



Speech by

Hon. Judy Spence

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

Hansard Tuesday, 6 March 2007

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (8.14 pm): It is an honour to represent the people of Mount Gravatt in this House. I was first elected to the Queensland parliament in 1989. Since that time I have been re-elected another six times. It is a privilege to be the longest-serving member for Mount Gravatt and also the longest-serving female member in this House. For this continued support I have to thank the 27,000 electors who live in my electorate. That the people of Mount Gravatt continue to re-elect me to the Queensland parliament gives me cause to reflect upon the achievements of the government and the faith that the people have placed in me as their representative.

Mount Gravatt is one of the state's most culturally diverse electorates. I regularly meet with representatives of the various ethnic communities as I attend functions throughout the year. These communities bring richness and diversity to schools, local businesses, the local economy and our everyday life. The 2001 census found that 32 per cent of the people who live in the Mount Gravatt area were born overseas, and I am sure this number has increased in recent years. Late last year I hosted a multicultural seniors morning tea with the member for Mansfield to celebrate our area's cultural diversity. The response was overwhelming with more than 400 people attending the event. These communities have all been very proactive in seeking government support to introduce new initiatives and programs that encourage a better understanding of the diversity in our community as well as helping them to access new skills training and education.

The new Muslim Business Network, led by Dr Mahomed Khatree, is doing some great work in helping provide the fundamental support systems that are important to all businesses. Muslims have called the Mount Gravatt area home for over a century. I am very pleased that the community is continuing to thrive.

I recently met with the newly-elected President of the Islamic Council of Queensland, Mr Suliman Sabdia, and I look forward to building a sound relationship with this council. I also have a great relationship with the Somalia Women's Association. Led by Mumina Isse, they are wonderful ambassadors for their culture and beliefs. I meet regularly with Mumina. I was happy to help launch the new program the association is running at Mount Gravatt State School to promote better understanding between Muslim and non-Muslim families.

Herrick Wong is a leader within our local Chinese community and heads the Happy Seniors Club, Sunnybank. This group runs social and community events for people in its community. I have been happy to assist it to apply for funding to continue its good work. I cannot talk about the Chinese community without mentioning the wonderful work that Mr Michael Yau does in so many fields of endeavour.

Mount Gravatt is also home to a very active Greek community. I have worked with community members such as Irene Cayas over the years to represent their interests and assist them with funding to undertake various local projects. I also have very strong links with many Taiwanese and Chinese organisations in my electorate, and I value their friendship and strong support.

My re-election with an increased margin in 2006 was in part due to the forward-looking policies of the Beattie government but also due to the efforts of my many supporters whose efforts I would like to

recognise today. My campaign was strongly supported by members of the local branch. My thanks go to John and Margaret O'Donnell, Brian and Mary Dutton, Hazel Shields, Marcos DeOrleans, Chris Jeppesen, Ron and Shirley Wimott, Bernie Dawson, Robbie Williams, Geoff Coakley, Pat Miller, Rex Bowen, Grace Lagos and Ian Lang, just to name a few members of the branch. These people gave up hours of their time to prepare and distribute election material, staff booths and erect signs. For this I sincerely thank them. In addition, my campaign was ably supported by many community groups such as the Happy Seniors and First Contact as well as local businesses in the Mount Gravatt area.

There are 22 schools in the Mount Gravatt electorate. As a parent and a former teacher I know how important it is to give our young people every possible advantage in their education. The people I represent are motivated by the desire for their children to have a good education. Generally I think the students in our local schools value education and are achieving very good results.

Our schools are delivering a world-class education which focuses on academic, cultural and sporting achievements as well as good citizenship. Locally, the Beattie government has invested more than \$1.65 million to refurbish new prep facilities at McGregor, Runcorn, Warrigal Road, Robertson, Sunnybank, Mount Gravatt and Upper Mount Gravatt state schools. I was very pleased to open each of these classrooms which are designed to make schooling enjoyable for our youngest students. Congratulations to all the schools for the very successful completion of these new classrooms. I wish them all the best for the 2007 school year. As well, all the asbestos roofs in my state schools are being replaced. We are the first government in this state's history to comprehensively address this issue.

