



Speech by
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Friday, 11 June 2010

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (4.17 pm): I rise to support the appropriation bills 2010 and in doing so welcome a budget that delivers on key projects and services for the electorate of Brisbane Central while maintaining the Bligh government's commitment to creating jobs, jobs and more jobs. Unlike those opposite, our budget does not freeze building projects, our budget does not reduce the Queensland public sector and our budget is full of good policies and ideas, unlike the policy-free zone of those opposite.

The electorate of Brisbane Central is a very diverse electorate, covering a wide spectrum of socioeconomic situations from the very needy to the very wealthy. That is why it is important to deliver a budget that caters for all in society, providing the basis for the creation of jobs, better housing and community projects and catering to basic human needs of health, education, security and wellbeing.

Having a job in hard economic times is the best way we can get Queensland moving again, and I fully support that during these hard times government steps in, stimulates the economy and creates the dignity of work. The Bligh government's \$17.1 billion Capital Works Program supports 106,000 jobs—jobs through the massive building program such as Airport Link and a record \$1.6 billion building program for new hospitals and redevelopments.

These programs work towards delivering more jobs thus securing a stronger economic recovery resulting in a more robust Queensland. To stop our massive infrastructure program now would not be in the best interests of Queenslanders. The reason for this could not be clearer than the job figures out yesterday that show that Queensland was once again the biggest jobs generator in Australia. In one month 8,800 jobs were created for Queenslanders—almost half of the nation's jobs created last month of 18,400. And these were not just any jobs—8,200 jobs created were full-time. That is an outstanding achievement in globally difficult times.

Good governments must take up the challenge, make the tough decisions and deliver a budget that produces lower deficit, lower debt and a return to surplus sooner, just as this budget has done. This budget ticks all three key areas. This Labor government budget confirms that we remain committed and focused on continuing our economic strategy of jobs creation and training the workers of tomorrow, with a 125 per cent payroll tax rebate for employers of apprentices and trainees as well as the lowest payroll tax in the nation and a new Skills Commission to tackle skills shortages.

I welcome the \$290 million that has been allocated in this year's budget to continue construction of the Brisbane Supreme and District courts, as well as funding for completion of major infrastructure projects like Airport Link. I also believe this year's allocation of \$200,000 to redevelop the emergency service complex and ambulance station at Spring Hill at a total cost of \$7.03 million is money well spent.

However, this government also recognises that many working families, seniors and other members of our community are doing it tough. I am pleased that this budget provides some relief in cost of living expenses. I particularly welcome the \$24 cut to CTP insurance on car registration, an increase in the

electricity rebate for pensioners and seniors from \$190 to \$216.21, as well as half-price car registration fees for pensioners.

Recently, a constituent of mine and MS advocate, Mr John Trigger, came to see me regarding a proposal for public policy to deliver a new medical cooling and heating electricity rebate scheme in Queensland. I agreed that this was a most worthwhile policy and personally lobbied the Treasurer and others in government and campaigned for the introduction of such a subsidy. I am extremely pleased that this budget delivers a new \$6.7 million subsidy program to assist people who suffer a medical condition that requires the extra use of air conditioners, such as sufferers of multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injuries and neurological conditions. This subsidy from 1 July will be \$216.21 per annum. It was great to be able to ring John Trigger with the good news on budget day and thank him for bringing this matter to my attention. His efforts will now benefit all Queenslanders eligible for the medical cooling and heating electricity concession. I also wish to thank Ms Jennifer Cullen, CEO of the Brain Injury Association of Queensland, who also wrote to me on this matter in November last year.

I also made representations for two additional budget initiatives for Brisbane Central. The first was extra funding for Kelvin Grove State College. I am very pleased that the budget allocates over \$427,000 for general learning area renewal and maintenance and \$45,000 towards the installation of pedestrian crossings and facilities. The second related to the fact that extra police are always welcome in the electorate of Brisbane Central, especially in the Valley Entertainment Precinct. I hope that some of the 203 extra police find their permanent place of work at the newly built and renovated Fortitude Valley Police Station. I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my speech in *Hansard*. It has been approved by the Speaker.

Leave granted.

