

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 1975

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Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. J. E. H. Houghton, Redcliffe) read prayers and took the chair at 1.57 p.m. in the late Legislative Council Chamber.

PRESENTATION OF MR. SPEAKER

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to report that yesterday I presented myself to His Excellency the Governor as the member chosen to fill the high and honourable office of Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and that His Excellency was pleased to congratulate me upon my election.

GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH

At 2 p.m. His Excellency the Governor came in state to Parliament House, was announced by the Sergeant-at-Arms, received by Mr. Speaker, and accompanied to the dais.

Honourable members being seated, His Excellency read the following Opening Speech:—

"HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

Since my previous address to you on July 30 last, this State has been to the polls. I congratulate all those who retained their seats in the House and welcome the newcomers to the Parliament.

It is many years since a State Governor opened the Queensland Parliament in February.

This First Session of the Forty-First Parliament commences at a time when the economic situation in Queensland is still causing concern, and unemployment figures here and throughout Australia are at an alarmingly high level.

Both of these factors call for firm, positive action on the part of all those responsible for formulating and carrying out the policies of the Government of this State and I feel sure that this will be done.

Although the immediate future looks far from bright, I am confident that, with hard work on everybody's part, co-operation between private industry and government and consideration and assistance from the Commonwealth Government, the future of Queensland, and of all those who live here, holds great promise of prosperity and security.

I am sure we were all shocked by the Christmas Eve devastation of Darwin, and I am very proud of the manner in which Queenslanders came to the aid of the unfortunate victims by opening their homes for accommodation and contributing most generously to the Relief Appeal opened by the Honourable the Premier.

Since I last spoke to you my Government has continued to implement its programme for the advancement and welfare of all people.

The 1974-75 Budget presented to the Queensland Parliament last September provided for a deficit of \$760,000 in the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

However, since that time, the state of the economy has changed dramatically. Salary and wage award increases and rising costs generally have presented serious problems to the Government. Award increases alone, for which a sum of \$93 million was allowed in the Budget, are now expected to be some \$105 million.

Remedial action was necessary and the Government decided to press the Commonwealth Government very strongly for additional funds for the Consolidated Revenue Fund and unemployment grants and loan allocations to create more employment opportunities for both the Government and Local Government.

The growth pattern established by the Queensland mineral industry since the early sixties was not maintained during 1974. However, the industry last year again had record figures of over \$600 million for the value of minerals produced. There was also a substantial increase in the output of some minerals, notably coal, which for the second successive year exceeded 20 million tonnes. These records were achieved against a background instability of world market prices, increases due to inflation and an apparent lack of confidence on the home front.

Exploration, particularly in the field of petroleum, remained at a low level. There still remain vast natural resource areas of Queensland awaiting exploration and development. The Queensland Government will continue to give encouragement to these projects.

Queensland's regional industrial structure will be strengthened and widened under new policy objectives, and implementation of major issues will require amendment of the Industrial Development Act 1963-1973.

One of these amendments will provide, in the case of pioneer-type industries, for an increase in the Government guarantee from 75 per cent. to 90 per cent. of the cost of a factory building where a decentralised manufacturer is unable to raise his funds in the normal commercial manner.

It is also proposed to establish branch offices of the Department of Commercial and Industrial Development in Rockhampton and Townsville.

The Department of Labour Relations and Consumer Affairs will co-operate with the Federal Government on matters of common consumer interest, such as product research and quality standards, in addition to areas already actively administered by the State.

It will continue to oppose, however, the Federal Government's unnecessary intrusion into everyday State consumer protection affairs.

The Government plans to provide Brisbane with a modern port of world standards by the creation of a Port Authority and the financing of major terminal facilities adjacent to deep channels on Fisherman Islands.

Channel deepening for larger ships is in hand at Townsville and Weipa while new wharves are under construction at Hay Point and Thursday Island.

To provide for the rapidly expanding demand for electricity, my Government has approved a capital works expenditure of \$135 million for the current year.

The major part of this expenditure will be spent on construction of the Gladstone power station, the largest engineering project ever undertaken by the industry in Queensland.

Work will also proceed on the transmission link between Northern and Central Queensland. When completed in 1978, this will mean that power from any of the major stations can be fed to centres as far apart as Cooktown in the north to the southern border, and to many western areas.

The Main Roads Department's works programming this financial year has been influenced by the provisions of the Commonwealth Government's new roads aid legislation.

Available funds are well below needs, particularly in the Rural Arterial category, and the State is taking all practicable steps to help cushion the effects of Commonwealth legislation in the areas worst affected.

The Department of Primary Industries is guarding a basic natural asset of our State, the soil. Provision of additional finance has made it possible to embark upon extensive soil protection programmes based on the wider adoption of land use and soil conservation measures.

