



Speech by
Neil Roberts

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Hansard Thursday, 17 June 2004

STATE BUDGET 2004

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (2.27 p.m.): State governments have a responsibility to deliver the services that people need and to invest in the building blocks of our economy such as roads, bridges, ports, railways and electricity systems. This budget does both and comes on the back of some recent good news about the Queensland economy.

In May, Queensland's trend unemployment rate dropped to six per cent, the lowest for 22 years. The budget forecasts that unemployment will remain steady for the next financial year at 6.25 per cent. Our economy is also expected to grow by 4.25 per cent over the next year. This is the 13th successive year of positive growth in Queensland.

The budget delivers record spending on capital works—over \$6 billion, which is the highest ever capital program in Queensland's history. Major investments include \$1.66 billion for electricity industry projects, \$1.9 billion for transport and main roads, \$406 million for hospitals and health and \$452 million for education and training. The capital works budget, an investment in our future, is 19 per cent higher than last year and will help support over 49,000 jobs, either directly or indirectly. The budget also delivers significant increases in spending on essential services such as health, education, disability services, police and child safety.

Some \$40 million has been allocated to reduce elective surgery waiting lists in Queensland public hospitals. This will include 300 additional hip and knee replacements, and 1,000 additional cataract operations. To highlight the Treasurer's claim that this is a budget with heart, funding for Disability Services will receive an extra \$220 million over the next four years. This is an addition to the historic increases in the last budget which provided for an additional \$200 million over four years.

The new Department of Child Safety will receive funding for a range of initiatives, including more than 500 additional staff. Since becoming Treasurer in 2001, Terry Mackenroth has made a personal goal to achieve real increases in the level of services provided to Queenslanders. He has delivered on this commitment and is to be congratulated on framing a budget with heart as well as the backbone to sustain further economic development of our state.

The scale of increased spending on services is worthy of special note. Since 2001, spending on health has increased by more than 27 per cent, education by more than 26 per cent, public order and safety by more than 39 per cent and disability services by more than 66 per cent. In achieving these increases, the Treasurer has maintained Queensland as a low-tax state with per capita tax estimated at \$1,614 in 2004-05 compared to an estimated \$2,056 for the average of other states. On average, Queenslanders pay around \$440 less in tax every year than people in other states.

The budget also contains some additional tax cuts. Currently every time a person performs a transaction on their credit card the state receives 10c in credit card duty. We are abolishing this tax, saving Queenslanders around \$19 million per year. Additionally, we are abolishing the bank accounts debits tax, or BAD tax as it is commonly known, from 1 July 2005. Other taxation reforms include a reduction in insurance duty and new transfer duty concessions for home buyers. This budget funds every single

election commitment made by the government. It is, as the Treasurer said, a budget with heart which delivers for all Queenslanders.

Since becoming the member for Nudgee, I have been in the privileged position to play a part in some significant achievements for my electorate. I am particularly proud of three: the establishment and funding of Earnshaw State College at Banyo, the new Police Citizens Youth Club at Zillmere and the establishment of a new community police beat at Banyo. However, a member's work is never done, and my commitment to the electors of Nudgee is to continue working for opportunities to improve government services and facilities in our local area. State budget time also provides an opportunity to review the contributions the state government has made to the electorate over the past year. I table a copy of a document which outlines some of the more significant achievements of the past year. Included in this document is an outline of some of the new achievements and expenditures contained in this year's budget.

This budget has delivered a helping hand to many sections of the community in addition to making the necessary investments in the building blocks of our economy. It is, as the Treasurer said, the best budget ever delivered by a Labor government. As is my practice each year, I want to acknowledge the magnificent contribution so many local organisations and individuals have made to improving the quality of life of constituents in the Nudgee electorate. I look forward to the next two and a half years of this term of government and to advocating for more improvements to government services and facilities in my electorate. Congratulations to the Treasurer on crafting another solid and sustainable budget for Queenslanders. I commend the budget to the House.