000—Club Development Program—various groups;
- \$45,000—Local Govt Dev. Program—Dysart skate park;
- \$56,250—Local Govt Dev. Program—Moura skate park;
- \$17,950—Minor Facilities Program—Mount Morgan skate park.

Treasury

- \$336,016—Gambling Community Benefit Fund—28 groups.

Examples include \$29,000 for Bauhinia School P&C for swimming pool; \$28,000 for Baralaba Show Society for new amenities block; and \$20,000 for resurfacing tennis court for Dingo Tennis Club.

Unfortunately, not everything that the community and I have worked for has come to fruition but that will not deter me from continuing to pursue a number of issues important to the people I work for in this Parliament.

For example, I have been patient on the issue of a new police station for Mount Morgan because of the huge effort required from Labor Governments to lift the number of police stations, increase police numbers, establish police shopfronts and police beats from the low level of police presence left to us by the 32 years of National Party neglect.

I believe it is now Mount Morgan's turn to get a new police station and I will be lobbying strongly for this to happen.

I will also be working to lift the status of the last remaining unsealed section of the Fitzroy Development Road between Woorabinda and Bauhinia.

Some funds have been allocated to improving this section of road but it is nowhere near what is required and I will be lobbying to have the works included in future Roads Implementation Programs.

It is certainly better positioned than at any other time to be included in future planning and I will be looking for landholders, livestock transporters and other heavy transporters to continue their support for this project.

And I urge the Federal Government to share the cost burden of this road upgrade.

Another big ticket item on my agenda for future budgets is to win funding for the construction of the Austadium—the second stage of the Gracemere Saleyards expansion.

The Austadium will provide a venue for indoor horse events, sales and other entertainment and will be a significant asset for the region.

The Saleyards Board of Directors made an excellent submission but, in all honesty, too late to be considered as a serious contender in this year's Budget.

One of the first priorities for the people of Central Queensland is access to health services.

While rural and regional Queenslanders understand that not all services can be provided in all communities, they do expect to be able to access services within a reasonable travelling time and distance.

The Government acknowledges this expectation by allocating the funds, however, because of the shortage of medical professionals it cannot always ensure that the services can be put in place.

This year's budget increase of over \$300 million is certainly welcome.

\$175 million of this increase is for additional employee costs including new enterprise agreements and awards for nursing, non-nursing and visiting medical staff.

Like every Central Queenslander, I appreciate and respect our nurses and other health workers who are of the highest quality and deserve good wages and working conditions.

Disability Services is another winner in this year's Budget with a \$290 million increase which includes \$200 million in new funding. I know this announcement will have been welcomed by support groups in my electorate.

The education of Queensland's children is an issue about which we are all passionate and Government and the community accept that quality education requires a huge financial investment.

Recurrent expenditure for education has increased by 5.8% to \$4.488 billion.

From this Budget, Queensland will gain an extra 636 teachers, a figure which includes 327 teachers to meet usual annual growth.

Expenditure on capital works is \$257.2 million—up 4.8% on last year.

There is \$12 million in new funding to support students with disabilities.

And \$19 million for further air-conditioning of State and non-government schools???

There is also \$155 million for literacy strategies.

And \$162 million over 4 years to progress education and training reforms.

Better preparation for school trials and helping students stay at school are the two important steps that will ensure students get every opportunity to achieve at school and be better prepared for a work environment.

I am delighted to hear that police funding is up \$84 million or 9.2 % on last year's Budget. This takes the police operation budget to \$1.001 billion.

Police numbers will increase by 300 this year taking total police numbers to 8,700.

This year's Budget also provides \$1.41 billion for Queensland Transport and \$2.1 billion for Main Roads with \$1.27 billion of those dollars to be expended in regional Queensland.

Road improvements mean safer roads and enhanced opportunities for major industry expansion.

The State has allocated \$446 million for local authority subsidies to assist with major capital works.