QEII Hospital is the primary emergency and healthcare provider for residents in my electorate. I regularly meet with local residents and the feedback about the hospital and its staff is generally positive. This is always pleasing to hear. It is a testament to the skill and dedication of the healthcare professionals who work at the hospital. I also visit the QEII Hospital regularly to talk to management and staff and keep abreast of any issues of concern.

The QEII is doing an excellent job, particularly in the area of elective surgery. I suspect not many people appreciate how many operations are performed there every year. In the last six months alone there have been in excess of 3,000 operations performed. For 25 years the QEII Hospital has provided a valuable and quality health service to our local community. I have always been keen to see the maximum number of health services delivered at QEII. That is why I am pleased that the Beattie government will invest over \$95 million to build and operate a new 30-bed elective surgery centre on the fifth floor of QEII, allowing more long-wait patients to get the operations they need more quickly.

For the first time in its history all five floors of the QEII will be dedicated to medical purposes. These additional beds will be exclusively for patients requiring elective surgery. This means their availability will not be compromised by competing demands for the emergency department. They will be used for the treatment of elective orthopaedic patients. There will be one additional operating theatre to support the new in-patient beds, additional facilities for rehabilitation services and specialist outpatient clinics.

I have made the delivery of more police officers to Mount Gravatt as well as better police infrastructure and resources to help them protect our community a priority. The number of police on our streets is increasing and our crime rates are continuing to fall. In terms of police infrastructure I have helped deliver the new Mount Gravatt Police Citizens Youth Club, a \$3 million two-year upgrade of the Upper Mount Gravatt Police Station, a CSI Upper Mount Gravatt—Queensland's largest regional forensic facility—and the Sunnybank Plaza Police Beat.

We went to the election with a promise to rebuild the Holland Park Police Station. We have committed \$7 million to building a new police station at Holland Park. I am particularly looking forward to this project as my father first started his police career as a young policeman at the Holland Park Police Station in the 1960s.

From talking to people in my electorate their priorities when it comes to community safety are their own personal safety and protecting their two greatest assets—their home and their car. Since 1998 we have put 85 more police officers on our streets in the South Brisbane district as well as more police liaison officers, school based police officers and volunteers in policing. In that time there have been some considerable reductions in the local crime rate, including a massive 35½ per cent drop in home break and enters, a 24 per cent drop in motor vehicle thefts and a 16½ per cent drop in assaults. I want to thank the police in my local district for these excellent results. We will continue to increase police numbers. This year alone we are putting 774 new recruits through the police academy—a record number in this state's history.

The population growth on Brisbane's south side has increased public pressure on our public transport system. I have taken to the government feedback from residents which has seen extra services provided on routes 133, 566, 571 and 573. With a growing and ageing population I have also lobbied hard for improved rail services. I have been happy to inform residents at my regular series of local morning teas that the Sunnybank, Banoon, Altandi, Runcorn and Fruitgrove railway stations will all be undergoing major upgrades to provide new modern facilities, disabled access and expanded car parking. That is part of the

\$184 million upgrade to railway infrastructure on the Robina line which will also see the development of a third track between Salisbury and Kuraby to carry express trains to the Gold Coast.

The Mains Road bridge will be upgraded to make room for this additional track. However, six lanes of traffic will be operating at all times during peak periods to ensure the impact on local traffic is limited. Queensland Rail has given me a commitment that it will plant more trees than it will be forced to remove. A budget has already been set aside for revegetation. Environmental groups and local residents will also have the chance to have input into the revegetation plan.

