



Speech by

GARY FENLON

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard 29 April 2004

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (2.36 p.m.): It is a pleasure to speak in this address-in-reply debate. This is the debate which responds to the address by the Governor in the first sittings of this the 51st Parliament of Queensland and, indeed, the third Labor government under the very competent stewardship of Peter Beattie.

Mr Wallace: More to come.

Mr FENLON: We hope there are more to come, because these are good governments for Queensland. As my constituents continue to tell me, there is no alternative in Queensland.

It has been a great pleasure to represent the constituents of Greenslopes in this parliament particularly over these last two terms of the Beattie government—to represent those people in the suburbs of Camp Hill, Carina, Coorparoo, Greenslopes, Holland Park, Holland Park West, Norman Park and Tarragindi, who total about 28,000 voters.

I would like to briefly cover some of the achievements of our government in the past term as they relate to my electorate and to canvass some of the general matters of policy that were outlined by Her Excellency in her speech and how these undertakings will start to affect some aspects of service delivery in the electorate of Greenslopes.

I am extremely proud of the achievements of the Beattie government over the past term, especially in the area of education. I can confidently say that the level of spending on capital works and maintenance and the attention to the delivery of good education service in my electorate have not been seen for generations. We have seen major redevelopment upgrades of local high schools—\$5.3 million at Cavendish Road High School, \$3 million of secondary school renewal at Coorparoo Secondary College and \$700,000 for upgrades at Whites Hill College and Holland Park High School, also through the Secondary Schools Renewal Program.

These are great achievements and some of those facilities such as the one at Coorparoo Secondary College are still to be opened. We have seen state primary school upgrades totalling \$6.779 million compared to \$9 million in total for high schools. Some \$428,000 of that was for the reconstruction of C block at Marshall Road State School, \$440,000 at Wellers Hill State School for the resource centre, \$200,000 for a special education unit, \$128,000 towards a new assembly hall at Wellers Hill State School, \$48,000 for Seville Road State School for a car park, \$300,000 to replace the toilet block at Marshall Road State School, \$4.5 million for the redevelopment of the Coorparoo State School, \$343,000 at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic School and \$392,000 at St Joachim's Catholic School.

We have seen safety improved in our local school environments through new safe drop-off and pick-up zones at a cost of \$160,000 at Coorparoo State School, Camp Hill and Wellers Hill state schools, and extra funding for IT grants totalling \$287,000. There is also \$150,000 for the Holland Park Police Station upgrade and \$1.1 million for the Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre to address homelessness. Indeed, adjacent to the Greenslopes electorate is the best hospital facilities imaginable with the \$353 million spent recently on the redevelopment of the Princess Alexandra Hospital and indeed the great services provided by the Greenslopes Private Hospital, which works very closely with the veterans community and this government through Health Department regulations.

The Governor's speech alluded to the major areas that this government will address in this term. One of those matters at the forefront of this government's decision to call an election at the time it did was that of child safety, and there is nothing more important to every member of this parliament and to all decent Queenslanders. This government will improve the child protection system by implementing the recommendations delivered by the recent Crime and Misconduct Commission inquiry into child abuse in foster care. This is to be undertaken through the auspices of a new Child Safety portfolio to address this issue. I am grateful to the minister for the recent briefing that he provided to myself and other members in relation to the implementation process. That briefing gives me great confidence that we are on the right track and that this minister is completely focused on a whole-of-government approach to dealing with child safety.

So many departments deal with child safety in one way or another. As the inquiry I mentioned has shown, it has been easy for some of those children to fall between the cracks, as it were, between the different portfolios under the previous system. I am sure that we would all agree with the minister in our hope that that will be something of the past—something that belongs in the past—and we will have a far better and comprehensive system to look after our children in the future.

Over the next three years there is a \$468 million package of additional initiatives to further our health services. As I have mentioned, many of these have already been established at the Princess Alexandra Hospital. Some 18,000 extra new elective patients will be treated, reducing waiting lists for surgery, and 242 new public hospital beds will also be established at the Mater Hospital, affecting the south side suburbs such as those in the Greenslopes electorate, as well as the Prince Charles Hospital and Caloundra Hospital. This will be boosted by 1,500 new nurse graduates.

As I have already mentioned, education is something that this government should be extremely proud of in terms of its past performance. Indeed, this will be driven further in the future with some of the most revolutionary changes that we have seen in the Queensland education system in generations. This is demonstrated in particular by the introduction of a universally available voluntary preparatory year of schooling in 2007, putting Queensland children on the same footing as their interstate peers. There will also be a move to target class sizes in years 4 to 10 from 30 to 28 by the start of 2007. This will give Queensland the smallest class sizes in Australia in these particularly important middle years, and we will see this occur in the context of the move to a comprehensive P-12 system of schooling in Queensland. There will also be significant initiatives in dealing with matters affecting everybody in our school communities in terms of violent and aggressive behaviour from intruders in school grounds, and the legislation passed in 2003 will back up this initiative.

This government is still focused very much on jobs, and jobs and training will be a key foundation to our work in this government. With 230,000 students being educated through our TAFE system in Queensland, \$2.4 billion is to be spent on vocational education and training to provide skilled workers. In conjunction with this, this government will be pursuing development in a balanced way between the exigencies of achieving commercial expansion and maintaining sound treatment of our environment. With this balance, we will be pursuing a number of programs. These include the advanced manufacturing plan of \$8 million, the creative industry strategy of \$8.9 million and \$5.1 million for the smart small business strategy. This will also be backed up by the creative industries strategy to assist the area of arts and entertainment, an area which is certainly dear to myself and many of my constituents who work in these fields.

