



Speech by

Kate Jones

MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE

Hansard Friday, 8 June 2007

CLEAN COAL TECHNOLOGY SPECIAL AGREEMENT BILL; APPROPRIATION BILLS

Ms JONES (Ashgrove—ALP) (4.57 pm): I am proud to rise in support of the Appropriation Bill 2007. I want to commend the Deputy Premier and Treasurer on bringing down a budget that is both economically responsible and delivers crucial infrastructure to build our state. During the coming 12 months a record \$14 billion will be invested in capital works while maintaining Queensland's AAA credit rating. With seven state taxes abolished since 2001, Queensland taxpayers continue to pay less state taxes than the national average and significantly less than residents in New South Wales and Victoria. Our unemployment level is 3.5 per cent, the lowest in 33 years. This record capital investment includes a number of projects that will significantly benefit my local community. It is fantastic news that \$2.4 million has been allocated for the construction of a new ambulance station to service Ashgrove and The Gap. There is no doubt that our paramedics are facing an increasing demand for ambulance services, particularly in the western suburbs.

I can advise that the Queensland Ambulance Service has already started planning for the new station and is currently investigating suitable land to secure a site as soon as possible. I assure local residents that I will be working closely with the QAS and the local community to deliver this new station. When complete, it will be a state-of-the-art, purpose-built facility to meet the requirements of our 21st century Ambulance Service and will deliver a welcome boost to services in our local community. Our paramedics are some of the most highly trained anywhere in the world, and I am pleased that they will have a new centre to help serve the people of the Ashgrove electorate.

Residents of Ashgrove and The Gap will also benefit from the record investment in our Police Service. This year more than \$1.4 billion will be allocated for the police budget, with an additional 200 sworn police positions. This new injection lifts the overall number of extra police positions created by the Beattie government to 3,000. We have significantly more police on the beat than ever before.

In the budget \$100,000 has been allocated to start the design and development of the new-look \$1 million police station at The Gap. Residents of The Gap will remember that in 1996 The Gap Police Station was shut down by the then Liberal and National coalition government. Having been opened by the Goss government in July 1992, only four years later The Gap Police Station was closed after the change in government. This was not only a dreadful decision for The Gap, one of the largest suburbs in Brisbane which clearly needs a strong police presence, but also a great waste of taxpayers' resources.

I am proud to be a member of the Beattie government that not only made the right and sensible decision to reopen The Gap Police Station in 2000 but also has committed a further \$1 million to build a better station on the site, which services Ashgrove, Bardon, The Gap and portions of Brisbane Forest Park and Mount Nebo. I will keep residents informed of the progress of this new station.

In my maiden speech I spoke about my commitment to education. I often visit the schools in my electorate, and I take this opportunity to thank the dedicated principals, teachers, support staff and parents, particularly those who serve on our P&Cs and P&Fs, for making our local schools some of the best and highest performing schools in the state. One of the real delights of my job is working with local school students, who will be the leaders of the future.

This year's budget delivers more than \$500 million to modernise schools and training facilities and includes a \$1.5 million allocation to a new numeracy initiative that will provide teachers with professional development opportunities. A sum of \$35.6 million is being invested over four years to improve literacy for students in all schools.

A big highlight in this year's budget is the announcement that the Beattie government will invest \$70 million over the next four years to provide every teacher who works two days or more per week in a Queensland state school with a dedicated laptop computer for their classroom. There is a further \$7 million provided specifically for non-state schools so that their teachers can also share in this initiative. More than \$200,000 has been allocated to make capital works improvements at Ashgrove State School, The Gap State School and Oakleigh State School.

Because we do have such great schools, as well as some of the most desirable and picturesque suburbs, locally we have seen a rapid escalation in land values, which is putting pressure on housing prices. I speak to many young couples and families who want to buy a home in the suburb because they grew up there or because they want to be close to their parents, but the prices are simply out of reach. This budget delivers on the government's commitment to reduce mortgage duty by 50 per cent from January next year. The complete abolition of mortgage duty for homebuyers will come into effect from 1 January 2009.

I am very pleased that this budget also introduces several new measures to lower housing costs. This budget lifts the individual resident tax-free threshold on land tax from \$500,000 to \$600,000. This change will apply from 1 July. In addition, a 50 per cent cap will be placed for three years on the annual increase in land values used for calculating land tax for all parcels of land other than newly created lots. This will ensure that, in the face of large land valuation increases, no land tax payer will see more than a 50 per cent increase in the land's value used for land tax purposes. This will significantly reduce the impact of large movements in land valuations, such as we have seen in our local suburbs. It is expected that during the next 12 months alone this will put \$50 million back into the pockets of property owners.

