



Speech by

Hon. Judy Spence

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

Hansard Tuesday, 18 May 2004

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Hon. J.C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (12.29 p.m.): On Saturday, 7 February I was re-elected as the member for Mount Gravatt for a sixth term with a two per cent increase in my primary vote. It was an encouraging result. I hope that my constituents saw it as the outcome of positive campaigning, strong policies and hard work. The result means that I now have the honour of being the longest-serving female member of parliament.

Government members: Hear, hear!

Ms SPENCE: Thank you. I would like to take this opportunity to place on the record my thanks to the voters of Mount Gravatt. I have always said that I regard it as an honour and a privilege to represent the interests of residents living in the Mount Gravatt electorate, which takes in the suburbs of MacGregor, Mount Gravatt, Mount Gravatt East, Nathan, Robertson, Runcorn, Sunnybank, Upper Mount Gravatt, Eight Mile Plains and small parts of Carina Heights and Holland Park.

Many generations of my family have lived in the area. I grew up in the electorate when the Big Top Shopping Centre was the place to shop, the tram stopped at Mount Gravatt Central and the Glen Hotel was surrounded by farms, and that was not that long ago. Of course, there have been many changes since that time and even more since I became the member for Mount Gravatt.

The Mount Gravatt electorate is one of the most densely populated electorates in Queensland and one of the smallest in area. The suburbs which make up the electorate were once frontier suburbs but are now easily accessible and seen as amongst Brisbane's most liveable suburbs. With the modernisation of the area, the state government has had to make big investments in the important areas of education, public housing, public transport and roads.

During the recent election campaign, I was able to outline to the electors of Mount Gravatt a long list of achievements of the Beattie government in my local area. These achievements included more than \$10.5 million in capital works to schools in the Mount Gravatt electorate since February 2001. This includes projects at Macgregor and Sunnybank state high schools, a new school hall at Mount Gravatt State High School, a new two-storey classroom at Macgregor State School and additional classrooms at Warrigal Road State School. More than \$1 million was provided to 12 schools in the electorate under the government's Triple R program and just over \$1 million was provided in information and communication technology grants. We provided \$140,000 to enclose the Sunnybank State High School auditorium, \$21,000 for special education services at Macgregor State School and \$30,000 to upgrade the sports courts at Robertson State School.

Funds from the Beattie government's record health budgets included upgrades at the QEII Hospital and extra health funding to local groups, including the Blue Nurses and Mount Gravatt District Community Support. In the important area of jobs, more than \$1 million was provided locally under the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle to assist 360 people with training and jobs. Public safety was also improved, with \$400,000 provided to upgrade the Upper Mount Gravatt scenes of crime office, \$432,000 provided to the Tactical Crime Squad and the allocation of an additional 35 police officers in the South Brisbane police district. Ongoing funding was also provided to many community support, disability and child-care services.

Sporting and recreation groups are also the beneficiaries from one-off grants and funding programs with \$1.2 million going to more than 80 groups in my electorate through the Gambling Community Benefit Fund.

In late February I had the honour of opening the new all-weather outdoor bowling green at the Mount Gravatt Bowls Club. The facility was constructed at a cost in excess of \$600,000 and I am proud to say with the assistance of the Beattie government. Sport and Recreation Queensland provided more than \$295,000 in last year's budget towards the new facility. This facility, which is the only one of its type in south-east Queensland, includes a shade structure, undercover lighting and synthetic green. It has put the Mount Gravatt Bowls Club on the map and is in an excellent position to attract regional, state and national competitions. The new facility is impressive and a credit to the committee and management of the bowls club. I would like to pass on my congratulations to the Mount Gravatt Bowls Club Committee, including President Des Roberts, Madam President Ett Ehlers and liaison officer Colin Colebrook.

I can also report to the House that work on the Hibiscus Gardens Youth Recreation Centre is progressing. The centre is being constructed in between the squash courts and the skate park at the Hibiscus Sports Complex. The Beattie government has allocated more than \$647,000 towards the establishment of this centre, which will include an office area, meeting rooms, flexible recreational activity areas, open spaces and a music rehearsal room.

My neighbour and parliamentary colleague the member for Mansfield, Phil Reeves, and I have worked closely with Councillor Kerry Rea and the Brisbane City Council to bring this project to fruition. The contract for the building works was awarded in mid-February, and the construction is progressing well, with the earthworks and footings for the building completed. Construction is expected to be finished by late June/early July and an agreement regarding the management of the centre is presently being negotiated. Most importantly, this project will benefit some of the youngest members of the local community, giving them somewhere to meet, socialise and organise events.

The funding commitments and details that I have outlined today cover only some of the work we have achieved in the Mount Gravatt electorate. As I said during the election, there is more work to be done. During the campaign I outlined my vision for the local area and I will work hard to achieve these outcomes. The Beattie plan for the Mount Gravatt electorate includes delivering on our statewide commitments to health, education and employment. However, over the next three years it will also include some targeted improvements for residents living in the Mount Gravatt electorate.

With a high number of schools in my electorate, and as a former teacher, education is always a priority. Over the next three years we will upgrade the major resource centre at Robertson State School to support information and communication technology initiatives at a cost of approximately \$300,000. We will provide \$146,500 to upgrade electrical infrastructure at Warrigal Road State School. Some \$61,000 will be provided for upgrades at Mount Gravatt State School and \$42,900 for upgrades at Runcorn State School. This work will occur through the Beattie government's Wired for the Future program.

