



Speech by

Peta-Kaye Croft

MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

Hansard Thursday, 7 June 2007

CLEAN COAL TECHNOLOGY SPECIAL AGREEMENT BILL; APPROPRIATION BILLS

Ms CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (11.22 pm): This is a good budget for the people of Queensland. It is a budget full of new initiatives and spending that will go a long way to improving our state's infrastructure and services. It is a budget that builds on the government's commitment to improving the opportunities available to young Queenslanders at school and in preparation for their journey into the workforce. It is a budget that demonstrates that the Beattie government recognises the most vulnerable living in our communities such as people with disabilities and their families, young people needing the support of the Department of Child Safety and the elderly.

There is much about the budget that I wish to talk about today, but the time afforded to me limits the detail I can promote about the budget. I will, of course, be endeavouring to meet with community groups, school P&Cs and other organisations to make them aware of the funding opportunities included in this budget. Most importantly, this budget delivers on the election commitments announced during the 2006 state election and residents would expect that this would be the case.

Broadwater schools will benefit from the funding provisions with \$41,000 being allocated to Coombabah State High School for the enhancement of the Special Education Unit facility; \$9,000 has been allocated for maintenance at Coombabah State School and \$6,000 to Labrador State School; and \$19,000 has been allocated to provide before and after school and vacation care for school-age and under school-age children.

I am pleased to use this opportunity to report on the progress of a number of projects that are underway in the Broadwater electorate. In this budget, \$600,000 has been allocated to Paradise Point Bowls Club for the completion of a new outdoor synthetic lawn bowls green that will be completed in late July.

The Hollywell Fire Station has received a further \$125,000 to complete its redevelopment project. Construction on this project has finally started, and I know that the wonderful firies at Hollywell will be looking forward to its completion. This redevelopment project includes the construction of a new lecture and training room and a new dormitory as well as the refurbishment of the station area and repainting of the station internally.

A sum of \$550,000 has been allocated to complete concept planning between the Gold Coast Highway and Southport-Nerang Road. Road upgrades have been highlights in every Broadwater budget since 2001. A sum of \$17.93 million has been allocated for the duplication of Hope Island Road to Lae Road and \$9.9 million has been delivered to complete the duplication from two to four lanes of the road between Oxenford and Santa Barbara Road. That project is well underway.

Local community facilities are well used in the Broadwater electorate and it is important to ensure that they are improved and modified to meet community needs. A sum of \$46,000 has been allocated to the Dodgers Touch Football Club to upgrade lighting and a further \$130,170 has been allocated to the Labrador Australian Rules Football Club to upgrade its lighting at Cook Murphy Oval.

A sum of \$20,000 has been allocated for modifications to the Runaway Bay library. A sum of \$10,000 has been allocated to the Gold Coast City Council to help provide for the Runaway Bay Esplanade foreshore improvements along Shearwater Esplanade, Anglers Esplanade and Oatland Esplanade. That work is currently due to finish in November 2007.

A sum of \$50,000 has been allocated to help provide the Broadwater Esplanade foreshore improvements. This work is being carried out along Hollywell and Runaway Bay foreshores and is due for completion in December this year.

There is a lot I could mention about this year's budget, but it is the huge spending on mental health and housing that I wish to now turn to. In doing so, I commend the Treasurer for recognising the dire need for funding in these areas in this year's budget. However, having regard to the time, I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Housing

The 2007 state budget has allocated a massive \$719 million for projects that will provide for a number of social housing solutions. More often than ever before, people who have no place to live and no where to go are coming to my office for assistance. In all my time as a member of parliament, the frustrating reality of not being able to find someone warm, safe and affordable accommodation is the issue that most upsets my office staff and I.

As everyone is aware, the Gold Coast is continuing to grow in population and while the government is working hard to ensure there are facilities, services and improved infrastructure to cope with that growth, the housing needs of the Gold Coast population is certainly one area that has clearly fallen behind in the supply demand equation. In addition, the private housing market availability for many Gold Coast residents is becoming more and more out of reach and, indeed, more people who are making the rental payments are living in after-housing poverty, that is, they cannot afford other bills and expenses.

The federal government's rental assistance scheme is not doing a thing to address the issue of providing for affordable housing. Rental assistance has only increased by \$4.60 in the last five years while rental prices have soared. The Minister for Housing Robert Swarten is to be commended for his persistent efforts in addressing this issue. Despite the Commonwealth government slashing over \$500 million to housing out of the state housing agreement, the state government continues to cover the shortfall. The state government is investing in more capital works projects for the Department of Housing than ever before to assist with the growing waiting lists for housing commission accommodation.