I recently visited the construction sites at the first stage of Banoon to Fruitgrove. At Sunnybank station the existing heritage building will be preserved with a new modern interior. Banoon station will be completely rebuilt. Altandi, Runcorn and Fruitgrove stations will be completely renovated. Construction is also underway at Sunnybank to provide a new island platform, waiting shelters, a new car park with 66 more car parking spaces and a new passenger set-down zone. For each of the stations in the first stage the upgrade will include a new lift and foot bridge providing better access to the station, four extra disability car parks—two on each side of the line—a new on-demand train advice system, CCTV cameras and extra lighting on platforms and in car parks. The station upgrades will be completed this year and the whole project, which includes a much-needed upgrade of the Stones Road level crossing, will be completed by early 2008.

Recently we had a major win for residents with the government's decision to ban trucks on the Brisbane urban corridor. Under this decision, which the member for Mansfield and I lobbied hard for, trucks unnecessarily using the Brisbane urban corridor will be restricted from 1 April this year. The restrictions will apply to all trucks rat-running through the Brisbane urban corridor when travelling either way from the Ipswich Motorway at Goodna to the Gateway Arterial Road at Wishart. This ban is good news for residents, especially those in the immediate vicinity, who will notice a significant improvement in their quality of life.

It will mean trucks weighing 4½ tonnes or more will be restricted from using the BUC as a through-route 24 hours a day seven days a week. Truck drivers will be fined if they do not comply. This will reduce the number of trucks using the BUC, cut noise pollution and fumes, reduce congestion and improve safety. From 1 July digital camera technology will be used to enforce this restriction.

I am a strong supporter of our local business community and the benefits it delivers. In the 1990s I helped bring them all together at the Mount Gravatt Traders to establish the main street program. This partnership resulted in securing funding from the city council of over a million dollars to go towards landscaping and improving the strip shopping centre at Mount Gravatt. I hope to reharness that energy and enthusiasm today. That is why in June last year I announced the reformation of this group to achieve even better results.

Business, particularly small business, has a lot to offer our community. It helps to build a strong local economy and provide valuable employment and training opportunities. Queensland's unemployment rate is the lowest in 30 years thanks to the success of small business that employs more than 50 per cent of all our private sector employees. That is why I am actively involved in a number of local business projects, including the development of a kiosk on the top of Mount Gravatt. I have worked very closely with the managing director of First Contact, Robbie Williams, to help it secure \$105,000 in funding to establish this venture which will help rival Mount Coot-tha and attract more jobs and tourist dollars to our area. This is a project very close to my heart because it was my great-grandfather Jack Johnston-Spence who was the president of the Mount Gravatt Trust and who, with other local residents, built the first road on to the top of Mount Gravatt mountain.

With a new year well underway, so too are many local projects designed to improve and expand services in my electorate. As I mentioned before, work has commenced on the major upgrade to the Mains Road bridge which will create the third railway track between Salisbury and Kuraby. Some other projects to look forward to include the development of a new park-and-ride facility on Klumpp Road, the development of new hydrotherapy facilities at QEII Stadium, the upgrade of the Mount Gravatt campus of the Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE, and maintenance work on the South East Busway. This year there will also be many opportunities for local schools, community groups and not-for-profit organisations to apply for funding grants through state government programs. We are very fortunate in the Mount Gravatt electorate to have service clubs, sporting clubs, seniors groups, churches and welfare organisations that meet the needs of our community. The volunteers who are the backbone of these organisations provide the real fabric of our society, and I encourage these groups to contact me if they need any help in applying for funding assistance.

To have been a member of parliament for 17 years would not have been possible without the support of family and friends. Tonight I would like to express my thanks to my husband, Heinz, and my two sons, Lucas and Jack, for their unqualified support throughout my term as the member for Mount Gravatt. As a few members in this parliament would remember, I was pregnant when I was elected 17 years ago and young Jack is now in year 12 and my other son, Lucas, is in his fifth year of university. They have

known nothing other than having their mum as a member of parliament. I do thank them for all of their support over the years. As well, my mother, Gwen, my sisters, Kate, Sue and Kerryn, and their partners, Shaun and Chris, are also great supporters. The people in my electorate have shown faith in me over many years and I look forward to honouring my commitment to them over the coming years.