A new portfolio of Communities has been established under this government. During this term, additional funding of \$65 million will be provided particularly to the disability services sector to increase support for adults, children and families and for the disability support sector in general. One area that is of very great significance to many of our community organisations, and those in my electorate are no exception, is the area of liability insurance. That is something that can cripple small organisations that have an important role in terms of looking after particular pockets of welfare and community enhancement. I am glad to see that negotiations will continue regarding the underwriting of liability insurance for the not-for-profit sector.

Multicultural affairs will also be well supported under this government with \$10 million for improving community relations. Emergency services are also fundamental to our suburbs on the south side. As we saw recently during the election campaign, our comfortable and stable life can be upset very quickly by events such as major storms sweeping through our suburbs. It is heartening to see that the 85,000 emergency volunteers in Queensland will receive additional equipment and training to improve standards and capacity throughout the state. It was a pleasure to attend the recent opening of the new emergency services building at Morningside which is in the electorate of my colleague Pat Purcell, the member for Bulimba. I am sure that the government's initiative will provide those people with the support that they deserve. This initiative will also be backed by an \$8.6 million multiservice special operations unit, which will be able to deal with major events such as terrorism and natural disasters.

We are all very pleased with the policing in the Greenslopes area. To be able to attend Neighbourhood Watch meetings time after time throughout my electorate, over the past year in particular, and to hear reports from officers indicating that there has been no crime in a particular sector for the previous period, or very negligible crime, certainly puts a smile on my face and certainly puts a smile on the faces of my constituents. The police have been doing a tremendous job right across the state. I am extremely happy with the activities of the police in the Greenslopes electorate in the way in which they are delivering a service in very close conjunction with our communities, particularly the Neighbourhood Watch groups. This will be backed up by innovative policing strategies over the term of this government, which will include police beats, school based police officers, DNA profiling, crime scene sample analysis, digital fingerprinting and other operational equipment and support. Recently, it was very helpful to attend the state police headquarters and to be guided through the operations, especially in areas such as the scenes of crime investigation and to see first-hand the latest technology and the levels of great competence displayed by those officers.

We will all come under pressure in the coming years through the sheer level of growth that we are experiencing in Queensland. This will be dealt with very ably under the Office of Urban Management. This office will ultimately oversee the completion of the SEQ 2021 regional plan. This plan is going to be of fundamental importance in terms of making decisions about our transport corridors—rail, roads, et cetera. The efficiency of this transport system will indeed be backed up by the culmination of a great deal of work that has been undertaken over the years to provide a world-class TransLink operation—a \$1.5 billion integrated transport network to ease public transport congestion—and also \$400 million to upgrade the Citytrain network for new services and trains to be established throughout that network.

The arts are also going to be well supported under this government. The nation's largest gallery of modern art will be part of the major redevelopment of the State Library of Queensland area. Indeed, arts initiatives include 16 other projects in regional areas.

As I have already mentioned, the environment will be well cared for under this government in a balanced way, along with development in the state. An amount of \$2.5 million will be provided over this term to establish and run an open space secretariat and an amount of \$5 million will be provided to start the Queensland Trust for Nature to help protect Queensland's open space. Indeed, in the suburbs adjacent to my area, the battle goes on in relation to fire ants and also there is the tremendous work undertaken by the Bushcare groups in revegetating local forests and remnant areas.

This government has great ambitions, and they will translate into significant achievements in my area of Greenslopes. In terms of health, a further \$1.5 million a year will be provided to establish a new cardiac team at the Princess Alexandra Hospital and \$110 million over the next three and a half years will be provided to further reduce elective surgery waiting times. We will also certainly receive our share of the 1,500 graduate nurses and 18,000 extra free dental treatments to pensioners, children, students and families over the next three years.

The roads in my area will receive \$144,000 to install median barriers at Deshon Street and Gaza Road; \$2.7 million for road safety programs across Brisbane; and \$2.4 million towards traffic improvement on my local sections of the Pacific Motorway and improvements to the Captain Cook Bridge. Again, education will be at the forefront of our activities with upgrades of the resource centre at the Wellers Hill State School to be finalised. There will also be upgrades of classrooms at Marshall Road State School, an upgrade of the telephone system at Seville Road State School and the wiring of schools for future upgrades to be undertaken at Holland Park, Marshall Road and Wellers Hill state schools.

Public housing will also receive a great boost with \$251,000 from the Smart State Building Fund and \$14.2 million for the refurbishment of the public housing interiors on the Brisbane south side. Funding allocations to Emergency Services also will have some impact in my local suburbs, with a further provision of \$480,000 to redevelop the Camp Hill Fire Station, which services the area.

Finally, the environment that we in this state all share is going to be enhanced by the very significant legislation that has already been passed—the first legislation passed under this parliament—with \$150 million devoted to preserving 20 million hectares of land through the new land clearing legislation. This will not only save trees but also deal with the problems of erosion, salinity and water quality. This is a great program for this government. I am very proud to be part of this government and to be able to support each of these initiatives in whatever way I can. I commend Her Excellency's speech.