Emergency Services gets a record \$607.6 million with the QAS to increase its workforce by taking on an additional 110 ambulance officers.

This figure includes 25 fully qualified officers and 85 student paramedics, four new stations, 17 replacement stations and 86 new vehicles.

I have mentioned only a few of the budget highlights.

But these are initiatives that continue to provide services for the people of Queensland.

We all acknowledge that every portfolio administered by the State could use more money but the reality is that there are only limited dollars available.

In the time remaining, I would like to provide a quick run down on some of the key funding allocations which will directly benefit those in the Fitzroy Electorate.

Those key allocations include:

\$135,000 for book stocks for public libraries.

\$6 million to provide rail infrastructure to assist in establishing common user rail freight facilities to industrial developments in regional Queensland.

\$1.27 million to complete rehabilitation and widening of the Dawson Highway (Gladstone-Biloela), east of Oaky Creek, at a total cost of \$2.04 million.

\$2.22 million to complete \$2.4 million shoulder widening on the Capricorn Highway, east of Dingo.

Under Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme, the following State Government contributions are provided on 50/50 basis for local govt projects:-

- \$190,000 to complete pavement and sealing works on Golden Mile Road, within Broadsound Shire, at total project cost of \$760,000;
- \$190,000 to complete gravel formation works from the Range to Baranga Road, within Duaringa Shire, at total project cost of \$760,000.

These works, I understand, are well advanced.

\$318,000 for repainting of school buildings at Blackwater State High School, Dingo State School, Goovigen State School, Gracemere State School, Jambin State School, Moura State School, Waraburra State School and Woorabinda State School.

\$300,000 to replace a sewerage plant at Mount Morgan Central State School.

\$20,000 to assist the delivery of special education at Blackwater Nth State School.

Confirmation of \$2.4 million in funds to meet the Government's 80% contribution for air-conditioning at Blackwater North, Dingo, Duaringa, Gogango, Goovigen, Gracemere, Middlemount, Mount Morgan Central, Moura, Port Curtis Road, Allenstown, and Waraburra State Schools.

\$116,000 for improvements to Blackdown Tableland Road at Tableland National Park.

\$80,000 for vegetation mapping in the northern area of the Brigalow Belt bio-region.

\$50,000 for vegetation mapping in the southern area of the Brigalow Belt bio-region.

\$52,000 for construction of toilet blocks at Rainbow Falls in the Blackdown Tableland National Park.

\$534,000 for local road and drainage works.

\$48,000 towards the development of the Blackwater Mining Museum Park and Visitors Precinct.

\$29,000 towards the development of the Bedford Weir Recreation Area.

\$42,308 to construct two additional courts with lighting at Middlemount Tennis Club.

\$11,444 to construct six outdoor courts for beach volleyball and touch football at Rockhampton's Athelstane Bowls Club.

\$9,900 to install safety fencing for motocross racing at Pink Lily for Rockhampton and District Motocross Club.

\$9,324 to develop a four-hole outdoor golf course for juniors and beginners at the Rockhampton Golf Club.

\$6,000 to construct 20 horse stalls for equestrian at the Alton Downs Polocrosse and Sports Club.

\$12,000 for four new patient beds at Baralaba Hospital and \$11,000 for a diathermy unit at Moura Hospital.

\$977,000 to construct 4 new public housing dwellings and \$58,000 to upgrade 11 public housing dwellings.

\$1.5 million for ongoing management of Mount Morgan minesite.

\$357,000 towards National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality in Fitzroy.

The Central Queensland region will receive around \$6.1 million to create an estimated 780 jobs through the State Government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative during 2003/2004.

This builds on the funding already allocated to the Fitzroy electorate under the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle, where approximately \$6.5 million has been allocated between October 1998 and March 2003.

This has resulted in 736 jobs being created for Fitzroy.

Mr Speaker, the 2003/2004 State Budget is positive, focused and one which has been well accepted by the taxpayers of Queensland.