The state government also recognises the financial challenges faced by private market home buyers. In our area we have seen the rapid escalation in land values around the state putting pressure on housing prices and housing investment. For many people looking to buy their first home near their family or where they grew up, our area is just no longer affordable.

I am very pleased that the budget introduces measures to help reduce this pressure on young couples and families. This budget will lift the individual resident tax-free threshold on land tax from \$500,000 to \$600,000. This change will apply from 1 July, and initial estimates suggest that some 6,000 households who have had to pay land tax will no longer have to do so.

In addition to these reforms, 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 measure ensures that in the face of large land valuation increases, no land taxpayer will see more than a 50 per cent increase in their land values used for land tax purposes. This will significantly reduce the impact of large movements in land valuations. This change will also commence from 1 July. It is expected that during the next 12 months alone this will put \$50 million back into the pockets of property owners. These changes are in addition to the government's commitment to reduce mortgage duty by 50 per cent from 1 January next year, with the complete abolition of this burden on from 1 January 2009.

Health continues to be a major focal point of the State Government spending. Another record budget of \$7.15 billion will continue to drive the reforms of the Health Action Plan that are improving Queensland's health system. This means more funding for mental health services more hospital beds and record numbers of doctors and nurses. In addition, \$635 million will be spent building world class infrastructure that will take our health system into the next decade.

This year's budget contains the biggest spending on Mental Health needs ever and the Gold Coast Hospital will benefit from this. For the Gold Coast, \$501,000 has been set aside for community organizations under the Home and Community care program, which provides support and maintenance services for eligible people at home to prevent early admission to residential care. A sum of \$215.4 million has also been allocated to improve the working conditions for Queensland Health staff, including Visiting Medical Officers, and clinical and administrative staff in 2007-08 as part of a total package of \$3.48 billion over three years.

There will also be an increased recurrent funding of around \$50 million for the Queensland Ambulance Service to meet growing demand. This will see the state government investment in ambulance services exceed \$400 million for the first time. This includes money for an additional 250 ambulance officers, 135 new defibrillators, 140 replacement and new vehicles and upgrading of facilities across the state.

This budget also delivers additional 200 police positions across the state, taking the number of serving officers in the Queensland Police service to 9928 by October 2008. The budget includes \$3.65 million for the commencement of the construction of a new district police office at Coomera. This new 24-hour district office will manage the areas of Runaway Bay, Coomera, Hope Island and Biggera Waters Beenleigh, Yatala, Pimpama, and Jacobs Well. The new district office will accommodate a range of police teams, focusing on a variety of operational and service areas, including Scenes of Crime, CIB, and Traffic Branch police. This is indeed good news.

I am pleased to see that this year's budget delivers a record budget for the Department of Child safety of \$551 million. This is an increase of over \$48 million. No person likes to hear of the very sad stories of circumstances involving the emotional or physical harm of young people. This funding will provide for the employment of about an additional 13 Child Safety officers, 29 additional Child Safety support officers, and 16 additional court coordinators and 53 permanent record keeping officers to ensure accurate and up to date record keeping to assist in child protection.

Education

The educational development of our young Queenslanders is a priority for the Beattie government. I often visit the schools in my electorate as a commitment to the parents and staff that I am willing to learn about the work being achieved in schools and the needs of the staff to ensure students are equipped with the best learning environments.

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 which will provide teachers with professional development opportunities for teachers. A sum of \$35.6 million is being invested over 4 years to improve literacy for students in all schools.

One of the biggest highlights in this year's budget from the portfolio of Education is the announcement that the Beattie government will invest \$70 million over the next four years to provide every teacher working two days or more per week in a Queensland state school or TAFE institute with a dedicated laptop computer for their classroom. This initiative will assist our fantastic teachers with further capacity for lesson planning, digital presentation of lessons, and student assessing and reporting.

From the feedback I have received from staff at local schools in my electorate already, the message is clear. This is good use of funding, directed straight at delivering for the needs of teachers to help them with their workloads and enhance their teaching methods.

This is a budget from which many can benefit, now and into the future. It is a budget that demonstrates the Labor government's strong fiscal management commitments yet recognises the needs of the state's vulnerable and needy. I commend the bill to the House.