



Speech by

## Hon. Lindy Nelson-Carr

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

Hansard Friday, 8 June 2007

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

**Hon. LH NELSON-CARR** (Mundingburra—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism) (12.00 pm): I am pleased to contribute to the debate today, because this budget delivers for Queensland on many fronts. Obviously, there is substantial investment in health, education, infrastructure, police, water and transport, but this government delivers for the environment as well. I would like to highlight a few of those initiatives.

Under Labor, Queensland has seen substantial increases in our national parks, marine parks and, just as importantly, increases in the number of rangers and their budgets which will deliver improvements in the day-to-day management of our parks. This will be further improved through increased permanent funding for weed, feral pest and fire control, despite the member for Burdekin's assertions earlier on. Additional money has also been allocated for improved visitor facilities and to finalise the new zoning plan for the vitally important Moreton Bay Marine Park.

**A government member:** Hear, hear!

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** I am glad that the member is happy. We will also continue to expand the off-parks areas of conservation by expanding the number of nature refuge agreements with landholders. Yesterday we were involved in such an agreement with landholder Graham Turner, who made one-third of his property a nature refuge.

This government takes the protection of our environment seriously. Last night I was quite amazed and also alarmed at the comments made by the member for Charters Towers when he tried to explain what ozone layers actually are. Unlike him, we want to protect our environment and we take that very seriously. That is why we have allocated an additional \$5 million to employ up to 60 new officers to monitor pollution and enforce strict environmental protection laws. The chances of detection and prosecution for polluters are about to increase substantially.

This government, the community and apparently even John Howard and George Bush acknowledge that climate change is real, that it is linked to human activity and that we need to do something about it. The Premier has announced major initiatives to tackle climate change and our government is definitely acting. However, as I said before, it seems that we have some incredible sceptics on the other side.

Once again I allude to the comments made by the member for Charters Towers last night, which were nothing short of extraordinary, and those of the member for Southern Downs. Not only were they in denial; they also spoke about conspiracy and myth. That is a poor substitute for decent policy and action. That goes to show—indeed, it places on the public record—just what the National Party really thinks about environmental issues. A couple of weeks ago the shadow minister was spruiking the environmental credentials of the National Party, but if one takes the time to listen to the contributions that its members made yesterday, one would hear a very different story.

We have allocated funding to deal with what we call orphan spills. Those are pollution incidents where clean-ups are needed but the perpetrators cannot be found. This new funding will allow councils that respond to such incidents to be reimbursed for the costs associated with the clean-up. An additional \$500,000 has been allocated to set up a chemical pollution advisory service. These initiatives will build on the already impressive track record of the EPA in ensuring that our air and water quality are protected.

Speaking of water quality, the budget allocates a further \$20 million to improve the water quality of south-east Queensland. This investment is the latest contribution by the state government to the south-east Queensland Healthy Waterways Strategy. It will ensure that the current boom does not come at a high environmental cost to our waterways. The funding will focus on practical and cost-effective projects, working to reduce water pollution loads from rural and urban sources. It will restore degraded waterways and build social capital for improving waterway health into the future.

The government made an election commitment to provide \$30 million for acquisitions to expand our national parks, including targeting the priority regions of the Cape York Peninsula, the Daintree rainforest and the south-east Queensland rainforest. Overall, the government is on target to meet the commitment of having five per cent of Queensland as a national park. Just as importantly, each year the government has set aside more money for the never-ending task of park maintenance.

As part of the 2007-08 state budget, the Environmental Protection Agency will invest more than \$7 million to maintain roads, tracks and other assets in Queensland's national parks. In addition, an extra \$2 million will be allocated to QPWS base funding to enhance pest and fire management in parks, to continue to build on the successful projects undertaken over the past three years. This supplements base level funding of more than \$3 million each year for pest management and \$5 million for fire management. Through this initiative, Queenslanders can expect safer facilities, improved access to parks and better protection of the natural values of parks and forests.

