



Speech by

Peter Wellington

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Hansard Thursday, 7 June 2007

CLEAN COAL TECHNOLOGY SPECIAL AGREEMENT BILL; APPROPRIATION BILLS

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (11.05 pm): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to participate in the debate on this year's budget. I thank the minister for her assistance in clarifying budget issues involving my electorate. I will try to restrict my contributions to how the budget has impacted on my electorate and not repeat comments made by earlier speakers. I thank the Treasurer for many of the projects which have received continuing funding and projects which have received new funding. In a constructive way I hope to be able to use this opportunity to remind the minister and other ministers of the ongoing funding needs for my community.

Improved health services continue to be a very high priority. I note the allocation of \$215.4 million to assist in improving working conditions for Queensland Health staff and support health workers. I believe that one of the simplest ways to show how the government values our health staff is to always ensure that our medical and support staff lead the pay scale by way of comparison with other states and territories in Australia.

I note the \$2.5 million allocated for the purchase of land for the expansion of the Nambour Hospital car park and look forward to work starting on this project in the next couple of months. I understand that a number of the houses on the site will be available for removal and will not simply be demolished.

The allocation of \$4.6 million for the replacement of our Nambour Hibiscus Nursing Home residential aged-care facility at the hospital is very much appreciated by residents, staff, family and friends. It is good to hear that a new site for the nursing home has been secured at Glenbrook Drive and Jack Street, Nambour. I hope to visit the nursing home next week, speak with staff, residents and supporters of the nursing home about the wonderful new nursing home that the minister has proposed. Thank you, Minister, for your dedication and commitment in pursuing a site and ensuring an allocation of appropriate funding for this new nursing home.

I understand the budget papers refer to \$4.76 million being provided to assist community organisations under the Home and Community Care program to support residents in their own homes so as to delay or prevent their admission to residential aged-care facilities. I understand almost \$50,000 has been provided for child health services to the electorate. The Sunshine Coast renal service will benefit from part of \$3.9 million allocated to improving renal dialysis services in Queensland. The Sunshine Coast Health Service District will benefit from the allocation of \$3 million this year for additional beds.

I turn to the issue of education. Following on from the allocation of \$616,000 last year for the redevelopment of trade facilities at the Nambour TAFE campus I note from the budget papers a further \$1.53 million has been allocated this year to continue this redevelopment at a total cost of \$12.3 million over four years. Thank you, Minister, and thank you to the government for your continuing support for the Nambour TAFE.

I note that the budget papers refer to an additional amenities facility to be provided at the Montville State School to eventually cost approximately \$1.2 million. In addition, further upgrading to existing

facilities and improved maintenance at the following schools has been specifically identified in the budget papers. Bearing in mind that it is just after 11 o'clock I will not go into all the detail apart from identifying the schools involved. The schools are: Burnside State High School, Nambour State High School, Nambour State School, Nambour Special School, North Arm State School and Mapleton State School.

I also use this opportunity to thank the minister for public works and housing, Robert Schwarten, for his support in having the Nambour Primary School Hungerford Hall roof replaced at a cost of approximately \$50,000. Minister, that is really very much appreciated.

I also place on record the need for the Palmwoods State School to have additional classrooms and a new administration office. I understand that the current growth in student enrolments at the school is consistent with the school's request to prioritise the allocation of new money for these facilities. I hope to take this matter up with the minister during the next sitting of parliament. Hopefully we will have a delegation of students and P&C representatives to meet with the minister.

On the issue of fire safety, last year the Minister for Emergency Services, Pat Purcell, listened to my request for money to be provided to purchase a new site for the Nambour Fire Station at a cost of more than \$500,000. I again thank the minister for last year's decision to purchase the new site and the allocation of \$750,000 in this year's budget for preliminary work to be carried out on the replacement station, which the budget papers refer to as having a total estimated cost of \$3.65 million. I can assure the minister and the government that our community on the Sunshine Coast is very proud of our local fire officers and the level of valuable community work that they perform during the course of their duties. I thank the minister and the government for their support.

