




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE AMENDMENT AND TRADE AND INVESTMENT QUEENSLAND BILL

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (10.53 pm): I rise in the House tonight to support the appropriation bills handed down by the Treasurer, the Hon. Tim Nicholls, on Tuesday of this week. This budget focuses on growth, rebuilding and resilience. This is a budget for our time. It is sensible and has no frills. As Ernst & Young said this week—

The announced investments in Education, Health, Transport and Community Services are positive and a foundation for future growth.

The state budget may not have been exciting, but it was fiscally responsible given falls in GST incomes and royalties. Whilst we continue to deliver for the people of Queensland by reining in the waste and mismanagement of the previous government to reduce the overwhelming debt that we have been left with, this budget builds on our core services such as those the Deputy Premier talked about: health and education, public housing, community services, roads, agriculture, tourism and community safety. It is also a budget that puts a firm focus on regional Queensland, with 75 per cent of our capital expenditure out of the south-east corner. I must refer the previous member, the member for Rockhampton, to Budget Paper No. 3, page 5, where he can see the extensive amount of money that is being spent within his region. It is disappointing for the people of Rockhampton that he does not even bother to mention his electorate in his reply.

We are a government for the whole of Queensland, and I thank the cabinet and the leadership team for understanding the importance of the regions during such difficult times. Difficult decisions have had to be made. Our government has fully delivered on its \$1.4 billion worth of cost-of-living commitments. We continue to freeze car registration fees and we have reinstated the principal place of residence stamp duty concession, saving \$7,000 when buying a new home.

Our government is open and upfront about the debt left to us by those opposite. Whilst we communicate the challenges we now face, both now and in the future, this has been reiterated by the Costello Commission of Audit. Since our government was elected we have unashamedly been pro growth. We are doing everything we can to cut red tape, support businesses and help the economy grow to create more jobs and opportunities for Queenslanders, in small businesses like Blackbutt Smash Repairs and large scale resource companies, by stripping away red tape and fast-tracking approvals processes. Whilst we continue to grow the economy, we are continuing the task we began last year to rebuild our state's finances, a task made all the more difficult by the natural disasters of 2013. Just as we are working hard to rebuild damaged infrastructure—our roads, our water treatment plants, our bridges—we are also working hard to rebuild the state's finances and make the budget more resilient in terms of the financial challenges we face.

We are investing heavily in giving children a better education through Great Teachers = Great Results; injecting record amounts of funding into health care; increasing funding to assist people with disabilities and their carers; putting more police on the streets; and increasing support to our rural

emergency services. In such tough times, and to help with the cost of living for those people who need it most, the value of the concessions in this budget is estimated at over \$5.2 billion. This is around 3.7 times the value of the concessions by those opposite in their last budget.

Mrs Miller interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Bundamba, your interjections are not being taken and I would ask that you stop.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: This means a typical pensioner can access up to \$1,511 per year in discounts on council rates, water, gas, electricity and other services. I would like to highlight just some of our concessions as they directly relate to and benefit the people of the Nanango electorate. For a start, there is \$615 million to Ergon Energy for the Uniform Tariff Policy so that those in regional Queensland can easily access electricity at the same price as those in South-East Queensland. This is often overlooked, but it plays an extremely important role in keeping the cost of living down and making the cost of electricity fair for people who live in the regional areas. There will be \$409 million in assistance under the government managed housing rental rebate. There is \$97.7 million over four years to boost the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme, which assists rural, remote and regional patients who need access to specialist medical services.

Importantly, we have doubled the Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme to \$10 million to ensure low-income households can get an emergency payment of up to \$720 on their energy bills. Over the past year, the Nanango electorate has received in excess of \$10 million in funds granted to our local community groups and schools. This has helped kindies, local sporting clubs, volunteer organisations, our wonderful race clubs and our local SES. It is important to note that all Queenslanders will benefit from the continued work of our emergency services.

This budget contains some wonderful announcements for the Nanango electorate. It is very pleasing to see the increases in health services. There are three health boards in my electorate. The West Moreton Hospital and Health Service takes in the majority of the Somerset region. It will receive a 12.1 per cent increase in funding. The Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service will receive an increase of 5.1 per cent, with a secured \$1.7 million for much needed upgrades at the Kingaroy Hospital. It is also very good to see funding being set aside for the construction of a new mental health community facility at the Toowoomba Hospital, as I know that it will benefit the members of my community. The electorate also takes in a small part of the Metro North Hospital and Health Service, which services the Kilcoy district. I am proud of the work carried out in the past year at the Kingaroy Hospital. It has seen an increase in services with the appointment of a permanent rural general surgeon and a concentration on improving the provision of health services now available at our backdoor that were not previously available.