In keeping with this theme of people enjoying our natural assets, the Beattie government has committed \$6.5 million over four years for another four Great Walks, in Cooloola, the Conondale Range, Carnarvon and the Whitsunday islands. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is working with Tourism Queensland to develop concept plans for each of those walks.

Protecting Queensland's heritage is a priority for this government and the \$5 million Living Buildings and Places heritage grants initiative is intended to encourage the contemporary use of historic places so that they continue to be used and protected, and will continue to be appreciated by the broader Queensland community.

Moreton Bay is an amazing asset and we need to make sure that we value it. On the doorstep of Brisbane and in the heart of one of the fastest growing regions in Australia, we have a marine park with turtles, dugongs, sharks, dolphins and whales. An extra \$500,000 has been allocated in the budget to help progress the Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan review. This funding will be invaluable in allowing more robust decision making based on science and economic data, and will also allow for the maintenance of the level of public engagement that stakeholders expect during this process.

As the Queensland Minister for Multiculturalism, I formally reaffirm Queensland's commitment to the values of multiculturalism. Australia is one of the most successful culturally diverse societies in the world and we should all aim to pursue social cohesion within a multicultural framework. The government is determined to keep Queensland at the forefront of multicultural development and this budget will enable us to deliver on that.

A number of innovative and exciting programs will receive funding in the 2007-08 budget. I seek leave to incorporate the rest of this speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Some of the innovative and exciting programs that will receive funding in the 2007/2008 budget include:

- \$1.055M to community based organisations for the Multicultural Community Workers Program to assist migrant and refugee communities to better access services;
- \$1M for local governments for the continued support of the Local Area Multicultural Partnership to support positive community relations at the 'grass-roots' level;
- \$730,000 for community festivals, events and projects to overcome barriers, reduce prejudice, support communities and celebrate cultural diversity;
- \$150,000 for the Queensland Roars Against Racism campaign;
- \$150,000 for community based schools that teach language and culture; and
- more than \$100,000 to support the peak ethnic community body, the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland.

Other areas being funded include arts, translating and interpreters, research, funds for the Muslim Community Engagement Strategy, and funds to continue the highly successful Australian South Sea Islander tertiary scholarship program.

Approximately \$700,000 has been allocated for the popular Queensland Multicultural Festival and Premier's Multicultural Photographic Awards.

Mr Speaker, whilst I am proud to be the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism, I am especially proud to be the Member for Mundingburra, so I always look for how any Budget benefits Townsville and North Queensland.

My electorate and the Townsville region overall have done very well and needs have been addressed across the board.

I welcome \$579,000 for North Queensland under the Queensland Skills Plan to provide additional training places to meet skills shortages and \$3.27 million targeting employment assistance for people in the region who are deemed as disadvantaged.

Major initiatives include: \$625,000 for Ross River Parkway, \$1.28 million to complete construction of six cluster public housing units in Mundingburra for people with spinal injury, \$136,000 for selected school maintenance projects, \$80,000 for much-needed car parking at Townsville Community Learning Centre and cash for a birthing centre at Townsville Hospital.

Over the last few years I have had several meetings in Townsville with members of a group called Friends of the Birth Centre.

Their objective to achieve a dedicated birthing unit at Townsville Hospital was boosted last year when Premier Beattie made a pre-election commitment of funding.

That pledge has now been honoured with \$780,000 to proceed with the facility, which is expected to employ four midwives and be able to handle 160 births annually.

The centre will provide an environment where midwives can offer specialised care for expectant mothers.

Last April, Health Minister Stephen Robertson opened Townsville Hospital's new \$2.6 million 22-bed emergency medical unit which is part of a Beattie Government promise to fund an additional 100 hospital beds.

I am very pleased to report that \$1 million was allocated in the budget to progress that expansion.

There were also budget allocations of \$400,000 to enhance oncology services at Townsville Hospital and \$30,000 for Child Health services in Mundingburra.

