



Speech by

**Hon. K. LINGARD**

**MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT**

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Hansard 6 June 2003

#### **STATE BUDGET 2003-04**

**Hon. K. R. LINGARD** (Beaudesert—NPA) (2.30 p.m.): The opposition acknowledges the significant increase in funding for people with disabilities. We all have to acknowledge the changing concept of how we deal with disabilities in our society, and I have always accepted the comment that a society can be judged by the way it treats people who have disabilities.

In 1997-98 the coalition was able to say that it increased the funding significantly over the previous six years of the Goss government. Whilst I note the Treasurer's statement that this government increased funding significantly in 1998 in comparison with previous years, I do not think that is something to skite about. This is something which will continually change, and more and more money will have to be provided to assist people with disabilities. What we have to accept is that we have an agreement with the federal government that in the area of disabilities they look after advocacy groups and employment and the state looks after care and accommodation.

Some \$200 million over four years is only a very small amount for service organisations to enable them to maintain viability. It is essential that funding and legislative reform create an environment in which service delivery is not constantly in crisis. Even now some parents are still driven to the point of taking their young people with disabilities to a care centre and being so desperate that unfortunately they do not pick them up in the afternoon and these people are now left to the care of the state. That is how desperate some people have become. It has happened over a long period. I must admit that it happened when I was Minister for Families. Some families and parents find themselves in a desperate situation and are driven to do that. We accept the 53 additional staff, which is an increase of about 2.5 per cent.

There is a very large increase in capital works to \$19 million, but I would point out to the government that only \$3.8 million was spent this year of the \$7.7 million budgeted. I think it was cruel of the government in 2001 to tell the people at Basil Stafford that it would be upgrading that centre when even now that centre has not been upgraded. As I say, there are still some families who are desperate enough to take their children to a place of care during the daytime and not pick them up in the afternoon.

In the area of Families, I note that there have been no new funds, only Future Directions funding that has already been announced. A four-year program commenced last year. There is not one new staff member, despite the minister predicting a continuing trend of an eight per cent increase in notifications in estimates hearings last year. I note that the figures released so far predict an increase of about six per cent. There have been no significant capital works. Cleveland Youth Centre will receive \$3.8 million and there is \$1.5 million for neighbourhood centres, but there are no significant capital works, and there is only \$7 million for IT, property management and minor works, and nothing for the new office in the south-west as was originally rumoured.

The Beattie government prides itself, supposedly, on the additional money it has committed to child protection, but increases in funding have not kept pace with increased notification rates and have not resulted in better outcomes for children. In 2001-02, notifications—reports of suspected harm to children—rose by more than 20 per cent. In the same period front-line staff increased by only six per cent. Based on figures for the first two quarters of this financial year, notifications to the Department of Families are continuing to rise at an alarming rate—by at least six per cent.

In December last year the minister was forced to admit that more than one in four Families officers were temporary or relief staff. The minister has made a great deal of the 90 additional Families positions which have been created, but only about one-third of those positions could really be described as front line and very few are involved in investigating notifications. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures show that Queensland has an unacceptable rate of investigations that are not finalised long after they should be. The summary was that the system is still failing children.

In the area of Sport, I note that there has been a decrease in the overall budget. There has been a \$2.6 million decrease in investment in sport and recreation infrastructure in Queensland. I note the government's attitude towards Lang Park. Whilst we hear the euphoria of Suncorp Stadium—

**Mr Shine:** You'll be there.

**Mr LINGARD:** Yes, I will be there. I have said that.

**Mr Mackenroth:** He has always said that; we have to give him that.

**Mr LINGARD:** I have always said that. At least I made a reputation running around bodies at Lang Park, not digging them up.

**Mr Mackenroth** interjected.

**Mr LINGARD:** Not like the Treasurer's mate Gibbsey! I note that this will be an issue which will come back and bite this government. I note the government's attitude towards the Public Works Committee. Someone threatened me not to say anything more about the Public Works Committee because last time I did I was referred to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. But, once again, this government has refused to allow the Public Works Committee to investigate any of the details of Lang Park.

Certainly I note that the PAC has not investigated any part of the funding towards Suncorp Stadium. Whether the Treasurer admits it is \$280 million or \$235 million, I have noted the Minister for Public Works' attitude that he is the builder and the Treasurer is the owner. I note the Premier's comments the other day in thanking Mr Maguire for all the money that has come in to Suncorp Stadium. I do not think anyone going to drink at Maguire's pubs will see a sign above the poker machines saying that the Premier has thanked them for all the money they have given to Lang Park.

Sooner or later this government will have to admit where the money—\$235 million—has come from to pay for the stadium. Somewhere along the line this government will have to admit who is paying the interest on that \$235 million, because this money, which has come either from borrowings of QIC or from consolidated revenue, will not last. I would say the interest rate is probably five per cent. Five per cent of \$235 million is just short of \$12 million. So that debt has to increase by \$12 million, and there is no way that the poker machine levy at this stage will pay off \$12 million. It will take a long time to come out even.

