



Speech by
Murray Watt

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Hansard Thursday, 10 June 2010

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

Mr WATT (Everton—ALP) (8.33 pm): I wish to speak in support of these bills which contain this year's state budget. This budget comes at a difficult time for both our state's economy and many families in the Everton electorate. This year, I have had an increasing number of local residents and businesspeople tell me they are finding it hard to make ends meet. The effects of the global economic downturn are still being felt in Everton, with family budgets being that much tighter this year. I wore out my welcome badgering the Premier about the need to use the budget to help average Queenslanders to make ends meet, but it was worth it. I was very pleased to see the Treasurer announce some important measures to help the hip pockets of Everton residents whose household budgets are getting tight.

The \$24 reduction in compulsory third party premiums on the registration of a car will definitely make a difference to these families. This has been scoffed at by some, but there are many in Everton who will not scoff at this saving to their family budgets. I am also pleased the government has acknowledged the financial difficulty of pensioners by increasing the electricity rebate for pensioners and seniors from \$190 per year to \$216. This comes on top of a range of other rebates for pensioners, including on water charges, car registration and council rates.

At the same time as helping Queenslanders who are feeling the pinch, this budget advances the government's plan to help our economy recover from the damage caused by the global financial crisis. We have taken some difficult decisions in the last 12 months, but all Queenslanders are starting to see the benefits of these decisions. Our deficit and debt levels have been massively reduced, and we are on track to return the budget to surplus. By borrowing to build new schools, hospitals, roads and public transport, we are not only providing the infrastructure our growing population needs; we are also keeping Queenslanders in jobs, and there is nothing more important than that.

I am of course also pleased to see the government provide funding for a number of important initiatives in the electorate of Everton. The best local announcement in this budget for Everton residents is the commitment of funding for the new children's emergency service at the Prince Charles Hospital at Chermside. Construction on this project, which was opposed by the LNP at the last state election, will commence this year. This service, to be completed in 2012, will be fantastic for local families, with world-class emergency care available closer to home.

There is also good news for several schools in Everton. Overall, the government will spend nearly \$1.8 million on various projects at schools in Everton, with classrooms to be modernised at Albany Creek State School, Albany Creek State High School, Everton Park State School, Everton Park State High School and McDowall State School. There are a number of other local announcements—particularly for transport and housing—which I would like to detail further, but I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard* to enable other speakers to have their say. I have the Speaker's approval to do so.

Leave granted.

Local initiatives

Health

I have already mentioned the funding this Budget provides for the new Childrens Emergency Service at The Prince Charles Hospital. The Budget will also provide another \$3.4 million to complete the broader upgrade to The Prince Charles Hospital. These are both major projects that will deliver even better health services to local families and support local jobs during construction.

Education

This Budget provides almost \$1.8 million to modernise classrooms in local schools. This funding builds on funding provided in last year's Budget. The amounts this Budget delivers are:

- \$222,343 to Albany Creek State High School;
- \$220,838 to Albany Creek State School;
- \$702,838 to Everton Park State School;
- \$316,321 to McDowall State School; and
- \$328,326 to modernise the science laboratory and \$5,000 in maintenance at Everton Park State High School.

One of this Government's greatest achievements is the introduction of the prep year of school. For decades, Queensland children were the only ones in the country without a prep year. It was undoubtedly contributing to the poor literacy and numeracy skills of Queensland students. The Government took action to correct this gap and now almost all Queensland children attend a prep year.

The next area for Government action is in pre-prep services. Currently only 30% of Queensland children have access to early childhood education delivered by a qualified teacher, while in other states the figure is 85-90%.

The Bligh Government has identified this as the next major area for funding in our education system, and has committed that by 2020 all Queensland children will have access to a quality early childhood education.

This commitment is being backed up by funding in Everton, by funding being allocated for the construction of a new kindergarten at Prince of Peace Lutheran College at Everton Hills. It will open in 2011 and I know the Prince of Peace community is very excited about this new expansion of their offerings.

Disadvantaged people

One of the consequences of difficult economic times is an increased number of people doing it tough.

I am pleased that this Budget is helping disadvantaged people, by building a huge amount of extra social housing for those unable to afford their own home.

Locally, more than \$11 million is being provided to continue the construction of 49 units for a community housing project in Mitchelton, with \$3.2 million being allocated for social housing in Everton Hills and Everton Park.

This project will provide jobs for workers in the local building industry and housing for people who need it most.

We are also helping those less skilled get into the workforce, by providing \$36 million to assist low skilled workers, those disadvantaged in the labour market and to support the Queensland Green Army strategy in the Brisbane area.

A number of community organisations in Everton will receive funding to assist those in need. They include:

- \$410,721 to the Windana Support Centre, an accommodation and support service for women and children escaping domestic and family violence,
- \$340,491 to the North West Youth Accommodation Service, which provides counselling and support for young people at risk of homelessness,
- \$540,000 to Help Enterprises, to provide housing for people with disabilities who have aging carers or who are in critical need of housing,
- \$317,607 to North West Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Association, to implement a program that addresses the needs of Indigenous young people,
- \$416,232 to Picabeen Community Association for two programs to provide support to young people who are at risk of disengaging from learning, and
- \$72,958 to Everton Hills Wesleyan Methodist Church to provide an early intervention and family support service.

Roads/transport

Like many parts of South East Queensland, Everton commuters struggle with one of the consequences of our growing population, traffic congestion.

I was therefore pleased to see this year's Budget continue to fund planning work to improve Stafford Rd.

The Budget also delivers \$270,000 for improved traffic signals on South Pine Road at the corner of Flamingo Drive at Albany Creek, as part of a wider \$870,000 upgrade project.

There is no doubt that some residents of Albany Creek experience unreasonably loud traffic noise, particularly those living next to Old Northern Rd. I lobbied the Treasurer to increase funding for noise barriers and I am pleased to see a \$20 million noise barrier package in the Budget. I will now be lobbying to ensure that Everton receives our fair share of this package.

The recent duplication of the Ferny Grove train line between Mitchelton and Keperra train stations has meant increased train services for locals. Services will improve further as a result of the duplication of the train line between Keperra and Ferny Grove stations, which has received \$35 million in this Budget.

Conclusion

This year's Budget delivers by helping average Queenslanders make ends meet, by reducing debt, reducing deficits and by funding many important projects in the Everton electorate.

I commend the Bill to the House.

We have a long way to go.