The 36 schools in my electorate will continue to benefit from the extra \$100 million in Fixing our Schools funding to address the maintenance backlogs in our state schools. It has been wonderful to see the improvement in so many of my small and larger schools, which amongst other things now have nice fresh coats of paint. I must say that that has been much needed. The overpopulated Kingaroy State High School will receive \$2.791 million for a brand-new three-storey classroom block to prepare for the move of grade 7 to high school. Also in Kingaroy, it is fantastic to see work continue on the new ambulance station. This year a further \$2 million has been budgeted to complete that station. It is great to see local tradies such as Fiedler Brothers Plumbing working on the new building. It is also very pleasing to see that we are continuing to provide funding for the new Highfields high school.

Another key aspect of the budget for Nanango is the investment in our roads. Unfortunately, our road network was dealt some very hard blows by the natural disasters of 2011 and 2013. The list of roads needing repairs seems endless. However, key funding includes \$7.5 million for the New England Highway south of Crows Nest and \$4 million for the Esk-Hampton Road, which goes through the beautiful Ravensbourne National Park. The other day I travelled on that road and I am looking forward to money being spent on it. The budget allocates \$7.5 million for the Oakey-Cooyar Road. I am also looking forward to continuing my work with the Minister for Transport to deliver the much needed overtaking lanes in my electorate.

However, tonight I am so pleased to stand in the House and announce the most exciting budget allocation for the township of Nanango: on the corner of the D'Aguilar and Burnett highways will be built the town's first set of traffic lights. It is wonderful that a set of traffic lights will be installed there. Because he drives through that area regularly, the member for Callide would know that it is a very dangerous intersection and the traffic lights are very much needed. It will be very exciting for the locals to have their first set of traffic lights.

Mr Seeney: The former member couldn't get it fixed.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I thank the member for Callide. Also dangerous is the intersection of Kingaroy Street and Markwell Street, and another set of traffic lights will be installed there. It will be a great year in the Nanango electorate for traffic lights.

I will touch on how my region and the rest of Queensland will greatly benefit from the expenditure planned through the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. It is very exciting to see more than \$400 million being allocated to primary industries right across Queensland. That expenditure includes \$16 million over the next two years to help implement Queensland's Agriculture Strategy. I congratulate the honourable Minister for Agriculture for delivering this major milestone in our government's plan to revitalise and expand that most important industry.

The people living in the southern part of my electorate will be pleased to hear that our government is providing additional funding to eradicate fire ants. In 2013-14, the federal government and all other states agreed to provide national funding of \$15 million. Queensland is going above and beyond our share of \$1.5 million by providing an additional \$3 million to boost the total national budget. Another exciting allocation is the investment over three years in a project with the Queensland University of Technology to research, develop and fast-track farm robotics. That technology will raise productivity and reduce input costs by automating the planting, maintaining and harvesting of crops. A sum of \$4.5 million has been allocated to continue upgrading the department's research operational facilities, such as the wonderful research facility based in Kingaroy.

We face the massive task of rebuilding our region following the floods. The council areas within my electorate receive assistance packages, which I know also greatly assist the electorate of Callide. An extra \$32 million will be provided to the South Burnett Regional Council and \$22.9 million will be provided for the Somerset Regional Council.

The two summers of disasters have had a longstanding effect on members of my region, particularly in the Somerset electorate. A \$61,000 flood risk study for the Esk township will help plan for future disasters, as will emergency communication technology for the Somerset region, such as variable-message signage, 'road closed' signs and cameras. It is also pleasing that the South Burnett will see a continued contribution to our local economic growth through a \$93 million injection in rehabilitation, dragline overhaul, equipment replacement and the Black Creek Diversion project at Meandu Mine and the Tarong Power Station. There will also be an injection of \$9 million for an overhaul of the Wivenhoe Power Station.

Tourism is extremely important to my region, and this budget commits more than \$127 million to support the tourism industry. Tourism is one of our state's largest employers, contributing approximately \$18 billion annually to the economy and supporting 220,000 direct and indirect jobs. The regional tourism organisation network, which includes incentives for local investment, will be supported through the provision of more than double the \$3 million the RTO network received under the previous government. It is good to see our departments working together, with the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing working with the department of tourism to develop a new ecotourism plan to encourage private investment and open up new tourism opportunities to showcase our natural assets. I am pleased that the beautiful Peach Trees camping area in the Jimna State Forest will benefit from a \$128,000 upgrade, which will assist people to make the trek into the forest to enjoy the serenity that the site provides. I encourage all campers to try out that camping ground, as it will not disappoint. The budget will provide \$105,000 for a new amenities block at the Yallakool tourist park, which will also benefit the electorate of Callide.

In conclusion, I congratulate the Treasurer and his team for delivering this budget that has our gross debt stabilising at \$80.1 billion in 2014-15, compared to Labor's last projection of \$85.4 billion. Unlike the previous government, we have clearly demonstrated our ability to manage expenditure, resulting in expenses being almost \$2 billion lower than budgeted. Therefore, it is pleasing to see the business community praise the budget and ratings agencies such as Standard & Poor's praising the state government for its sound financial management. With this budget we focus on growth, rebuilding and resilience. We are a great state with great opportunity. I commend the bills to the House.