For many families in Brisbane Central, where the world class Cochlear headquarters and manufacturing facilities are located at Teneriffe, this government's additional investment of \$16.5m to double the number of cochlear implants and expand children's hearing services over the next four years is most welcome. Cochlear has recently announced expansion in production at their Teneriffe facility and coupled with this budget's extra funds will ensure that even more lives are changed for the better for children suffering from hearing loss.

Homelessness and community services are critical issues in Brisbane Central where there are many non-government organisations located and working tirelessly to provide essential and professional services to those most in need in our community. Therefore, community infrastructure programs such as the \$10m budgeted to continue construction of community housing projects in Fortitude Valley and Bowen Hills are most welcome.

I also know that many Level 3 supported accommodation facility providers located in Brisbane Central will be very pleased to learn that the budget provides a land tax exemption which aligns to the land tax treatment applied to aged cared facilities. I have been lobbied about this issue in the past and I am glad that my representations to government have resulted in this outcome for providers who deliver both accommodation and personal care support, such as assistance with meals, hygiene and medication, for many needy residents in Brisbane Central.

Many community organisations and families in Brisbane Central will continue to receive much needed government funding in this budget with a record spend of \$1.61b, up from \$1.4b last year an increase of 15.2%. For example, \$658,000 for Seniors Legal and Support Service, \$433,000 to support pregnant and parenting young people who are homeless and \$1.6m to fund the many services provided by Co.As.It located in Newmarket, will continue to be able to provide much needed services, to mention but a few.

The budget also provides \$2.9m for early intervention and support services for the families of children with a disability and \$2.09m will go to the Centre of National Research on Disability and Rehabilitation Medicine at Herston towards research into the acute care and rehabilitation of people injured in motor vehicle accidents.

A number of key other measures in this budget that I know will greatly benefit the residents of Brisbane Central include more than \$36m going towards assistance for low skilled workers, those disadvantaged in the labour market and to support the Queensland Green Army strategy in Brisbane.

In addition, record spending in Health of \$9.99b together with the additional number of 1,200 doctors, nurses and health professionals to the front-line workforce will continue this State's ability to provide world class health services to the people of Brisbane Central.

Equally important is this year's \$33.7m to go to supporting the Queensland Institute of Medical Research at Herston, \$7.8m of which is additional funding to further drive research and innovation in this crucial area of health.

A healthy and active lifestyle is also essential to good wellbeing and I am very excited to have \$2m allocated towards the construction of a multi-use community indoor sport and recreation centre for netball, soccer, futsal, basketball and recreation activities at Perry Park, with a total state government contribution of \$4m for these much needed facilities in inner Brisbane.

Mr. Speaker, children are our future and this budget delivers a \$9.5b education and training budget, a massive investment which means more kindergartens, 316 extra teachers and teacher aides with more than \$1.38b going directly to education infrastructure improvements. I welcome an additional amount of nearly \$100,000 to be spent this year assisting many kindergartens to provide approved programs for children in the year prior to Prep for many centres located in Brisbane Central.

This budget also provides for strong 'Green' initiatives with \$965m budgeted to protect our environment and natural resources and build climate change resilience. I am also pleased that the budget provides \$115m over five years for a range of solar initiatives to help build our solar industry and double our solar energy turning Queensland into the Solar State. I know many residents of Brisbane Central have benefited by switching to Solar Hot Water and have taken advantage of the Government's rebates which continue.

Mr. Speaker, this budget aims to provide for the future of Queensland whilst at the same time recognizing that jobs must be a priority in tough times and providing some relief for working families, pensioners and seniors and those less fortunate in our society.

Record budget allocations in health, disability services, education and our \$17.1b infrastructure program are necessary and essential if Queensland is to continue to be the economic engine driver that delivers benefits for the years to come in Australia's fastest growing and greatest State. Now is definitely not the time to cut our massive capital works job creating program.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Treasurer and Premier on delivering Queensland's 150th budget, a budget for a very different Queensland to what it was back in 1859. A budget that has jobs and job creation at its core as well as providing record funds for those in our society less fortunate than ourselves.

I know the residents of Brisbane Central will benefit from this budget's initiatives and I look forward to advising my constituents of the many ways this budget lends a helping hand.

I commend the bills to the House.