On the issue of primary industries, my electorate is very fortunate in having the regional department of primary industries research station located at Nambour in the heart of the Sunshine Coast. I am very pleased that the government has allocated \$2.4 million for the purpose of building a regional office at its Perwillowen Road research station site just on the outskirts of the town of Nambour this year, with a further \$50,000 to be spent next year. I support this project and have already had preliminary discussions with departmental staff regarding the building. It is exciting times for the research station.

I understand that \$1 million has already been allocated for the planning and early acquisitions of land necessary for the upgrading of the railway line between Landsborough and Nambour, with \$34.5 million allocated for future funding. In the budget papers reference is made to \$33.1 million for the replacement of old timber bridges, including pedestrian bridges, throughout the Queensland railway network. I have already put in a request for the department to immediately look at the need to rebuild the railway bridge on the Blackall Range Road at Woombye. I understand that only last month Queensland Transport inspected the bridge and although it says it believes it is structurally sound I believe the bridge is past its use-by date and it is time for the bridge to be replaced with a safer, wider and more appropriate bridge, especially in light of the high volume of vehicles that travel over that bridge on a regular basis. I intend to continue to pursue this matter with the minister in the weeks ahead.

I note that \$129,709 has been allocated for bus and car set-down areas at the Kenilworth State School in the Maroochy shire with a total state government contribution of \$135,000. This project, while referred to in the budget, was completed last month. Some \$300,000 has been allocated to complete planning for bridgeworks at the Caboolture Creek on the Yandina-Bli Bli Road at a total cost of half a million dollars. I understand this project being funded is part of the Regional Bridge Renewal Program. Some \$300,000 is also allocated to construct and improve Razorback Road to a two-lane sealed standard on the range going to Montville. I understand that the total state government contribution to this council project is \$450,748. For the record, this is a Maroochy Shire Council road and a Maroochy Shire Council project, yet the state government has provided financial support. The road is currently under construction and work is due for completion, I understand, later this year, weather permitting. Some \$2 million is allocated for the intersection improvements between the Kiel Mountain Road overpass and Erbacher Road on the very busy Nambour Connection Road. For the record, I note and draw to the minister's and the government's attention that some people in my community simply do not support the proposed works which have been allocated. But we need to note that this is a joint project which has been jointly funded and worked through in partnership between the local council and the state government.

I note \$25,000 in state government funding has been allocated for pedestrian crossing improvements on School Road at Bli Bli. I understand that design for this work is currently underway and the work is scheduled to be completed next year. Some \$100,000 is allocated to commence safety improvements on the Eumundi-Kenilworth roads at a total cost of \$290,000. I understand that the minister will in the near future be making a further announcement about this very important link road. I understand \$478,000 has been allocated to construct Dusty Rhodes Bridge and the approaches to Petrie Creek Road, and that is located in the Maroochy shire. Some \$124,958 is also allocated and provided to construct off-road shared pedestrian bikeway bridges at Maroochydhore-Noosa Road and Eudlo Creek bridge in the Maroochy shire with a total state government contribution of approximately \$150,000. I understand that a preliminary design for the work is currently underway and it is anticipated that construction is scheduled to start early next year.

In the budget papers there is also reference to \$43,000 being allocated to the Maroochy Shire Council to assist with the Maroochy regional botanical gardens at Tanawha with a total state government contribution of \$86,000. This has been announced previously, but it is good to see it referred to in the budget. There is also the \$875,000 that the state government has provided to the Maroochy Shire Council to help with the Nambour revitalisation project, with a total state government contribution of \$1.75 million. I put on the record my community's sincere appreciation of the government coming on board with the council and with local councillor Paul Tatton in his strenuous efforts to get the state government's support for this very important revitalisation of Nambour. I thank the minister for local government for his very committed support for our town. I certainly appreciate his involvement and look forward to continuing to work in a very sensible and proactive way with the minister for local government and the Treasurer in trying to ensure that Nambour continues to receive the significant funding to ensure that this revitalisation project continues.

There is also \$5.38 million allocated to complete the construction of 28 public housing apartment units for low-income earners at a total cost of \$6.72 million. I put on the record my appreciation to the minister for public works and housing, Robert Schwarten, for his genuine efforts to try to provide additional funding and support for the less privileged people in our community who are in need of public housing. Hopefully in the lead-up to the federal election we will have more commitments from both the government and the alternative government to ensure that more money becomes available to the less privileged in our community.

