




Speech By
Hon. Ian Walker

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 5 June 2014

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

 **Hon. IB WALKER** (Mansfield—LNP) (Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts) (10.23 pm): I rise in the House to commend this budget not only to the House, but indeed to my constituents of Mansfield and to the stakeholders in the areas which I represent: the areas of science, IT, innovation and the arts. If I can speak firstly about what this delivers to the people of Mansfield.

There is some tremendous news in respect of the Great Results Guarantee money which flows through to the various schools in my electorate. I spoke in some detail about this earlier in the week, so I will not run through that again now. But it is great to see that money secured through this budget for the benefit of the students in my electorate and their results in numeracy and literacy, which will no doubt be accentuated and improved by that great funding.

There is some good Get in the Game funding which is again confirmed in this budget. For the Mount Gravatt Hawks, the team that plays at Dittmer Park, the funding coming through for their change rooms and amenities at Dittmer Park will be welcomed by the numerous players and their parents who use that great facility. Similarly, facilities have been confirmed at Yandina Park at Mansfield down on Wecker Road for the St Pauls cricket team. David Valentine and his team have been working hard for those facilities in conjunction with soccer, which shares that facility. It will be great news for the boys and girls who use those facilities on Wecker Road. Bruce Wilson and his team at the Mount Gravatt Youth and Recreation Centre have had the pleasure this year of opening that centre and to see money come through under the Get in the Game program for the lighting upgrade at FR Caterson Park. It will certainly be good news for all of those that use both the indoor and outdoor facilities that are related to the Mount Gravatt youth and rec facility there.

There is good news also for those who have the benefit of the Home Assist Secure program to assist them at home, which is for those who have difficulty with repairs and maintenance and safety in their homes. Both Anglicare and the good people at the Mount Gravatt Community Centre, Cassandra Rowland and her team, will see that money come through under this budget. Just in passing I want to knowledge the great work that Lynn Rose did in running the Mount Gravatt Community Centre. She has recently retired, but the Home Assist Secure program was established and secured by Lynn after she had done earlier work at BABI on the bayside, and she was a tremendous worker for my local community. They are the specific things that I did want to speak about in relation to those things that have been delivered to my electorate of Mansfield.

I spoke this morning in the House about the arts provisions in this budget, so I will not go through those again. But I did want to dwell just a little bit on the area of science and innovation within my portfolio because in her response to the budget today, the Leader of the Opposition gave us some platitudes—unbacked by anything else other than mere words—about what the opposition plan to do in this area. That was probably an excessive use of the word 'plan', but it was certainly an attempt at canvassing this issue. It is this government which has a clear and strong plan to invest in science and innovation, creating a brighter future for all Queenslanders.

It is a challenging fiscal environment. I am sure all of the ministers on this side of the House did not wish to be operating under a system in which our AAA credit rating had gone and we had \$85 billion worth of debt to deal with. But that is what we have to deal with, and we have to practically operate within that environment. The government now has to do the heavy, fiscally responsible lifting to get the budget back on track. It has meant that strong choices have had to be made and, unlike those opposite, we have made those choices and we do have a strong plan for a brighter future.

As part of the strong plan, the government will play to our strengths by recognising the valuable contribution that is made by the science sector in this state, and we are committed to using science and innovation for economic success. Our science and innovation action plan provides the clear strategic direction, principles and actions that will harness the power of science and innovation to drive economic prosperity and enhance the wellbeing of all Queenslanders. In contrast, the opposition has no policy on science and innovation—no strategy, no plan, no actions. The best that the Leader of the Opposition could come up with in her budget reply speech was to have a talkfest; Labor's Advance Queensland policy on science and innovation. That is about having a talkfest to talk about stimulating and fostering our reputation as Australia's most comprehensively knowledge based state.

Adding to their lack of any policy, in her budget reply speech the opposition leader seemed determined to run a scare campaign to talk down Queensland as a place for our best and brightest minds to work. Labor has the policy to have a talkfest and to talk down Queensland as a place to work, and this government is acting responsibly to deliver real and tangible outcomes in science and innovation and is putting in place programs to retain our best and brightest minds. I will give a number of examples later where investment in science and innovation is part of this plan for a brighter future, but what I wanted to move on to now is the specific issue of the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine.

Queensland has invested significantly in constructing world-class research facilities which support cutting-edge collaborative research projects, attracting and retaining skilled researchers and beginning to diversify the state's economic base through support for knowledge-intensive industries. As we have mentioned a number of times in this House, we are building on this strength through a commitment of \$42.12 million towards the establishment of the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine. This fulfils a key government election commitment and I am pleased to say that the federal government has also confirmed its commitment to add an additional \$42 million to our commitment. That means that an investment totalling more than \$84 million will be spent in North Queensland and Far North Queensland which is a big boost to those communities. There will be three locations for the facility in tropical North Queensland—Townsville, Cairns and the Torres Strait. There will be great jobs during construction and ongoing jobs for our scientists in the important tropical health and medical research field. Researchers at James Cook University are making important research breakthroughs all of the time, and in recent weeks I have been up there to look at some exciting breakthroughs they have made in relation to dengue fever.

I therefore read with disbelief the hypocritical comments made by Senator Kim Carr at a Senate committee hearing today that the investment being made in the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine amounted to pork-barrelling and that James Cook University was below world standards for medical research and suggested there were more appropriate candidates for the cash.

A government member: What a thing to say!

Mr WALKER: The hypocrisy of Senator Carr's comments—and this man is a galah; 'Carr the galah'—is brought to light when less than 12 months ago on 17 July 2013 he and his fellow Labor Senator Jan McLucas announced the opening of the \$25 million Cairns Institute at James Cook University where Senator Carr said that the building will attract leading academics. Presumably those leading academics were in other research institutions, so applying Senator Carr's logic the investment would have been better spent elsewhere. Further, Senator McLucas said that the new building consolidated JCU's expertise in all matters tropical and that it is a wellspring of great ideas about how we as a nation should go about tackling issues specific to the tropics in the areas of marine and climate science and public health. If Senator McLucas is right, then JCU's expertise in all matters tropical would qualify it well to be the recipient of the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine funding, as it is indeed of course. We are glad to be supporting that. We are glad that the federal government is matching that and it is an embarrassment to the Labor Party and to the Leader of the Opposition to see her own team talking down James Cook University, talking down North Queensland, talking down Far North Queensland and talking down Queensland's expertise in this area. It is cheap political points by Senator Carr at the expense of communities in North and Far North Queensland. What Senator Carr fails to understand is that the Newman and Abbott governments are about building jobs, infrastructure, capacity and excellence in regional Queensland.

I also want to speak briefly about ICT. There are significant announcements in the budget in respect of IT. Some \$8.1 million is going towards the One-Stop Shop initiative, \$72.4 million is going towards the government wireless network which will allow our emergency services—police and firemen—to talk to each other securely, and there is \$3.1 million to make tactical improvements in cyber security and awareness within Queensland government departments. Across the electorate of Mansfield and across the areas covered by my portfolio this budget delivers. It delivers, as has been said before in this debate, in a strong, solid and workmanlike way. I am sure that the Treasurer has been careful to deliver these and other solid achievements throughout this budget. I congratulate him for the budget that he has introduced and I commend the budget to the House.