Mr Speaker, I make special mention of \$160,000 for youth justice programs, \$22,000 to the Good Shepherd Hospice to deliver health and fitness services and programs, \$320,000 for accommodation and support services for women and children escaping domestic and family violence and \$53,000 to provide before and after school and vacation care for school age and under school age children.

\$414,000 will enable coordination of a range of practical and counselling intervention services for children and young people in Mundingburra, with a total of \$1.42 million set aside for that purpose.

Aitkenvale and Cranbrook State Primary Schools and Pimlico and Heatley State High schools will benefit from a total \$136,000 for targeted maintenance projects.

Approximately \$57.18 million will be invested in vocational education and training in the North Queensland region during 2007/2008 and \$24,000 is earmarked for Smart State PHD grants at James Cook University.

Mr Speaker, \$625,000 has been set aside during 2007-08 for Stage Three of Ross River Parkway, bringing the State's contribution to this world-class network of walking and bike paths and associated facilities around Ross River, to more than \$5.2 million.

The joint Parkway development with Townsville City Council is one of the top recreational attractions in the Townsville region on a par with The Strand and Riverway.

A major feature of the next stage of Ross River Parkway will be construction of access points for boat and canoe landings as well as fishing platforms.

I know that my colleagues Mike Reynolds and Craig Wallace share my satisfaction that a State contribution of \$2.13 million will assist Townsville City Council in developing the Townsville Arts Hub flexible performing arts space, to be located behind the old heritage listed Townsville railway station.

This year's \$2.13 million allocation is part of a Beattie Government commitment of more than \$5 million to the arts hub which will provide an opportunity for Townsville's performing arts companies to come together under the one roof. The development will include an intimate theatre for up to 300 patrons.

I also welcome \$1.23 million to assist with refurbishment of Townsville Civic Theatre and \$1.77 million towards extensive upgrading of the PCYC multi-purpose facility in Wellington Street Aitkenvale.

My office in Townsville received a call on budget afternoon from Townsville City Council querying the budget amount for the PCYC.

I am pleased that Mayor Tony Mooney and the council could quickly be reassured that the Beattie Government's commitment to the project is unchanged at \$2.77 million. \$1.77 million is however, the amount allocated for the project this financial year.

When completed, the facilities will increase the ability of the PCYC to provide the widest possible range of sporting and recreational activities for residents of all age groups in Aitkenvale and surrounding suburbs.

Important road upgrades to be funded in the Mundingburra electorate include:

- \$90,000 for intersection improvements of Acheron Avenue and Ross River Road
- \$15,000 for construction of a bikeway on Discovery Drive between University Road and the Townsville Hospital
- \$45,000 for an indented bus set-down area at Pimlico State High School
- \$110,000 for pavement rehabilitation on Fulham Road between Armit and Hugh Streets
- \$108,000 to complete improvements to traffic signals on Ross River Road and \$239,000 to commence further signal upgrades—also on Ross River Road—as part of the Intelligent Transport System, or ITS
- \$25,000 to construct a bikeway on Mooney Street between Fulham Road and Tyrell Street and
- \$80,000 for a roundabout at the intersection of Palmerston and Tobruk Streets.

Mr Speaker, \$41,000 of a total \$82,000 State contribution, will be made available to Townsville Golf Club for an irrigation system and to upgrade four existing fairways with drought tolerant grass—a practice that needs to become the norm in these times of diminished rainfall and increasing water shortages.

I also commend the budget allocation of \$70,000 to assist Townsville City Council with lighting of Cambridge Park in the suburb of Vincent.

The park has been extensively redeveloped with assistance of \$435,000 through the Community Renewal Program in a joint council/ State Government project. Money to light the park as a safety measure at night is additional to that amount.

In the time available I have only touched the highlights of spending within my portfolio and electorate and the greater Townsville region.

I congratulate Treasurer, Anna Bligh, and commend this budget to the House.