About \$90,000 will be provided to upgrade telephone facilities at Mount Gravatt State School, Runcorn State School, Sunnybank State School and Upper Mount Gravatt State School. In the area of public housing, we will invest \$176,000 from the Smart State Building Fund for housing upgrades. The electorate will also reap the benefits of \$14.2 million for the refurbishment of public housing interiors in Brisbane's south side and \$1.5 million for the construction of 15 units of new accommodation. In the area of emergency services, \$1.6 million has been allocated to redevelop or reallocate the Mount Gravatt Fire Station.

People with disabilities and their families will benefit from \$15,000 funding to upgrade and improve disability facilities and equipment in the local area and from the allocation of \$71,201 to the Xavier Children's Network to provide extra respite to children and adults with a disability and their families. We will spend \$1.8 million towards a \$4 million project to provide bikeways on the Pacific Motorway between Nathan and Logan Road. In the area of transport services, \$100,000 will be allocated to upgrade the Nathan connection arterial road and \$2.4 million will be contributed towards traffic improvement measures on Brisbane sections of the Pacific Motorway.

During the election campaign I nominated traffic congestion as one of the key issues for the electorate. It was also used by the opposition to disseminate misinformation amongst the electorate regarding Kessels Road during the last days of the campaign. These 'Dear resident' letters purporting to be from concerned residents were clearly politically motivated. The letters were a flawed and mischievous attempt to blame the state government for the traffic congestion problems on Kessels Road. Without a doubt, as the suburbs in the Mount Gravatt electorate continue to grow and increase in popularity, this is an area of high importance. It is also an issue where all levels of government need to work together.

I am pleased to report to the House that I get along well with my neighbouring local, state and federal counterparts, and I am committed to working in partnership with them on any issue. However, one area where I cannot get agreement nor any cooperation is with the federal member for Moreton, Gary Hardgrave, on the issue of Kessels Road. The Queensland government is still waiting for a formal federal

government response to the final report on the Brisbane Urban Corridor Study submitted to Canberra for consideration in December.

The federally funded study, which was completed by the state government, identified community concerns, investigated causes and identified practical community based solutions for this corridor which, as a National Highway, is a federal government responsibility. We are looking for a commitment from the federal government and an initial federal funding of \$6.7 million to cover the final cost of the BUC's study and undertake detailed planning on elements of the plan. The request for funding also includes a modest federal contribution of about \$1 million to allow for minor works identified in several of the 55 BUC recommendations over the next 12 months. In addition, the Queensland government is also waiting for the federal government to respond to the letter sent last March regarding taking the toll for trucks off the southern bypass from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. for a 12-month pilot study. This was a major recommendation of the BUC report.

The state government already has provided \$5 million for some of the recommendations from the study. Shortly after being re-elected, I invited the new Minister for Transport and Main Roads, Paul Lucas, to visit and inspect the Kessels Road section of the Brisbane urban corridor. Mr Lucas was quick to respond and visited in early April, meeting with the member for Mansfield, Phil Reeves, and myself. Mr Lucas is in the chamber at present, and I would like to personally thank him for his time. He, like myself, felt residents had been severely let down by the fact that the recent federal budget did not include any funds to help fix traffic congestion along the Brisbane urban corridor.

A government member: This was their big chance to put up or shut up.

Ms SPENCE: This was its big chance, as the minister has suggested, and we are yet again very, very disappointed at the lack of action by the federal government.

The budget delivered a slap in the face to every south side commuter struggling with traffic along the corridor. The federal government and the member for Moreton, Gary Hardgrave, have once again failed to acknowledge their responsibilities to this route, or even give an indication that they are concerned about fixing the problems.

It is well past time for action, but the federal government has shown that the Brisbane urban corridor and the concerns of the people driving on it every day are not a priority. It is estimated that around \$200 million in federal government funding could be needed to deliver the wide spectrum of solutions identified by the BUC study. Instead of buck-passing and attempting to score political points out of this issue, Mr Hardgrave needs to get serious and needs to get his federal colleagues interested in funding and implementing the recommendations of the BUC study. Unless we work together, there is not going to be a resolution.

With the new term of the Beattie government I have taken on a new ministerial role. It is my honour to be Queensland's first female Minister for Police and Corrective Services. I am pleased to report that the Mount Gravatt and the Holland Park police stations were among the first police stations that I visited and toured when I became the new minister. I know the invaluable role that the Queensland police play in crime prevention and protecting the public, and in the short time I have been the Minister for Police and Corrective Services I have been impressed with the professionalism and dedication of the many officers I have met from the Queensland Police Service.

I have always had a cooperative working relationship with police from my electorate, including police officers such as Senior Sergeant Ray De Bruen and Sergeant Ross Frassetto. These officers have provided assistance through the local Neighbourhood Watch groups and safety forums that I have hosted.

On 14 May this year—last week, in fact—I reached another milestone, becoming the longest serving member for Mount Gravatt. The previous longest standing member was Geoffrey Chinchen. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to represent the Mount Gravatt electorate for such a long period.

In finishing, I would like to acknowledge those who have assisted me in my role as the member for Mount Gravatt and during the recent election campaign. I know the result would not have been the same without the assistance of many people, including branch members and local supporters. My campaign office was a hive of activity during the election, and there are many people who have assisted me, from my first campaign which operated out of a room in my home to people offering assistance for the first time.

I would like to say a special thanks to my campaign director Jane Hague, my family, staff and all the volunteers. I would like to make particular mention of the members of the Chinese community, particularly the Happy Seniors Club, which is headed by Dorothy Lan and Herrick Wong, who gave their time and support during the campaign.

I will continue to represent the ever-changing electorate of Mount Gravatt and ensure that we receive our fair share of funding, services and support from the state government. I will also work hard to ensure that constituents are aware of the important services and programs provided by this government by continuing to host information seminars, morning teas, celebratory functions and regular communications

with my constituents via newsletters, street stalls and doorknocking. I look forward to the next three years with energy and enthusiasm.