



Speech by

Hon. Nita Cunningham

MEMBER FOR BUNDABERG

Hansard Friday, 9 June 2006

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Hon. NITA CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (11.54 am): I rise with a great deal of pleasure to support the appropriation bills 2006 that will follow on the Beattie Labor government's tradition of fiscal responsibility. The Beattie government already has a proud record of economic management, with the Queensland economy now outperforming the rest of the states with 3½ per cent growth. Business investment is estimated to surpass the \$25 billion mark for the first time and unemployment is expected to remain around five per cent—the lowest for 30 years. The increase in funding for the health action plan to \$9.7 billion over five years will provide more doctors, nurses and allied health workers, more services, more hospital capacity, more equipment, better technology, shorter waiting times and better facilities—delivering on our commitment to build the best possible health system for Queensland.

Queensland Public Service workers will welcome the new maternity leave entitlements. The Disability Services budget of \$633 million marks an increase of 186 per cent since we gained office in 1998. The Department of Child Safety funding has almost tripled in the last three years and this year will establish two new residential therapeutic facilities and new services for Indigenous children.

The Queensland Police Service will get an extra 350 police officers this year, making that an increase of almost 3,000 in the last three terms. Another 144 ambulance officers will be added to the service over three years and 35 new communication officers will start this year. The budget provides over \$100 million for the rebuilding effort in north Queensland following the cyclone in March. Rural Queensland will benefit from \$150 million over the next four years for a range of Blueprint for the Bush initiatives. Another reform that will be welcomed, especially in my electorate, is the payroll tax changes, releasing some 600 employers across the state from paying payroll tax in the 2006-07 year, and a further 4,000 employers will have their payroll tax reduced. That is great news indeed for business and for jobs.

This budget also brings some land tax relief for residents. The sum of \$1 billion is being invested in our schools over the next five years. P&C members are welcoming the changes in applications for funds. To address the infrastructure needs, Queensland's capital works budget will exceed \$10 billion for the first time ever. The good news for regional Queensland is that 60 per cent of that capital program will be outside the Brisbane region.

For my electorate of Bundaberg, this year's budget will give a very welcome economic boost to our schools, our roads, our hospital, our city council and numerous community services as well as local clubs and groups. Some \$3.1 million will be spent this year on completing the planning and starting the construction of our massive \$42 million ring-road that will take heavy vehicles out of residential areas and provide safe pedestrian crossings for students of St Luke's College, East Primary and Kalkie schools. It will include 14.3 kilometres of new road, an overpass over the main north-south rail line, a number of smaller bridges and traffic lights at major crossroads.

Another \$3.5 million will fund traffic lights and upgrading at eight of our busy intersections to make our city roads safer. The city council in Bundaberg now has state funding approved for three major projects, almost \$2 million for the Hinkler Hall of Fame, \$3.8 million for the Turtle Interpretive Centre and

\$1.5 million for the proposed aquatic centre. This financial year should see these projects commence. The council will also receive \$287,000 for three walkway/bikeway projects.

Contrary to the comments of the member for Burnett in this debate, Bundaberg's Base Hospital will indeed benefit from this budget. For our hospital, we will see the flow-on benefits from the \$9.7 billion health action plan committed by the government to build a better health system over the next five years. For Bundaberg's hospital specifically, apart from the electrical upgrade, we will have an extra \$765,000 for enhanced cardiac services, \$391,000 to employ additional specialist mental health staff, \$390,000 for new cancer services and \$113,000 of additional funding for Indigenous health programs.

Bundaberg certainly has concerns about the shortage of skilled workers, particularly in the building industry, so it has been a real coup for Bundaberg to get one of the 10 Skilling Solutions service centres that were announced in this budget, and I look forward to seeing that take shape.

As well, our TAFE college will be boosted with \$2 million from the state and federal budgets for redevelopment of the Bundaberg campus. Another six Bundaberg schools have gained capital works funds in this budget following on from unprecedented building works at our schools in my three terms in this parliament. Some of those schools had been waiting for many years for their buildings. Indeed, one had correspondence dating back to 1984 requesting the replacement of a toilet block that was in a dangerous position for children. It now has that new toilet block as well as a covered area and is very happy with the results and, of course, very happy with our government. For our schools there is also \$153,000 in this budget to continue the school based police officer at Kepnock State High School, which is very important.

Foster care, child support, disability support and community support groups in Bundaberg will be funded in excess of \$3 million this year. To support this government's healthy lifestyle initiatives, 27 of our local sporting groups and clubs have gained almost \$117,000. That will provide training, equipment and facilities that they would otherwise not be able to afford. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to work with those groups.

Some \$800,000 in this budget will start the construction of a new electricity substation to cater for the development needs of our growing city. Twelve new public housing units will be built at a cost of \$3 million and another 12 valued at \$3.46 million will be underway with this year's budget allocation of \$300,000. As well, the upgrading and servicing of public housing in my area in this financial year will exceed \$2.7 million.

I am delighted to speak in support of the Appropriation Bill. As I will be retiring from this parliament at the end of this term, this will be my last budget. What a great budget it is for Queensland. What a great budget it is for my electorate of Bundaberg. I congratulate the Treasurer, the Hon. Anna Bligh, on her first budget and the Premier and ministers on their commitment to bring together a budget that will benefit all Queenslanders.

It will deliver quality services, set the pace in building infrastructure for the future, confirm this government's sound economic management, provide a better quality of life for all Queenslanders and place our state on a solid pathway for the future. This budget is indeed another fine example of this government's commitment to govern for all Queenslanders. On behalf of my constituents in Bundaberg, I thank the government for its support and look forward to the completion of the many projects for Bundaberg that have been funded in this budget. I commend the bill to the House.