



Speech by

LEX BELL, MP

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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STATE BUDGET 2003-04

Mr BELL (Surfers Paradise—Ind) (4.44 p.m.): Last year in this House I criticised the budget and, perhaps by coincidence, I was not any longer on the Indy invitation list, so this year I will not criticise the budget!

The media asked me what I hoped for in the budget before the Treasurer brought down this budget on Tuesday. I indicated three things, apart from the continuation of existing projects, that I hoped would be in the budget. The first was that I hoped that the land tax scales would be adjusted to accommodate the massive changes in valuations. The second was that there would be provision for a government-run aged care facility on the Gold Coast in response to the 27,000 signatures which were presented by me to the House last year, and the third was funding to enable implementation of stages of the Gold Coast transportation plan.

I see that of my wishes half of each of two of my three wishes have been granted. I do not really criticise this budget in all seriousness. I have always said that a dull budget is a good budget, and this one is a dull budget, but it also, in my view, is quite a good one. It is a solid budget. It builds on what has occurred in the past and it does continue the works that are in progress or planned.

I note particularly in the electorate of Surfers Paradise funding for the Gold Coast Convention Centre completion, which is partially in my electorate, funding for the Indy and funding for extra police and tourism, all of which is extremely welcome indeed. In the wider initiatives for the Gold Coast there are quite a number of matters, and I will not repeat what the member for Southport and the member for Gaven have said, and perhaps others that I did not hear.

I would like to note two of the wider initiatives on the Gold Coast which I see directly benefit the electorate of Surfers Paradise. One is the drug courts at Southport. They are an important facility for people who reside in the electorate of Surfers Paradise. The other is the Tweed bypass, which enables the northward flow of sand which naturally replenishes sand on the beaches in the electorate which I represent. However, there are also disappointments. I am disappointed at the meagreness of the relief given to land tax. Certainly that relief which is given will be welcomed, but it is not much for someone who finds that, say, in the last two years the unimproved capital value of his property has doubled. A benefit such as is contained here is not going to go very far.

It is said around this place, and said quite accurately, that when valuations go through the roof the local council should bring down its percentage rate in the dollar to accommodate this. I realise it is not so simple on a state-wide basis, where valuations may fluctuate from place to place, but I doubt very much whether the meagre—I repeat that term 'meagre'—concessions given to land tax in this budget will correspond with the overall increases in value throughout the state. I signal that at a later time I will be asking a question as to the total land tax revenue from this budget compared with the total land tax revenue in a preceding budget to see whether in fact advantage is being taken of the increases in valuations by some less than fair means adding to revenue from exactly the same land.

I would also like to point out that the question of aged care on the Gold Coast is going to become an election issue. Those 27,000 people who signed the petition asking for a government aged care facility on Gold Coast have not forgotten. Lots of them are asking me what is happening and I have been saying to them, 'Look, you can't do anything outside of budget. Timing is everything in politics. Wait until the next election comes near'. I think members will see that there will be a movement

on the Gold Coast from those people to say, 'We want to be heard'. That 27,000 signature petition was only one petition. I could have obtained many, many more signatures at that time.

I concede from the answer I received from the Minister for Transport to a question asked in the House this week that some of the aspects of the Gold Coast transportation plan are being implemented and funded in this budget. Perhaps it does not go far enough, but it would be churlish of me not to acknowledge that some of those matters have been addressed and substantial funding is going into road transportation on the Gold Coast. There are other issues, such as light rail and water transport, that desperately need to be addressed, and this is something that I will continue to take up with the Minister for Transport. I do not intend to go on and on, and I am not looking for a ticket to the Indy because I bought a unit on the track. But I would say to the Treasurer: on the whole, well done; it is not a bad budget.