




Speech by

Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Hansard Friday, 17 June 2011

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; COMMUNITY AMBULANCE COVER LEVY REPEAL AND REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Skills and Mining) (4.39 pm): The 2011-12 budget rebuilds Queensland while helping families with the cost of living. It locks in the spending that will build back better Queensland communities. It sees the abolition of the ambulance levy, saving some 1.4 million Queensland families and small businesses \$113 off their electricity bills.

I note the bleatings of a number of members opposite about this particular measure. This measure, as was the levy in its day, represents progress. If those opposite had their way, the Chermiside Local Ambulance Committee—an institution I am very proud to be the patron of—would still be running community fundraising for basic services to supplement the subscription, rather than using these activities to enhance their services. They would be back to fundraising for basic services, and that is disgraceful.

This budget also delivers a concessions pack totalling almost \$1.4 billion, including big increases to electricity rebates, the pensioner rates rebate and South-East Queensland water subsidy schemes—which are all very important to many of my constituents. This pack includes: for the pensioner rates rebate, an 11.11 per cent increase to \$200 for pensioner homeowners off gross rates and charges levied by local councils; for the South-East Queensland water subsidy, a 20 per cent increase to \$120 each year off the cost of water access and volumetric usage charges; and for the Electricity Rebate Scheme, a 6.6 per cent increase to \$230 off the cost of their domestic electricity supply each and every year.

Turning to my portfolio, the Bligh government has invested some \$104.5 million in the continuation of the very successful Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. This program will help 24,000 job seekers into work. The Bligh government has renewed our commitment to managing abandoned historic mines with \$24 million. The Bligh government has delivered a total skills and training budget of some \$1.3 billion. The Bligh government will continue to work with Skills Queensland as it delivers a \$50 million strategic investment fund to partner with industry on skills training.

When it comes to helping people in the Stafford electorate, this budget delivers for the north side. Small measures are often overlooked when we discuss billion dollar budgets and million dollar projects, but these measures are very important in my electorate. They make a real difference to particular communities and particular community institutions. That is why students, parents and the community will soon be able to enjoy some upgraded facilities at two local schools thanks to a \$120,000 investment in better facilities. We will invest \$100,000 in upgrading the car park at the Stafford Heights State School. After the great improvement that has come with their recently opened BER project, this car park will make a huge difference to the way the school operates. I know that Tammy Robinson, the president of the Stafford Heights P&C, is very appreciative of this measure. The \$20,000 funding to resurface the tennis courts at the Somerset Hills State School is ideal for keeping our youngsters fit and active. I know that Ian Carmody, the president of the Somerset Hills P&C, is very appreciative of this. He raised this measure with me as a concern and I was very pleased to be able to deliver on it.

I grew up on the north side of Brisbane. I did the whole of my schooling there and now my children are going to school there. Our community values our local teachers and schools and I am proud to see this responsive investment. I want to thank the Treasurer and the Minister for Education for listening to my representations and providing students in the community with first-class facilities for our schools.

The budget will also help provide funding for transport, health and infrastructure. We are delivering better public transport, with \$93.7 million to continue building the Northern Busway to Kedron and provisions to plan the next stage to Chermside and Bracken Ridge of that great piece of public transport infrastructure. There is also continued budgetary commitments for the new children's emergency department at the Prince Charles Hospital, which is a very important improvement in the context of delivering the Queensland Children's Hospital. This is further evidence of the Queensland government delivering on its priorities for the north side—traditional Labor priorities of improving health and education services and addressing the cost-of-living pressures on working families and fixed income households.