I note there is mention of \$1.1 million to provide post-school options for young adults with a disability and their families as part of the government's ongoing commitment to care for the disabled in our communities. I thank the minister again for his support. Some \$651,000 has been allocated to the Sunshine Coast Regional Housing Council under the community rent scheme to provide short- and medium-term accommodation to public housing applicants in need of immediate housing in the private rental market at a total cost of \$1.95 million. The Sunshine Coast Regional Housing Council does a very good job on the coast in very trying times. Some \$2.92 million has been allocated to assist adults with disabilities to live and participate in their respective communities as part of the government's ongoing commitments. I thank the minister again for his ongoing support.

In relation to ambulance services, I hope that the injection of \$50 million to the Queensland Ambulance Service and the recruitment of 250 new ambulance staff this year will significantly reduce the pressure on ambulance officers and assist in improving the delivery of ambulance services around Queensland and also on the Sunshine Coast and in my electorate. I thank the minister for the funding to train and employ an additional 200 police positions in the state and hope that some of these new positions will be allocated to the Sunshine Coast region. On the issue of training, I note there has been the provision of \$1.18 million to provide training to Sunshine Coast disadvantaged Queenslanders, and this should assist participants in these programs to better improve their skills and employment prospects.

On the issue of water, it is great that it is raining—and I note that a few other members have mentioned this—and it is great that the recent rain has certainly been well received. I note that there is an allocation of \$81 million in the budget for the continuation of the Home WaterWise rebate scheme which offers rebates for water-saving devices such as rainwater tanks, washing machines, shower heads, dual-flush toilets and pool covers for residents who install these devices in their homes. I certainly urge Queenslanders that if they have not applied they should put their applications in in order to make sure our water goes as far as possible.

While speaking to this Appropriation Bill, I realise its very clear connectivity with the clean coal bill and the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill which was debated yesterday. I understand some of the amendments to the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill give effect to reductions in the mortgage duties and reductions in land tax. The changes proposed by these amendments were for changes to vehicle registrations according to the number of cylinders of the respective vehicles. I understand that a four-cylinder car would attract a three per cent duty, a six-cylinder car would attract a 3.5 per cent duty and an eight-cylinder car would attract a four per cent duty.

The government has justified this increase in rates by saying that there will be an incentive for people to purchase smaller vehicles and that the income generated by this increase will go to support the mental health services. To vote in support of a reduction in taxes and an increase in funding for mental health services, the drafting of the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill was such that one also had to vote in support of the increase in vehicle registration.

I use this opportunity to clearly say that I do not condone or support this technique. I certainly do not condone or support the proposed increase in vehicle registrations. I am disappointed that the government has used this technique as a way to get support for increasing vehicle registration fees. I note that other members have spoken about the very clear similarities with the way that the government used the increase in electricity fees to pay for ambulance services. I certainly hope that we are not going to see more of this

strategy in budgets to come. I hope that next year the government will find a different means to fund our very important mental health services.

I am very much aware of the need for increased funding for mental health services on the Sunshine Coast. There is a mental health unit attached to the Nambour Hospital, which is just up the road from my electorate office. There is a mental health office just over the road from my office. I am very much aware of their needs.

There is a concerning increase in the number of people with mental illnesses. It seems to me that there is a very clear connection between that and the level of drug abuse in our community. Perhaps for a future budget we could consider that connection. Perhaps the proceeds of crime, confiscated assets and money made through illegal activities could be directly connected to funding mental health services, which are certainly needed not only in my electorate but also throughout Queensland.

It is now 11.20 at night and I know that other members certainly want to speak. I close by saying that, as with the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I will support the Appropriation Bill. However, I certainly do not want the government or anyone else to point to my support of these and other bills and say that I support the increase in registration fees in the way that it has been undertaken. I certainly do not support that. I certainly did not support the way that the government used the increase in the electricity charges as a way to fund our ambulance services. Tonight we are seeing a continuation of a new style of increasing taxes, so that the community can connect a worthy cause like increased funding for mental health services or ambulance services with a tax that might otherwise be very unpalatable to it. I look forward to hearing other members' contributions to this bill.