



Speech by

Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

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CLEAN COAL TECHNOLOGY SPECIAL AGREEMENT BILL; APPROPRIATION BILLS

Mr HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (8.48 pm): It is with great pleasure that I rise to support the appropriation bills and the Clean Coal Technology Special Agreement Bill before the House. I want to commence by congratulating the Deputy Premier and Treasurer on the delivery of her second budget. This is an outstanding set of figures and initiatives for all Queenslanders and indeed for the electorate of Stafford.

This budget is firmly in the proud tradition of Labor budgets in Queensland. The budget is squarely focused on state development with a \$14 billion capital program led by an outstanding infrastructure program. Equally, this budget has a heart and a commitment to the needs of those who need the support of government. However, it is where both traditions are interwoven that this budget is at its best. The best example of this is the \$500 million injection over five years from the Queensland Future Growth Fund into social housing. As a result, this year's budget has a record Queensland housing assistance package totalling \$719 million, including \$479 million for the building program for public housing in 2007-08. This measure responds to a crying need in our community to provide affordable and secure accommodation for more Queenslanders. It includes more than \$8 million of funding for 37 public and social housing units in the electorate of Stafford.

Of course, as the home of Queensland Housing Commission developed homes—the first government built public housing estate was started in Lutana Street—Stafford has a significant number of public housing dwellings. Importantly, more are needed, but what is particularly needed is a greater range of housing options in the local community. The further construction of seniors units and apartments on the north side is welcome to address this great need. I congratulate the government on the extra funding for services for Queenslanders living with a mental illness. Over half a billion dollars of new money for clinical and community services will address a dire need in our community, and this is a tremendous addition to the Beattie government's \$10 billion Health Action Plan which is providing a wider range of quality services to northsiders at the Prince Charles Hospital.

Further, the investment being made in education and training is very welcome and indeed is an investment in the economic and social future of Queensland. Through a \$562 million Capital Works Program in the education and training area, there is a commitment to \$800 million over four years to modernise vocational training and to the Queensland Skills Plan through to the embedding of the latest learning capabilities with \$70 million set aside over four years to provide laptops to teachers across the state school system. This is a truly welcome education and training budget. I also acknowledge the increased commitment to disability services—a budget that has grown since the election of the Beattie government in 1998 by over 200 per cent. Residents in the Stafford electorate will also welcome the increased funding for the Queensland Ambulance Service which will provide an additional 250 officers and upgrades of equipment and facilities. The Chermside Ambulance Station is indeed the busiest station in the state and I know that a commitment of more staff and support to the service will be welcomed by my local community.

A budget is about much more than expenditure entailed in this appropriation. That is why I want to acknowledge the sound economic management of the government. I note the continued strong economic growth and employment growth in the state. But as I mentioned earlier, to maintain this economic activity it is important to seriously invest in infrastructure for a more robust economy and a fairer society. This budget entails judicious borrowings to efficiently and effectively fund the vital economic infrastructure in the Capital Works Program. Investment in this infrastructure—the water grid, roads, ports, rail and public transport—is sound economic management well recognised and acknowledged by the business sector in this state.

Unfortunately, over the last few days it has become apparent that the opposition in this place is against this sound strategy. In debates various members of the opposition have attacked the Treasurer as an unreconstructed socialist on the one hand and as a relentless economic rationalist on the other. Members opposite claim to support the infrastructure program—with the exception of the vital water grid—but reject the strategic borrowings that will deliver it. So it begs the question: how do they propose to do it? The only conclusion I can come to is that the National and Liberal Parties are not professing to adopt socialist economic policies, nor are they professing to adopt traditional Tory budgeting. It appears that they are willing to adopt a 21st century adaptation of Douglas Social Credit. They want the infrastructure. They do not want to borrow. They criticise the revenue mix. Logically, they will just print the money. But honourable members may ask how a National-Liberal state government is going to print this money. Well, this is where the Liberal Party steps into its own. Willprint presses are standing ready to print some dodgy Flegg dollars to pay for Queensland's future. I warn Liberal members against this course, as the AFP might return to knock on their door. But I am proud that the Beattie Labor government is a sound economic manager, investing in the future of our state as a growing economy and a fair community.

In concluding my contribution to this debate I also want to make a brief reference to the Clean Coal Technology Special Agreement Bill, which is a key revenue measure to the revenue components of the overall budget. That is why I want to praise the changes to the land tax regime. Increased thresholds and the very important innovation of a 50 per cent cap on land tax increases are not only part of a proper response to the housing affordability problems being experienced across the state, but they also address important elements of the nature of our economy. These changes are also contributing to the economic wellbeing of the state and of all those working Queenslanders, including many in my own electorate, whose retirement incomes rely upon the performance of their superannuation fund.

Of course, key investors in Queensland's property sector include these superannuation funds. This is the reason it is so very important that this element of tax relief applies to the so-called absentees. During debate on the revenue bill members of the opposition acknowledged this as somewhere between overdue and not good enough. But on this matter we have an opportunity to judge what the opposition members would do rather than what they say. Members will recall that my electoral neighbour, the honourable member for Clayfield and member of the shadow cabinet, served ratepayers as a Brisbane city councillor. Indeed, Lord Mayor Campbell Newman thanked the now member for Clayfield for his 'contributions' to the delivery of his BCC budget for 2006-07. In that BCC budget—the Newman-Nicholls budget—the cap on property tax increases was not extended to companies and absentees. So property owners, especially owners through superannuation funds, should congratulate the Treasurer and take the member for Clayfield and his coalition colleagues' protestations with more than a grain of salt. On that note, I commend to the House the widely recognised sound economic management at the heart of this budget and its traditional Labor agenda of state development and community fairness.