**Mr Mackenroth:** The loan is a loan over 20 years, and the money that would come through that levy will pay that loan off over 20 years and we will actually have an excess of money.

**Mr LINGARD:** That is an explanation which the minister has already given but, as I have just said, five per cent of \$235 million is just short of \$12 million, and there is no way in the world the government got more than \$12 million in the first year. It has already admitted that. It was probably about \$5 million or \$6 million. So the debt is increasing. Regardless, it will be a long time, and certainly it will not be paid out before the Treasurer leaves parliament. Someone will have to pick it up at the end, regardless of what he has done.

Money is certainly coming from somewhere—borrowings on which the Treasurer has paid out the whole debt. There is no doubt that sooner or later price variations will come to the fore as they started to this morning. Regardless of whether the Treasurer wants to answer these questions or the Minister for Housing wants to answer them, someone has to answer for what is happening with those price variations. If it is the case that the joint venture has to pay out some great price variations of \$20 million to \$40 million, who will pay for them? If the government does not pay for them, what favours will be given to this joint venture group in the future? Slowly that will come out.

I also mention that Sport and Recreation Queensland failed to meet its target number of QAS athletes and those training and residing in regional Queensland. The government underperformed on this measure by over 30 per cent. The number of athletes training and residing in regional Queensland was down on the target figure by 100 athletes. I would have thought that, with his interest in sport, this is something that the Treasurer should be able to achieve.

When we look at how successful the Broncos have been with their training programs—admittedly, it has cost them money—we see that this is certainly an avenue that many sports would like to explore if they had the financial ability of Rugby League, so that they could select young people and train them under their programs. The Broncos are lucky. The Lions are lucky. But many other sports do not have that ability. I think sooner or later the government has to pick up many

of those sports and put much money into them. Unfortunately, unless a person is both the Minister for Sport and Treasurer—

**Mr Reeves:** Prior to 1989, nothing had been spent on sport—absolutely nothing.

**Mr LINGARD:** I agree, but it is no use in 10 years time saying that prior to 2003 we did not do anything for athletics or we did not do anything for swimming—those sports that are not as financially well off as Rugby League and Aussie Rules. What will happen with the lease arrangements for teams such as the Lions and the Broncos in the future? There is no doubt that the Lions pay a very high price for the Gabba. They are locked in to the Gabba. There is nowhere else that they can use. But it is a matter of whether the Lions are going well enough—winning enough games and playing as many home games as they would like—in order to be able to continue to pay off their debt to the cricket ground. Similarly, whilst the Broncos continue to win and get plenty of home games they will be able to pay off their debt. But when they are not winning—and the Broncos cannot win every time; some other team has to win—and crowd numbers decrease, how will they be able to continue to pay these very high costs?

It was disappointing for me to pick up Wednesday's *Beauresert Times* and see on the front page massive headlines about what is happening to the hospital system in Beauresert. People have talked about money going into Queensland Health, but the front-page article in the *Beauresert Times* was about a lady, who stated—

When I was 28 weeks, I went and saw a midwife at Beauresert and she said it (the maternity ward) would be open by the time I was due.

This magnificent hospital was built during 1997-98 by the coalition government. Since that time, it has been a political football. The article states—

She said she wanted to have the baby at Beauresert so she did not have to worry about travelling a great distance when she was in labour.

...

Thirty-six weeks into her pregnancy she was told by her general practitioner to organise having the baby at Logan Hospital because he was not confident Beauresert Hospital's maternity ward would be open in time.

Open in time! It has been closed for two years! At one stage, 400 babies every year were born at the Beauresert Hospital. That hospital's maternity section was massive. The whole lot was taken down and a brand new hospital was built. The article continues—

'All along they said I could come back to Beauresert for post natal care' ...

Six hours after the baby was born—

this lady—

was preparing herself to be transferred to Beauresert.

'All I was waiting for was to be discharged' ...

She called her husband when she was discharged and said she was ready to be driven to Beauresert Hospital.

'One of the midwives rang Beauresert to get clearance, then she came in and said the head doctor said he didn't have enough midwives.'

The nurse told—

the lady—

the two Beauresert midwives were training at Logan over the weekend.

The article states further—

'People like us would like to know why we are being fed this misinformation which only comes back to haunt the hospital.

...

'Where are the people making the decisions that keep sabotaging the local women and restricting them from giving birth at Beauresert Hospital?

...

'We were there when it happened, when it (Beauresert Hospital's maternity ward) closed down for three weeks and now it's been over two years.

'I don't think it (the reopening of the maternity ward at Beauresert) will ever happen. I think it's a lost cause.'

