



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Friday, 19 June 2009

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT (ASSET RESTRUCTURING AND DISPOSAL) BILL; FUEL SUBSIDY REPEAL AND REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (4.41 pm): I rise to speak on what is one of the most important state budgets in recent memory. It is a budget handed down in the most challenging of times—a time when there are storm clouds sitting on the horizon, when the economic climate is dark and unstable and when true leadership is required to make it through to the next season of prosperity. The people of all nations around the world are feeling the pinch of the global financial crisis. Major banks across the globe have collapsed and governments of all political persuasions have been plunged into deficit through steeply declining revenue. In many cases, political turmoil has broken out.

On the home front, people in my electorate of Greenslopes are facing challenges many have not endured. Businesses are under increased financial pressure, workers are concerned about their jobs and families are doing it tough. The key to survival in such tumultuous times is leadership and courage. These tough times call for tough, courageous decisions to be made by strong leaders who know that there is more at stake than just political reputations.

The budget handed down by the Treasurer this week is a courageous budget. It seeks to guide Queensland through this time of financial challenges and turmoil so that our state and its people emerge at the end of the storm stronger, better and ready to make the most of the prosperous times which we know will return.

This budget is not about handouts and it is not about sweeteners; it is about making the right decisions to invest in Queensland's future. I am very pleased the decisions which have been made will help secure the future for the people of my electorate of Greenslopes. There is no question that for our local communities to sustain the impact of the global economic crisis the most important thing we can do is keep people employed.

Employment is the key to social cohesion. It ensures people are able to earn a living, to provide for themselves and their families. People who make money also spend money which, in turn, supports the jobs of others. People who are working are keeping the businesses and organisations they are involved in operating, stimulating economic growth and ensuring vital services can continue to be provided. That is why this budget is focused so squarely on jobs—jobs for Queenslanders, jobs for people who live and work in my electorate of Greenslopes.

One of the key infrastructure projects that forms a part of this budget's massive \$18.2 billion job-generating Capital Works Program is the Eastern Busway. This budget is delivering more than \$138 million as part of the construction of the Eastern Busway between Buranda and Main Avenue at Coorparoo. This

is a long-term project that aims to deliver long-term outcomes for the people of my electorate and the surrounding areas.

This busway will make it easier for people to get to work and, more importantly, to get home at night so they can spend less time in traffic and more time with their families. This busway will make it easier for people to contribute to the health of our environment by utilising public transport and reducing carbon emissions. This busway will take more buses off our roads, reducing congestion for those people who need to drive themselves. These are the long-term impacts this government's investment in this project will have for Tomorrow's Queensland.

This investment is also going to deliver for the people of our community today. By investing in this major project, the Bligh government is helping to create and maintain jobs in my electorate, in Brisbane, in the south-east corner and throughout the length and breadth of Queensland—jobs for construction workers, jobs for engineers, jobs for suppliers and manufacturers; jobs for mums and dads, husbands and wives that put food on the table and keep our economy strong.

The Eastern Busway is just one of the many capital works projects in my electorate supported by this budget. People in my local area will also benefit from this government's \$3 million investment in concept planning for the Pacific Motorway between the Gateway Motorway and Coronation Drive—money that will be used to plan for the future, to ensure we start building Tomorrow's Queensland today.

There is also funding to make our roads safer right away, with \$100,000 to kick-start installation of median barriers on the Pacific Motorway between the Captain Cook Bridge and the Kessels Road overpass, as part of the Queensland government's Safer Roads Sooner program. Because our lives are busy and noisy enough, there is \$2 million for additional noise barriers alongside roads across Greater Brisbane. People can listen to life, not to traffic, and this government can deliver on its Q2 commitment to maintain our great Queensland lifestyle.

In these tough economic times it is inevitable that many people may feel, through no fault of their own, that their lives have been turned upside down. This year's budget is there to help these people. The tough decisions this government has made in the budget are being made to ensure that essential services for vulnerable members of our community are not compromised and that those organisations who provide crucial support for the disadvantaged or downtrodden are supported.

One such group that provides incredible support to young women in need in my local community is the Zig Zag Women's Resource Centre. I am very pleased this year's budget includes more than \$300,000 for this organisation to provide counselling and support for young people at risk of homelessness. The budget also includes over \$300,000 for the Micah Projects crisis supported accommodation for homeless families in my electorate. This funding will ensure families whose lives are torn apart will have somewhere to turn.

While everyone in Queensland is likely to feel the impact of the global economic crisis, there are some people who will do it tougher than others. The Bligh government does not turn its back on people who need extra support in our community, and this budget is a testament to that. Older Queenslanders will benefit from an increase in the subsidy available for electricity bills to 15.67 per cent to assist with the increased cost of electricity. I know this will make a real difference in the lives of many older members of my community in Greenslopes, and I am pleased this government has taken this decision to ensure this assistance is available.

Many people in my community who are living with certain physical disabilities will also benefit from the \$11 million going towards infrastructure projects across Greater Brisbane's Citytrain stations which will ensure the stations comply with disability standards. Accessible public transport that allows people with a disability to get around and get on with their lives is essential, and I am very pleased this government is investing in these important works.

I am also pleased there is \$350,000 in this year's budget to complete construction of the new Holland Park Police Station by next month. This is the final instalment of the Bligh government's \$5.9 million investment in this new station. It is a station that the community can be proud of. As the new home of the Holland Park police, the station is a modern, state-of-the-art facility which will ensure our police are truly well accommodated and equipped to do their job of keeping the community safe. This represents a major investment in law and order in my electorate, and I look forward to joining the police minister for the official opening of the new station when it is complete.