It is heartening to see the improvement in returns from our overseas sugar sales. I understand this is the first occasion when we have had a high level of production at a time when overseas prices also are at a high level.

The successful conclusion of the long term commercial contract with Japan will, I feel sure, when taken in conjunction with similar contracts with Korea, Malaysia and Singapore, provide a basis for confidence for reasonably remunerative returns to the sugar industry in the years immediately ahead.

The beef cattle industry is of vital importance to Queensland. This State is Australia's largest supplier of beef cattle and looks to overseas markets for about

80 per cent. of our production. The Government is gravely concerned at the decline in overseas markets, and arranged for a trade mission led by the Honourable the Minister for Primary Industries, to visit a number of Middle East and Pacific countries in an effort to open up new markets for meat and live cattle.

The Department of Education will make further provision for children who have special educational needs—Aboriginal and Island children at all levels, children with social disadvantages, and those with physical and mental handicaps.

With the construction this year of a further 90 pre-school units, the number operating by December 1975 will total 230. The pre-school correspondence programme also will be extended to cater for an estimated 1,200 children in isolated areas by January 1976.

An inter-departmental committee has been appointed to plan the establishment at South Brisbane of a cultural complex incorporating the Art Gallery, State Library, Museum and Centre for the Performing Arts.

The re-organisation of Police Regions and Districts is continuing and the resultant structure is one of the best in Australia.

The Police Academy is of great importance to the Police Force, and current police building projects include an Administration Block, Chapel, Gymnasium and Equipment-Learning Resources Centre.

The Department of Works programme of \$86 million is substantially in hand, including an educational building programme of \$53 million.

Following the land boom of the preceding two years the number of land dealings lodged for registration with the Justice Department in the latter half of 1974 declined appreciably.

The Law Reform Commission is preparing a report concerning the repeal of some Queensland Statutes and this will be submitted shortly.

It is anticipated that a Bill will be presented eliminating differences in the Companies Acts of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, to make way for a completely uniform Companies Act to operate in the three eastern States from July 1, 1975. A Bill amending the Auctioneers and Agents Act is also being prepared.

The Small Claims Tribunal, which resolves disputes between consumers and traders quickly and inexpensively and in an informal manner, is now in its second year of operation. Because of the increase in the number of claims being lodged, a second Referee is being appointed in a temporary capacity to assist in the hearing of such claims.

The Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement has continued to develop its policies, which are directed towards the social welfare of indigenous Queenslanders, who will soon choose members of a new Aboriginal and Islander Commission. This action will consolidate the work already undertaken by the Department in the formation of Community and Advisory Councils.

During this Session, legislation will be introduced by the Department of Lands to provide an additional organisation for the further investigation, declaration and preservation of National Parks throughout the State and for the establishment of a wildlife service.

My Ministers have advised that legislation will be introduced to allow grazing selections in certain cases to be converted to perpetual lease tenure, provided the conversion is not contrary to the public interest.

The development of Crown Residential Estates has proceeded this financial year in some 45 cities and towns throughout the State between the Gold Coast and Port Douglas on a somewhat reduced scale than originally planned. All funds available at the present time are fully committed.

With the advent of colour television next month the Queensland Government Tourist Bureau will become one of the first national advertisers to use this medium. A series of short colour commercials has been prepared to promote Queensland resort areas and will receive wide exposure in the southern States.

The Bureau's Townsville branch will move into modern premises in the new S.G.I.O. building later this year, while consideration is being given to Bureau representation in an Australian Travel Industry Task Force to North America in 1976.

Since the inception of the State Government's scheme for assistance and encouragement to sport in 1972, over 800 sporting clubs and associations throughout Queensland have benefited financially.

The Queensland National Fitness Council continues to provide facilities for recreation, and a works programme to upgrade and expand amenities at its various camps is well advanced.

A Commission of Inquiry Into Youth, under the Chairmanship of His Honour Judge A. G. Demack, has been appointed by the Government to inquire into the nature and extent of problems confronting youth in Queensland.

Work is continuing on the various building projects within the Prisons service and construction of the State's newest Prison at Woodford is nearing completion.

An investigation of the Prison Service by officers of the Department of the Public Service Board is nearing completion and this, together with a proposed investigation of latest methods of Prison administration and facilities overseas, will assist in improving the service in Queensland.

Irrigation and Water Supply Commission storages in 13 dams and 56 weirs presently hold 80 per cent. of their total capacity, water from which is used for urban, mining and power generation purposes, plus its main use for irrigation.

Three dams at Julius, Glenlyon and Kinchant, and two weirs at Baralaba and Bingegang, and the Burnett River Barrage are under construction.

