



Speech by
Gary Fenlon

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Thursday, 7 June 2007

**CLEAN COAL TECHNOLOGY SPECIAL AGREEMENT BILL;
APPROPRIATION BILLS**

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (6.04 pm): I rise to speak in support of the appropriation bills and the clean coal technology bill. Having seen a number of budgets pass through this place and having seen the transition that Queensland has been through since I first came into this House, I can stand back and look at what this budget really is about in terms of continuing that process of transforming Queensland.

On page 12 of the Treasurer's budget speech I see the heading 'Investment in intellectual infrastructure'. I stand here very proudly as a member of a government that has a budget with that heading. It really does represent what we are about in this state now and how far Queensland has come, being so obviously and deliberately out there creating this investment in intellectual infrastructure because that is our future. Indeed, that is what I tell kids at my local schools. I say to them that they are not just in one little classroom, sitting out there in Coorparoo or Holland Park or Wellers Hill, but part of one big classroom—the global classroom, the classroom that connects them to the wider marketplace, jobs and value creation in the world today.

This is an element of this budget that really underpins everything that we are doing in this state and what this budget is about. We see in a macro sense that this is the way we are proceeding in this state. We see it transformed in a micro sense right back through to each of our own electorates. We see it in a macro sense, for example, in the focus on the prep year and the professional development of our teachers. As we know, prep year is now approaching its full age cohort, and \$50 million is provided in this budget to support that cohort coming through the system. With that, 192 new teachers and teacher aides will be employed across the state.

This is accompanied by the very significant commitment of \$70,000 to ensure that every Queensland state school teacher is wired to the future via a laptop computer that will accompany the teacher at school and at home and will provide the requisite range of support mechanisms to assist in their professional development and their capacity to research directly in their workplace by having online access wherever they are. This is an amazing development for Queensland schools, one which not long ago we could not have comprehended let alone see the reality of that today. Non-government schools will share in the benefits of this program with funding of \$7 million.

Skills development is such a key plank of our strategy that we also see the \$1 billion Queensland Skills Plan starting to deliver results, with an increase in apprentices and trainees of 7.9 per cent compared to a decline in the rest of Australia of 1.8 per cent. These figures speak for themselves. In this year we will allocate \$17 million under this plan to create 4,250 new trades training places. This is one of the most significant needs that we have in this state.

One only has to travel to the regional areas and speak to anyone involved in industry to realise the skills shortages that are being experienced in the critical trades that support not only the mining industry but also the ancillary industries that are arising as a result of this mining boom. It is tremendous to see this

very concrete flow-on to the rest of the industrial sector from this boom. We need skilled people to fill the positions.

All of this is indeed a fundamental construct of the Smart State Strategy. We see the results of this bearing fruit now. Half a billion dollars has been committed to date for that Smart State Strategy. In this budget a further \$100 million will be put into the Smart State Research and Development Fund. This, indeed, is enhancing our capacity not only in our traditional areas but also in our new areas and strengths—areas such as information technology, aviation, creative industries and biomedical research. These are areas that would not have even been contemplated when many of us were at school, but are now fields of endeavour that every school leaver is being advised by their careers officers within schools that they can train and get jobs in. We see our children now eyeing the jobs and benefits of these particular industries. Innovation and creativity are the keys to these changes.

That is one of the major macro areas that I will touch on. This cannot occur unless we also maintain the fundamentals in this state: a healthy economy with growth at 5.5 per cent in 2006-07 and a prediction of 5 per cent for 2007-08 compared to the rest of Australia at 2.75 per cent. We are certainly part of the engine, the powerhouse, for Australia and we will continue to be that here in Queensland. Unemployment consequently has remained low; the lowest indeed for 33 years. Queensland's AAA credit rating is being sustained and business investment is estimated to surge 18 per cent in 2006-07 and, indeed, the state's taxes per head in 2007-08 are still being maintained at a low level of \$2,226 per capita and it is pleasing to see that that is still lower than New South Wales and Victoria.