One of the major focuses of this government is crime prevention. We want to stop crime from happening in the first place. This government makes no apology for being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. This year's budget includes more than \$150,000 for the Impact Youth Organisations Reducing Crime Ltd group in my electorate, to help build crime prevention projects and partnerships to tackle the causes of crime head-on. There is great community spirit in the Greenslopes electorate and these sorts of initiatives help to build the opportunities for people to work together to make our community safer.

Families with children make up around 20 per cent of my constituents so our investment in education is truly important for the people of Greenslopes. There are 10 primary schools and five high schools in my electorate, and I know that every one of them will be pleased to hear that almost 25 per cent of this year's budget is allocated to education funding.

Almost \$5.5 million in this year's Education budget is allocated specifically to schools in my electorate. The largest portion of this funding is being provided for the relocation of Xavier Special Education program, with \$4.58 million allocated to this important project. There is also important maintenance funding for Coorparoo Secondary College, Coorparoo State School, Holland Park State High School, Holland Park State School, Marshall Road State School, Mount Gravatt State High School, Cavendish Road State High School and Seville Road State School.

These schools are the breeding ground for tomorrow's Queensland leaders—the next generation which will have the future of our state in their hands. I am very pleased this budget is delivering important funding to ensure today's students continue to have positive learning environments to develop their minds and help them set the course of their own future.

We know that to ensure our children have access to quality education we must ensure they are led by strong and talented individuals. That is why this year's budget includes funding for 350 more teachers and teacher aides. A big investment in education in this year's budget is for the creation of a new leadership centre for principals to provide them with the best chance to deliver their skills and lift school performance. This is an enormous initiative that demonstrates the commitment of this government to improving education standards across Queensland to ensure that our kids get the best start in life. This budget also includes funding to help ensure our kids grow into strong, healthy adults, with \$28,000 to promote healthy eating and drinking among students and Swim Australia members across Queensland, including in my electorate, through the Good Food for Sport program. Initiatives like this can be the difference between healthy children and unhealthy children, and I am very pleased that this government continues to acknowledge the need for action to reduce the level of obesity among Australian children.

Sadly, sometimes we cannot protect our children from illness and health problems. It is in these cases that we rely on quality health services to help our children back to health. This budget invests significant funding to provide those very services every parent wants for their child. It continues to deliver on this government's commitment to build a single, world-class children's hospital on Brisbane's south side. Some \$80 million has been allocated for a research facility to be built as part of the new Queensland Children's Hospital. This is a major part of this government's hospital building program which, together with funding for an additional 645 doctors, nurses and health practitioners, will help to provide the kind of health services and facilities people in my electorate deserve.

Today's world offers a great array of opportunities for school leavers and job seekers. But in these tough economic times, the jobs people desire can be hard to find. That is why this government is providing major incentives for employers to take on new workers and is investing in training programs to help job seekers build their skills for employment. This budget affirms our election commitment to exclude apprentice and trainee wages from payroll tax and extend a rebate of a further 25 per cent on these wages. This will make it easier for businesses to keep apprentices and trainees on in these tough times and even to take new ones on. We know that providing workers with new skills and training will assist their chances of finding and maintaining quality employment in the good times and the bad.

This budget provides a major boost to training opportunities, with \$124 million over the next four years to create more than 100,000 additional training places for existing Queensland workers and around 46,000 additional training places for job seekers. People in the Greater Brisbane area, including my electorate, will particularly benefit from \$28.1 million being delivered for the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative, including the Green Army, to create more than 3,500 jobs for young people and those who are disadvantaged in the labour market. By providing people with the skills and training they need to get work and stay employed, we are helping to build the economy and enable people to participate in the workforce.

In tough economic times, when governments must put all of their energy into economic growth and job creation, it is essential that we also make sure that we do not take steps backwards by compromising previous important initiatives for the sake of new investments. While the economic climate may be seen as the most pressing issue for almost every Queenslanders right now, the environmental climate remains of crucial importance. Climate change has not gone away in the face of the global financial crisis and this government remains steadfast in our commitment to addressing its impacts and supporting people in our communities who wish to play their part in a greener future for Queensland.

As part of this government's initiative to confront the realities of climate change, this year's budget is allocating \$15 million over four years for the ClimateSmart Business Service. This program will help small to medium sized businesses in my local community to save energy and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in the lead-up to the planned introduction of a carbon pollution reduction scheme by the federal

government in 2011. Businesses in my electorate are very keen to play their part in climate change solutions, and I am pleased this budget will help them to do so.

As the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations, I am committed to a Queensland that is fair, safe and just. This year's \$884 million budget for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General is delivering on infrastructure, jobs and services. More than \$150 million in funding for ongoing construction of the new \$600 million Supreme and District Courts complex is the centrepiece of my department's budget. This major project—one of the biggest courts capital works projects in Australia's history—is supporting up to 5,000 jobs and will provide the modern facilities our state needs at the heart of our modern justice system. There is more than \$30 million for other courts capital works projects at Ipswich and Toowoomba, as well as funding for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to ensure our state's crown prosecutors can continue to keep pace with population growth and the increasing number of cases coming before the courts.

This budget also continues to support and improve the rights and safety of Queenslanders at work and at home, with more than \$126 million for industrial relations services, electrical and workplace safety. This government is committed to making Queensland workplaces among the healthiest and safest in the country, and this year's budget will help us to reach that goal for people right across Queensland, including in my electorate. As the state member for Greenslopes, I am very pleased to commend these bills to the House.