Protecting our environment for future generations is one of the issues that motivated me to stand for the seat of Ashgrove. I know it is an issue that many people in my local community are very concerned about. I am very proud that this budget includes more than \$714 million in new funding over the next five years to respond specifically to the climate change challenge. This includes \$400 million from the Future Growth Fund.

As the guardians of one of the natural wonders of the world, the Great Barrier Reef, which is extremely sensitive to temperature change, I believe that Queensland has extra responsibility to take action. The whole-of-government strategy ClimateSmart 2050, which was announced as part of the state budget for 2007, is a strategy with real measures to tackle climate change now, protecting our environment for future generations. A key component is establishing a \$300 million Climate Change Fund to ensure Queensland is at the forefront of developing new technologies like hydrogen fuel cells and investing in emerging technologies.

We will also promote research and development into renewable energy sources to meet our renewable and low emissions target of 10 per cent by 2020. The development of renewable and low emission technologies is a key part of climate change mitigation. On a local front, we will benefit from record spending by the Environmental Protection Agency to maintain roads, tracks and other assets in Queensland's parks and forests, with \$200,000 allocated for upgrades at Brisbane Forest Park.

Another key strategy to protect our environment is to invest in public transport. Residents in Enoggera, the Grange, The Gap, Alderley, Ashgrove and Gaythorne are big public transport users. I am pleased to advise that a record \$1.2 billion will be spent on public transport infrastructure and services such as the \$333 million new Inner Northern Busway extension, which is already ahead of schedule. This will see more buses and trains added to the public transport network to increase services. A further \$60 million is being injected into TransLink to integrate ticketing and fares, including rolling out TransLink's smart cards.

Growing up in a large household with only brothers, I know how important sport is for getting kids active. Through sport, young people benefit physically while learning skills and the benefits of teamwork. Four local organisations including The Gap Netball Association, the Northern Suburbs Hockey Club at Ashgrove, the Valley District Cricket Club and GPS Rugby at Ashgrove will benefit from a \$50 million package to upgrade sporting facilities.

Health continues to be central to Queensland government spending. A record budget of \$7.5 billion will continue to drive the reforms of the Health Action Plan to improve health services in our hospitals such as more hospital beds and record numbers of doctors and nurses. This includes more than \$250 million to improve conditions for hardworking Queensland Health staff, including visiting medical officers as well as clinical and administrative staff.

As we are experiencing the worst drought on record, water infrastructure is also a pivotal part of this budget. The government is undertaking unprecedented expansion of water infrastructure, with \$9 billion invested in the south-east Queensland water grid. A sum of \$640 million is allocated in 2007-08 for the construction of the grid network of pipes to move water where it is needed most. When finished, the grid will do two things. It will drought-proof south-east Queensland and it will enable water to be piped to where it is needed when it is needed.

Currently, there are 22 bulk water assets owned by 12 different entities and 17 councils that deliver water in the region. The new water grid structure will see that streamlined to just three bulk water providers, which will be state owned statutory authorities. Councils will retain control of the domestic distribution system and water retail business. This plan makes a lot of sense and will ensure that water is delivered fairly and equitably to all of us.

This year there is a further \$81 million for the Home WaterWise Rebate Scheme, which will offer rebates for water-saving devices such as rainwater tanks, washing machines, shower heads, dual flush toilets and pool covers. So far, one in five south-east Queenslanders have accessed the rebate and one in 10 people have installed water tanks with the assistance of state government subsidies. I thank local residents who have taken action to do their bit to reduce the demand on our water supply.

As well as investing record funds into building better infrastructure, this is also a very decent budget. There are funding boosts in the key areas of disability services, mental health services and social housing. For social housing—the policy area that I previously worked in—a record \$7.19 million will be invested to help people who are in greatest need in our community. When the Beattie government was elected, only \$330 million a year was allocated for housing services. Under this government, we have more than doubled this assistance. Public housing in the Ashgrove electorate will benefit from the \$30 million allocated in the budget to upgrade dwellings in Brisbane. The 2007 budget delivers the infrastructure and social investment we need in a growing state. I commend the bill to the House.