



Speech by

Rachel Nolan

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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STATE BUDGET 2004

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (2.17 p.m.): It is my pleasure to rise to participate in the budget debate and to follow on from the member for Tablelands and her discussion of the missing link. I will start by talking about the budget as it affects Ipswich. I will not go into a lot of detail on that, other than to say that this has been an important and significant budget for Ipswich.

As I said recently in my address-in-reply speech, Ipswich is tremendously important to the good future growth of south-east Queensland, because Ipswich is the only part of south-east Queensland that has the capacity in the future for jobs growth as well as urban growth. Planning is obviously a huge topical debate at the moment. What we have seen so far is enormous urban expansion around Logan and on the Gold and Sunshine coasts, but it is urban expansion that has not been well matched with industrial growth. What we are getting in south-east Queensland is significant areas of urban sprawl. If we continue to be reactive and respond only to developers' demands for more land to continue that urban sprawl, that is what all of south-east Queensland will very quickly become.

Ipswich is different from Logan, and Ipswich is different from the Gold and Sunshine coasts because it is the only place in south-east Queensland that not only has the capacity for urban growth but also has the industrial land and the infrastructure for there also to be industrial growth. Planning towards Ipswich is one of the central tenets of managing south-east Queensland's growth well. For Ipswich obviously that is a tremendous opportunity. But planning badly would also give us a tremendous risk and could be extremely detrimental to what is a very connected, well-established old community.

Ipswich is Queensland's second city, and it needs in the future to maintain that status as a wonderful place to live and a stand-alone provincial city. So infrastructure for Ipswich is vitally important right now. Whereas in recent days we have heard the National Party talk a lot about infrastructure as a means of effectively saving dying communities, we need infrastructure in Ipswich because people want to go there. People will go there. We need that infrastructure to maintain the quality of life and ensure that we have industrial as well as urban growth.

In last year's state budget there was a significant funding commitment of just over \$3 million for the Ipswich River Heart project, which will for the first time genuinely revitalise the CBD stretch of the Bremer River. So it was a significant lifestyle boost for our river, and work will start on that project very soon. I believe it will be a significant catalyst for genuine revitalisation of the Ipswich CBD. It will restore the city's heart.

What we have seen in this budget is the realisation of the only new road commitment that was made in the last state election. That was a commitment that the Premier made to extend the Centenary Highway from Springfield through to Ripley. Again, that is extremely significant in terms of managing south-east Queensland's growth well. As we all know—and anyone who has been sitting in here in anything other than a coma in recent years will know—there are tremendous problems as a result of the federal government's negligence concerning the Ipswich Motorway. What our government has done is commit to building a genuine second road from Brisbane to Ipswich by extending the Centenary Highway corridor from Springfield through to Ripley.

That will mean there will be two routes and there will be two paths for industrial and urban traffic between Brisbane and Ipswich, and it will open up the southern part of Ipswich beyond Springfield and through Ripley to both industrial and urban growth in the future. This budget committed \$3.7 million for the final planning stages of what will be a \$120 million road commitment. That is a tremendously important key in planning south-east Queensland's growth well. So in two years in Ipswich we have seen two pieces of infrastructure that acknowledge fundamentally Ipswich's central place in planning south-east Queensland's growth in the future. In last year's budget we saw River Heart and this year there is the beginning of funding for that second corridor between Ipswich and Brisbane.

There are obviously many other things in the budget which are wonderful for my constituents, but I can talk about them in press releases; they are in my local media. I do not need to stand here like many others have down and trawl through a list for the edification of all, but it needs to be understood by all those in the House that, while it is important that we boost social spending, health, education, et cetera, and while those are things for which I do a tremendous amount of work, the real key to Ipswich and to south-east Queensland right now is creating lifestyle and urban amenity and providing the infrastructure for that to happen well. And that is what this budget does.

I want to comment briefly on the disappointing contribution that we have had in the last couple of days from the Leader of the Opposition and his team. I sat here yesterday because I had the misfortune to be on roster and heard what I think was perhaps the most disappointing budget reply I have heard from a Leader of the Opposition certainly in my time in the House, although many members will know that for some years before that I was an economic policy adviser in Treasury and I have heard quite a good many budget speeches and replies. It was a bizarre contribution, I have to say. There were a few elements that struck me as a little odd.