Work continues on the major Bundaberg and Emerald Irrigation Schemes, Mt. Isa Water Supply Scheme, extension of the Blackwater Water Supply Scheme to serve the State Electricity Commission, and diversion works for Stage 2 of Callide Dam.

The joint Commonwealth-State evaluation of the Burdekin River Basin continues.

With the completion of this summer's planting the area of effective softwood plantations owned and controlled by the State Department of Forestry will be 93,000 hectares of which just under half has been established in the past eight years.

The Department of Local Government is placing particular emphasis on town planning and its town planning section is being expanded to cope with the excellent response received from Local Authorities.

The Department has been given approval to open a branch office in Townsville.

The Railway Department will be transporting increased quantities of coal and other minerals with the completion of new projects.

The Greenvale Line has been handed over to the Commissioner for Railways and is being used for transporting nickel ore in North Queensland, while contracts have been placed for materials and rollingstock required for the haulage of rock phosphate from North-west Queensland to Townsville.

Work is progressing on the first stage of the cross-river railway link between South Brisbane and Roma Street Railway Stations, which is part of the major scheme for upgrading public transport in the Brisbane area over the next few years, including electrification of the suburban railway services.

Construction will continue on a new wagon repair depot at Townsville, a train marshalling yard at Willowburn in Toowoomba, extensions to the Moolabin goods yard and a major goods handling depot project at Acacia Ridge, both in Brisbane.

A two-pronged attack to improve the quality, capacity, efficiency and frequency of urban transit services in the Brisbane Statistical Division will be made this year with the start on road-rail interchange facilities.

The Agent-General's Office in London is a vital link between Queensland and the United Kingdom. The office will continue to draw to the attention of United Kingdom and European industrialists and businessmen the opportunities offered by Queensland for investment and development. It will continue to aid the recruitment of skilled persons in various categories, and staff for specified sections of industry and commerce and for Government Departments, particularly the teaching service.

The Treasury Department is planning the installation of a Central Government Computing Complex incorporating large scale processing facilities, telecommunication equipment, on-line and interrogation systems and sophisticated ancillary devices such as computer output microfilm equipment.

The Co-ordinator-General has delegated to the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission the production of working drawings and contract documents and the acquisition of the necessary land for the Wivenhoe Dam. Work on the relocation of roads and other services is proceeding. The new North Pine Dam should be completed by December, 1975.

Work on the new Brisbane Metropolitan Abattoir is proceeding steadily with a target completion date for July, 1975.

Following a feasibility study, tenders have been called for a new structure to dam Enoggera Creek, which when constructed, will reduce flood heights.

A comprehensive programme of special investigations to assess the potential of the resources of the basin of the Burdekin River and its tributaries for industrial, mining, urban and agricultural uses, hydro-electricity generation and for flood mitigation is being carried out as a joint Commonwealth-State project under the direction of the Burdekin Basin Appraisal Project Committee.

The Government has continued its policy of providing to Queensland residents free treatment to both inpatients and outpatients at Public Hospitals within the State, and has maintained an efficient and comprehensive Hospital Service throughout Queensland.

Cabinet approval has been given to a hospital construction programme totalling \$110 million over a seven-year period.

My Government is very conscious of the need for housing and is extremely concerned at the reduction of activity in the private homebuilding sector of the industry.

The Queensland Housing Commission will continue construction for home ownership and rental to cope with the large number of applications on hand. In the first six months of the current financial year 744 Commission dwellings were completed—an increase of 101 over the corresponding period in 1973-74.

The Commission is giving every assistance towards maintaining employment in the homebuilding industry. The Commission has 2,324 dwellings in contractors' hands for construction, including 399 units for aged people. A total of 393 such units has already been completed.

Honourable Members, included in the legislative proposals you will be asked to consider during this Session are:

- A Bill to standardise building by-laws for Local Authorities;
- A Bill to amend the Water Act to ensure proper supervision and safety of dams;
- A Bill to amend the Magistrates Courts Act to provide for the operation of Small Debts Courts;
- A Bill to amend the Marginal Dairy Farm Reconstruction Scheme Agreement Act;
- A Bill to provide for the holding of property by sporting bodies and clubs;
- A Bill to implement recommendations of the Status of Women Commission.

I now declare this Session of Parliament open and trust that your labours will aid the welfare and happiness of all sections of the community.

I pray that the Blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels."

His Excellency then left the Chamber.

Mr. SPEAKER announced that the sitting would be continued in the Legislative Assembly Chamber, where he took the chair at 2.24 p.m.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier): I move—

"That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 11 a.m. tomorrow."

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 2.25 p.m.