



Speech by

Michael Choi

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

Hansard Thursday, 8 June 2006

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (10.34 pm): I am thankful for the opportunity to make my brief contribution to a budget which, in my opinion, is fantastic. It is a record budget for Queensland. It is one of the best budgets I have seen since my election to this House. In making my contribution, I would like to thank the Treasurer for this budget. It is a fantastic budget for building communities, for building businesses, for building families and, as the Premier said, for building tomorrow's Queensland today.

Yesterday I went to the budget lunch, and the Premier and Deputy Premier were speaking during the lunch. There were probably 1,000 people at that lunch, mostly from the business community. As we all know, the business community does not usually align with our side of politics. Having said that, I say to members of this House that the businesspeople I spoke to after the lunch have certainly given the budget a big thumbs up. In fact, they said they could not see any possibility of voting for anyone except the Queensland Labor Party at the next election because if the coalition cannot even manage a merger it certainly cannot manage government.

The budget continues the wonderful health action plan, which was introduced by the Premier and the Minister for Health—a plan which initially cost the government \$6.4 billion and now, with further funding, has increased by \$3.3 billion to a massive amount of \$9.7 billion. There is also a billion dollars for the Tomorrow's Schools—Providing for a Smarter Future program, including \$850 million over five years to modernise and refurbish our schools. I think most members would agree with me that children are the most important assets of Queensland, and we have to do everything we can to ensure that their study environment is suitable for a very demanding syllabus that they have to manage.

I have some very old schools in my electorate—the Capalaba State School, for example, which has now been renamed Capalaba State College. The junior campus celebrated 125 years last year. It is certainly a school with a very long history. The previous member for Bowman, the Hon. Con Sciacca, was a student of Capalaba State School a long time ago. It is a wonderful school. Having said that, as members would understand, the building, being 125 years of age, is showing signs of wear and tear and is in some desperate need of repair. I am certainly looking forward to speaking to the minister and trying to get a bit of that one billion dollars so that I can contribute to the refurbishment of that school.

A massive \$10 billion capital works and infrastructure program as well as the creation of a Queensland growth fund, using proceeds from electricity retail sales to further enhance services in the state, is most welcome. From a business perspective, I also welcome the reduction in payroll and land tax. The threshold for transfer duty for first home purchases has also been increased to \$500,000.

Queensland continues to be the engine room of the nation's economy. It is in fact the envy of all the other states. The economic growth of Queensland continues to be strong and is expected to grow at 3.5 per cent. That is almost double the projected national average in the next year to come. In fact, the Queensland economy has outgrown every other state in Australia for the last 10 consecutive years. We continue to enjoy being the lowest taxing state in Australia. The average taxable amount per person in Queensland is only \$1,927 compared to over \$2,147 for Victoria and a massive \$2,451 for New South Wales.

Unemployment remains at a 30-year low. It is now at 4.9 per cent. I am pleased to inform my learned colleagues that for the electorate of Capalaba the unemployment rate is less than three per cent. Capalaba continues to be the economic hub and the employment centre of the Redland Shire Council. Talking about employment, Capalaba will receive one of the 10 new Skilling Solutions Queensland customer service centres that the government has committed to establishing in the 2006-07 year under the recently launched Queensland Skills Plan. This centre will provide face-to-face advice, information and assistance on training and career opportunities for people in Capalaba and the greater Redland shire.

Public transport is a major concern to me. With rising petrol prices we have to encourage public transport usage to cut down the consumption of petrol not only for economic reasons but also for environmental reasons. TransLink has been working very hard on new bus routes in my area. I am pleased to inform the House that the patronage of TransLink bus services in my area has increased by at least 20 per cent in the last few months.

In addition, \$2.2 million has been allocated to continue work on the eastern busway from Buranda to Capalaba including the staged delivery of bus priority measures from a full busway to bus lanes along Old Cleveland Road. It is expected that the total cost of this investment will be around \$1 billion when fully completed. Furthermore, \$7 million has been allocated towards the duplication from two lanes to four between Vienna Road and Redland Bay Road as well as on Capalaba-Victoria Point Road. That will be a total investment of over \$14 million.

It does not stop there. Fifteen additional beds will be opened at the Redland Hospital. Close to \$1 million has been allocated for enhanced cardiac services in the Bayside Health Service District. More important—and something that is very dear to my heart—is mental health services. I attended a mental health forum with the honourable member for Redlands, John English, only a few months ago. We listened to the tragic stories of some of my constituents concerning mental health. I am pleased that more than \$670,000 will be allocated to support community mental health services. This is obviously an area of severe unmet need in the past.

I am pleased to report to the House that the Redland Hospital is doing extremely well. A recent report on KPIs has indicated that it has exceeded most of its KPIs. In view of the time constraints, I seek leave to incorporate the balance of my speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

\$527,000 towards the Koala Conservation Implementation Package, a partnership with local governments across the state to ensure the survival of the koala in the long term particularly in South East Queensland, with a total State Government contribution of \$2.15 Million.

\$347,802 to Redland Shire Council to construct a skateboard and BMX plaza incorporating connecting skateable paths at Capalaba under the Major Facilities Program 2007.

\$300,000 to complete renewal of public housing at Birkdale with a total cost of \$918,000.

\$210,500 to Queensland Police-Citizens Youth Welfare Association to construct extensions to the PCYC at Capalaba incorporating a gymnastics area and multipurpose room under the Major Facilities Program 2007.