This is a brand new, 40-bed hospital at which the surgical and maternity wards continue to be closed, at which we find that people attending outpatients are told to see their private doctor and at which some accident victims are airlifted to Southport, Logan or other Brisbane hospitals. Others are taken there by ambulance, when the Beauresert Hospital has a landing pad for helicopters.

The mother of a child with a suspected broken foot was told that she would have to drive her child to Southport because there was no X-ray service at the Beauresert Hospital on the weekends. A child with a temperature but in a stable condition was sent from the Beauresert Hospital to the Mater Hospital for treatment because the Beauresert Hospital was not able to perform the necessary tests.

Quite obviously, that is not good enough for a brand new hospital built in 1997-98. It has been a political football that, obviously, has not been funded adequately by the government.

I also want to mention SunWater and the fact that it is a government body. Once again, we see what happens when these government bodies are allowed to make their own bureaucratic decisions. Anyone who has seen the Maroon Dam and Moogerah Dam would know that in the 1970s both of those dams were built, as people were told, for agricultural viability. The boards who ran those dams allowed only approximately 60 per cent of water to be allocated. The other 40 per cent was kept in storage so that in times of drought, obviously, there would be adequate water in those dams. If these dams run dry, it takes a long time for water to flow back into them. So it is not as though when they are emptied they fill up again quickly. They have very poor catchment areas.

But of course SunWater, being told by this government that it has to make as much money as possible and return as much of a dividend as possible, allocates all of the water out of the dam every year. As well as allocating all of the water out of the dam—I will not say 100 per cent, because someone referred to this the other day—it allocates all other water from tributaries and creeks either above or below the dam. So really, there is an allocation of more than 100 per cent. In a year such as this year, obviously all of the water is used and no water is retained for agricultural purposes.

When it comes to the crunch, the groups that are able to maintain their water use are the industries—Davis Gelatine, which this government forced on the Beaudesert shire and A.J. Bush, which this government forced on the Beaudesert shire—and urban development. Of course, the people who miss out are the agricultural people. That is completely unfair. All of the people around the Christmas Creek and Running Creek areas were afraid that they would be put on a total water ban once the weir at Round Mountain reached below 15 megalitres a day. There are eight to 10 users on Running Creek and some 42 license holders on Christmas Creek. There are 60 dairies along the Logan River and its tributaries, not to mention the beef cattle properties and the horse studs.

The farmers are worried that taking water from Christmas and Running creeks is not the solution. When the weather gets bad, there will not be any water to use. The water will never make it to the river. There are moves afoot to suspend water extraction at low levels. Farmers say that they should not be expected to supply their water at this level. They ask: what will happen to the value of their properties? Who wants to buy a dry farm? Will the lack of water be reflected in the Valuer-General's valuation of their farms?

The whole situation has come from the dam being overcommitted. Water has been allocated which at present is not there. The water in the creek and the tributary is not there in the dam and, surely, should not be allocated. There is no management of water by SunWater and no understanding of the system used by the farmers. Farmers do not just use the water because it is allocated to them; they use it when necessary because of drought and because new crops are planted in anticipation of a good season nine months down the track.

Obviously, when the dam was built in 1974 it was meant for the use of farmers, with a small portion of the water to be allocated for urban use. Now its priority is urban use, with the farmers playing second fiddle. The Beaudesert shire's allocation is 5,500 megalitres a year. Obviously, if the government continues its policy with SunWater the farmers will be put out of business and the local economy will die. An outcome is urgent. Winter crops should have been planted in April in order to be ready to feed in November. Time has already passed by. Farmers cannot plant crops worth thousands of dollars unless there is an assurance that the water will be available in the growing season should it be needed.

If members want a good feed of crayfish, they should go out to Joy's at Moogerah Dam. There are magnificent parks and magnificent cafes out there. However, the capacity of Moogerah Dam is down to two per cent. The rest of the Boonah shire has green grass, but there is no water at Moogerah Dam. I think that pumping must stop at 1.6 per cent, because obviously the pipes cannot get the water out of the bottom of the dam.

The trouble is that all these licences and large allocations are still being charged against the farmer. At present we allow the biggest power station in the area to take more and more water. Swanbank still takes water out of the Moogerah Dam. At present it is not taking water from there because it is coming from Wivenhoe. That has forced the farmers into a situation—that is, they do not want SunWater at Moogerah Dam because SunWater is the biggest charger in terms of water prices. Farmers know that if Swanbank is permanently taken away from that dam they will have to pay a large price for water at a time when their agricultural industries are not viable. We keep increasing the relative cost of water in the middle of the drought—the worst drought in living memory—and charging farmers for water that does not exist. Moogerah has rarely been full since 1976. The last time was in the early 1990s and for most of the last 27 years it has been in a severely depleted state. Still users are told that they must pay for their allocations and must pay for ongoing maintenance. They are still paying up to \$8,000 per year but have not received any water since 2001. If the government is continually going to say that it is up to SunWater, it is leaving it in the hands of the bureaucrats and it is not good.