



Speech by
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Thursday, 18 June 2009

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

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (9.56 pm): I rise to support the appropriation bills 2009 and express my gratitude to the residents of Brisbane Central. I thank them, following the recent state election, for giving me the opportunity to deliver my second budget speech.

As others have said before me, this is the toughest Queensland budget for decades—a response to the global economic crisis—and I commend both the Premier and Treasurer for delivering a budget that does not abandon the workers of Queensland and their families and that is determined to fund core services and help battlers through challenging economic times. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights article 23(1) states—

Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

Although the global financial crisis is not of our making, we are not immune from its impact. It is imperative that the Bligh government best cushion its effects, and I believe this budget is doing this in the Labor way. My electorate of Brisbane Central will benefit from millions of dollars for infrastructure projects delivered as part of an unprecedented \$18.2 billion infrastructure investment and massive Capital Works Program, which will support 127,000 jobs. Our commitment to protecting jobs fits neatly with article 23(1) of the UN declaration, which states the protection against unemployment as a value to strive for regardless of the economic circumstances.

This state budget focuses on creating and sustaining jobs, supporting families, meeting election commitments and positioning our economy for future growth. The alternative would be devastating. Now is not the time for cutting back. Government spending in times of need makes perfectly good sense because it means jobs for Queenslanders. When unemployment is on the rise and when private investment stops, it is the role of government to create jobs, to stimulate local economies and to provide job opportunities. I welcome the continuing work on the Airport Link road project, with much of the work occurring in my electorate, helping to create around 10,000 jobs over the life of the project.

Despite the tough economic times and the loss of billions of dollars in revenue during the next four years, I am pleased that this budget is determined to keep our economy moving while ensuring that we continue to hire the extra teachers, doctors and police officers we need in our communities and the electorate of Brisbane Central. During the last budget, I welcomed the funding of over \$7.6 million, at a total cost of \$13.2 million, to complete the Fortitude Valley Police Station. I am extremely pleased to report that the new station is now complete and functioning, and I further welcome this year's budget allocation of \$2.24 million for the refurbishment of the old police station, at a total cost of \$2.8 million, which is currently underway. The refurbishment of the heritage listed station, complete with the new building, will have a

great boost to the police presence in the very busy inner-city suburbs and will allow a better delivery of essential police services.

Further, job-busting building works—such as the \$152 million to continue construction of the new Brisbane Supreme Court and District Court complex, at a total cost of \$600 million—are also well received for the CBD, as is the near \$1 million for the major refurbishment and upgrade of the Brisbane Children's Court, with a total cost of \$5.21 million. These two projects together will support almost 5,000 jobs in total and be a great stimulus for the surrounding businesses in the CBD.

It is once again pleasing to refer to a number of key measures in this budget that I know will greatly benefit the residents of Brisbane Central. About 12 months ago, the cry from business leaders and retailers was the issue surrounding skills shortages, and indeed it was an issue that needed to be addressed. However, to drop the ball in tough times is not the answer and that is why I fully endorse and support the \$613.71 million for vocational education and training and the \$28.1 million for the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative, including Queensland's Green Army, to create 3,560 jobs for young people and those disadvantaged in the labour market and in my electorate.

Now is not the time to cease the training agenda. Now is not the time to cease skilling Queenslanders and preparing them for job readiness. Training, skills and qualifications are essential for job prospects, and I know many constituents of mine are taking advantage of these training opportunities. I am very glad they are continuing. Employers will also benefit from a 25 per cent payroll tax rebate on the wages of apprentices and trainees, as well as exempting eligible wages from payroll tax. These are incentives targeted in the right area and strengthen everyone's right to work.

I also know many businesses in my electorate will benefit from the extension of the terms for land tax payments for 2009-10 which will pave the way for the introduction of an instalment payments regime the following year. We all know that in the inner city land values have risen substantially, and these measures will go a long way to assisting those businesses affected.

The new Fortitude Valley station looks great, following the facelift at a total cost of \$30 million, and it is great to have the last finishing touches taking place with this year's allocation of \$1.92 million to complete the upgrade. In addition, I warmly welcome the millions of dollars being spent on transport and main roads in my electorate which will provide vital maintenance upgrades on roads, bridges, boardwalks, expressways and busways, all creating jobs and ensuring the safety of our commuters.