Firstly, the Leader of the Opposition seems to think that the Queen is running Britain and therefore it is a reasonable comparison to make between expenditure to maintain the Premier and his ministers and expenditure for the Queen, which struck me as shockingly irrelevant. While that was a bizarre diversion and we all went off down that funny little path, the more significant objection I have to the Leader of the Opposition's contribution yesterday was the strange position that he seemed to take on capital works. The Leader of the Opposition and many of his members subsequently essentially argued, I think, that there was not sufficient capital works expenditure in this budget.

It needs to be understood that for the first time in this budget there is more than \$6 billion of capital works expenditure. Indeed, in this budget there is more than \$1,400 per Queenslanders for capital works. Members of the old National Party stand up and tend to say that the eighties, the great Joh days, were the height of capital works and the height of good governance in this state.

Mrs Reilly: Cranes.

Ms NOLAN: There were cranes on the skyline and things were moving ahead. We were damming every creek in sight. What they do not acknowledge is that in real per capita terms during that period, which they presented yesterday as the great heyday of capital works expenditure, in the best year of the eighties there was in fact only \$1,140 in capital works expenditure per person in Queensland. So what this government is doing is spending more on capital works in real terms than the National Party did even at the times when they considered themselves at their very best and perhaps, sadly, at the times when they were also their most corrupt.

Even in the National Party's heyday they did not go close to spending what this government is spending on capital works now. But to confound that even further, the National Party argued not just that there was not enough capital expenditure; the member for Toowoomba South made the argument that in the eighties capital works constituted about 43 per cent of state budget expenditure and now capital works expenditure is not a great enough proportion of the budget. So it should be, according to him, more than 43 per cent.

There are two ways that we can do that, and there are only two ways. I have thought about this and I cannot see any other way. If we were going to boost capital works to more than 43 per cent of the budget, there are a couple of things we could do. We could either absolutely gut recurrent expenditure or we could raise taxes. So let us say we absolutely gut recurrent expenditure. Let us say we just rip the life out of it, which I guess is probably what the National Party would do. What is recurrent expenditure? That would be health, education, child protection, wages for police. That is where the money goes on recurrent expenditure.

Perhaps the National Party does not want those things. Perhaps it wants longer, not shorter, waiting lists. Perhaps it does not want more child safety officers. Perhaps it wants bigger classes and fewer police. Is that seriously what the National Party is arguing? Or is it, on the other hand, arguing that what we need in Queensland is more tax? Is the National Party the party of higher taxation for Queenslanders? If it is arguing that, even though we are spending far more on capital works than it ever dreamt of going close to, it is not enough, then there are only one of two ways we can go. We can gut recurrent expenditure, we can sack teachers, nurses, doctors, police and child safety officers or we can raise taxes. That is the

fundamental lie of what the National Party has been trying to tell us in this chamber in recent days. The National Party wants to lie to the people of Queensland and pretend that we cannot just have it both ways; we can have it every way there is. I wonder where these people get the imagination for having this many positions.

Mr Seeney: I wonder where we get the patience to listen to you.

Ms NOLAN: Frankly, it confounds me how they can possibly dream up having that many positions.

Mr Seeney: Do we have to sit here and listen to this rubbish?

Ms NOLAN: I do not think they have ever thought about that many positions in their lives—

Mr Seeney: I thought you lot wanted to go home.

Ms NOLAN:—because these people over here on the National Party side—

Mr Seeney: What's going on with you, Terry? Didn't you want to go somewhere?

Ms NOLAN: The member for Callide has more fiscal positions than the *Kamasutra*, and I would have to say that for the member for Callide that would be a first. I would have to say that, when it comes to the member for Callide, that surprises me because they want to have it every way there is. They have more positions than most of us could imagine, because they want less recurrent expenditure and less tax and more capital. It is a bizarre, bizarre position. It would be terribly uncomfortable. The National Party cannot continue to mislead the people of Queensland, because the people of Queensland are not simpletons. They know that every creek cannot be dammed and there cannot be more capital expenditure and less tax while still providing first-rate health, education, disability, child protection and police services. All the evidence shows us that what Queenslanders want is basically three things. They want a good health system. They want a good education system because they know, unlikely the National Party, that education is what gives children the best possible chance in life. They also want to be confident that their government is genuinely planning and genuinely building the infrastructure for the future. They are the things that Queenslanders want. I think that Queenslanders are smart enough to know that when it comes to that, the National Party simply could not deliver it.