These are the main settings that are healthy and that will allow us to drive not only our old industries but also our new industries so effectively. As I said, these macro settings translate clearly and effectively into the micro settings of our electorates with more than \$500 million being allocated to build and upgrade schools and training facilities across the state. In my electorate of Greenslopes, this translates into \$366 million being invested over 23.2 million hours of vocational education and training in the region in 2007-08. Further, in relation to schools \$15,000 is targeted for maintenance of hard external surfaces at Cavendish Road State High School, \$30,000 is for high priority maintenance related to flooring at the Coorparoo State School, \$35,000 is for the RRR Program for repainting Holland Park State School and, similarly, \$35,000 is for the Marshall Road State School. I am pleased especially for Marshall Road State School. It was the subject of strenuous representations from myself and the school community. I am very glad that the government listened to our representations and that we are getting results. That flaky paint will be sorted very shortly, I hope. The amount of \$10,000 has also been allocated for priority maintenance related to flooring at Wellers Hill State School.

Police and emergency services is always a fundamental interest to our communities. I go around the Neighbourhood Watches with pleasure these days to hear on a continuing basis the reports from our very capable local police officers of the low crime rates in our areas. This can only be due to our Police Service becoming more effective. Each officer has more arms, more legs, more eyes and more brain power because of the technology, the intelligence systems and the equipment that they are using et cetera. We are keeping up with the allocation of police officers and facilities to do that.

The government will be recruiting 250 new ambulance officers in 2007-08 across Queensland which is part of a \$50 million injection into the Queensland Ambulance Service to meet growing demand for services. The budget also delivers an additional 200 police positions, taking the number of officers in the Queensland Police Service to 9,928 by October 2008. Part of this allocation is \$76,000 in continued funding for the South Brisbane Tactical Crime Squad, which is very effective on the ground and targets known crime hot spots with an emphasis on investigating property crime and drug offences.

An amount of \$2.5 million is allocated for the completion of the Camp Hill-Carina Police Station and \$1.6 million for the continued redevelopment of the Holland Park Police Station, which will be a total cost of \$6.9 million. This will be a major centre for the area. There will also be \$15.65 million for the commissioning of over 140 new ambulance vehicles across the state to replace older vehicles.

Transport in the Greenslopes area has again been well catered for with \$50,000 in state government funding for construction of a bikeway and footpath at the Holland Park State School. In addition, \$65,000 is allocated to construct an indented bus bay at Cavendish Road State High School. There is nothing better to spend our money on than the safety of our kids around schools.

The other big project that we will see unfolding in the Greenslopes electorate area in the coming years is the magnificent eastern busway, which will be part of this new bus network that will have tentacles across the city. An amount of \$46.7 million has been allocated to continue planning of the eastern busway. That will be money well spent. I am very pleased with the activities of the transport minister, Paul Lucas, in ensuring that as this busway unfolds every opportunity will be taken to regenerate the suburbs that it moves through in both a commercial and social manner. This is a great initiative and we see the continuation of funding for it.

There are a range of other initiatives, including \$5.5 million to complete construction of the new electricity zone substation. Again, this emphasis on major infrastructure across the state is being transformed to the local areas, to the local suburbs.

There is funding for the following: \$2.67 million to increase transformer capacity at the Camp Hill electricity substation; \$245,000 to coordinate a range of practical counselling intervention services for children and young people; \$10,000 for Career Employment Australia to deliver a healthy lifestyle program; \$34,000 for the Queensland Association of School Tuckshops to offer healthy food and drink options; \$1.4 million to complete construction of eight public housing seniors units; \$1.4 million to commence construction of six public housing apartment units for low-income earners; \$39,000 for the magnificent Eastern Suburbs Rugby League Football Club to install lights; and \$419,000 to establish support networks and future planning for families caring for a person with a disability. I have continued to highlight this last area as I encounter individuals who reach a very mature age but still have a person at home they are caring for. This is an important issue that we encounter in our electorates, and we all know it will require very astute attention to look after these people in the future.

There are many more things that I could speak about in this great budget. I commend the Treasurer, Anna Bligh, for this very responsible budget. It is a balanced budget but also a budget with a vision for Queensland. It is a vision that shows we are looking at the main game in terms of essential infrastructure, and it also shows that we have the macro settings in place transmitting right through to our own electorates in a very responsible and intelligent manner. I commend the bills to the House.