Record spending on health and education is also very much welcomed. I particularly note the total amount of nearly \$1.7 million in funding for additional classrooms and maintenance work at the Windsor, Brisbane Central, Kelvin Grove and New Farm state schools. Together with the Building the Education Revolution moneys being spent on these schools and other schools in my electorate, a transformation is taking place which has been unprecedented in recent times and is delivering real and lasting benefits for our children. Investing in our schools is one of my highest priorities, and I have worked keenly with all of my schools, government and non-government, in ensuring they get the much needed funds to equip them to deliver the outcomes for our future generations.

The community sector in my electorate is both large and much needed, providing essential and often critical services throughout the inner city. Therefore, it is particularly pleasing to find that not only will most of the community organisations continue to receive their funding but that in most cases they will receive an increase. For example, I welcome the \$827,000 for the Palliative Care Program in Brisbane Central for funding to provide the much needed range of palliative care services, at a total cost of \$2.64 million. In addition, it is great to see that \$568,609 has also been provided to the Seniors Legal and Support Service to continue their good work in the community, and I particularly refer to the excellent assistance they are providing to the residents of Gleneagles.

As my electorate has a high percentage of older Queenslanders, I also welcome the subsidy increase of 15.67 per cent for electricity bills to assist with the increased costs of electricity. This covers the increased costs in electricity expenses, which I know will assist in making ends meet for those who qualify for this assistance.

A total spend of \$1.45 billion for social housing, which includes Australian government Nation Building and Jobs Plan money, will greatly benefit the additional social housing that will be built in my electorate. For example, I look forward to the near total amount of \$8 million being provided to the Brisbane Housing Co. and other community organisations to build and provide much needed affordable accommodation for those most in need, particularly in the electorate of Brisbane Central.

There is no doubt that the workers in the community sector are hardworking and carry out their duties in a dedicated manner throughout the community. This is why I am particularly pleased to note that the single biggest allocation of additional resources in this budget—some \$414 million across four years—is being provided to support the community sector to continue their essential work and meet their recently awarded wage increases. These increases are much deserved, and it is the Labor way to ensure they fully benefit from the favourable decision.

This year Queensland celebrates its 150th birthday, and unfortunately in its 150th year we are facing the toughest economic circumstances as part of the global economic recession. It was also indeed a

pleasure and very humbling to have been re-elected by the people of Brisbane Central during our sesquicentennial celebrations.

Budgets are never easy, but this budget in particular involves making a number of hard decisions which, despite the global recession, allow Queensland to remain well placed for a strong recovery with growth again expected to stay ahead of the nation. I know that in the long run all Queenslanders will benefit, even though it may get worse before it gets better—as although this is a difficult and far-reaching budget, it goes a long way to charting the course to recovery. That is the difference between this side of the House and those opposite. This budget makes tough decisions, charts a course to recovery, is jobs focused and aims for a strong recovery—unlike the opposition reply speech which was long on rhetoric but short on substance and any real alternative, an opportunity that will not be lost on the people of Queensland.

When tough decisions are made on this side of the House, we engage with those affected. We negotiate with the union movement and we ensure that all workers are looked after. This is the Labor way. That is why unions, which those opposite intended to destroy with their anti-union Work Choices legislation, trust us to do the right thing. Call unions any name you want, but when it comes to integrity on looking after workers and their families and trust on delivering outcomes for workers it is Labor that unions turn to, not the hypocritical, anti-worker organisation that is the LNP.

I conclude by commending the hard work of the Premier, the Treasurer and their staff in delivering a tough budget in what would have to be the worst economic conditions I can remember. However, in spite of the global recession, this government is able to meet the values I hold so dear which are contained in article 23(1) of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. The values contained in this article include, and I state them again, the protection against unemployment, and this budget is aimed at achieving exactly this outcome—concentrating on creating jobs, jobs and jobs. Families are doing it tough. Now is not the time to cut back. I commend the bills to the House.