

**PROROGATION**

On 11 March 1996 the following Proclamation was issued by the Governor—

**PROCLAMATION**

I, LENEEN FORDE, Governor, prorogue the Legislative Assembly to Thursday, 28 March 1996.

[L.S.]

LENEEN FORDE

*Governor*

Signed and sealed on 11 March 1996.

By Command      ROBERT BORBIDGE

God Save the Queen

## QUEENSLAND



# HANSARD

## Legislative Assembly

### SECOND SESSION OF THE FORTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

#### Appointed to meet

AT BRISBANE ON THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF MARCH IN THE FORTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II, IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1996

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#### THURSDAY, 28 MARCH 1996

##### OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

Pursuant to the Proclamation by Her Excellency the Governor, dated 18 March 1996, appointing Parliament to meet this day for the dispatch of business, the House met at 2.15 p.m. in the late Legislative Council Chamber.

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. J. Fouras, Ashgrove) read prayers and took the chair.

The Clerk read the Proclamation.

##### GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH

HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,

You have been called together to give your attention to, and to make decisions upon, matters pertaining to the welfare of this State.

Consequent upon the resignation of the former Government on 19 February 1996, I invited the Honourable Robert Borbidge to form an Administration. This he did and the

new Ministry was sworn in on 26 February 1996.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

My Government has set out for this Second Session of the Forty-eighth Parliament a program to provide for enhanced economic growth through provision of sound basic infrastructure and services.

My Government believes that the delivery of State Government services should be characterised by inclusiveness of all sections of the community in terms of both design and practical day-to-day decision-making.

The Office of the Cabinet has been abolished and a simplified structure introduced in the new Department of the Premier and Cabinet commensurate with serving the Premier's needs as Chief Minister and member of the Council of Australian Governments.

Another such initiative will be the establishment of the Centre for Economic and Environmental Research which will provide factual and timely information to all stakeholders concerned with the economic and environmental aspects of major State development issues.

Inclusion of regional views in central policy decision making will be assisted with the establishment of an Office of the Premier for North Queensland in Townsville, with support offices in Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton and Gladstone.

The Public Sector Management Commission will be replaced by the Office of the Public Service which will provide timely and practical support of Chief Executive Officers and their Ministers in the provision and management of public service establishments.

Security of tenure in employment in the public sector, acknowledging excellence, skills, knowledge and relevant experience will be supported by legislation to be introduced.

My Government also believes that long-term stable growth is only possible with strong fiscal discipline in the management of public finances. It is therefore committed to low State taxation and maintenance of long term financial asset reserves. Borrowing will only be entertained for infrastructure to the extent that projects are able to service their debts and will not be countenanced for recurrent expenditure.

The State's finances will be reviewed by an independent Commission of Audit to identify any problems and suggest options for the future provision of infrastructure in the State, together with alternatives for the delivery of other Government services.

A framework will be developed for appropriate levels of contracting out of Government services, together with commercialisation initiatives and the introduction of a tax equivalent regime for Government Owned Enterprises. Where appropriate, possible privatisation and sale of non-strategic Government assets will be investigated. Consultation with other governments on implementation of National Competition Policy objectives will continue.

The new Department of Economic Development and Trade will co-ordinate development and implementation of the State Economic Development Strategy to strengthen, diversify, decentralise and internationalise the Queensland economy for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

The Brisbane Gateway Ports Strategy and the Townsville and Gladstone Industrial Land Projects will ensure that these important economic gateways are well placed to attract new industries and are capable of efficiently supplying markets both domestically and overseas.

My Government will implement a contemporary planning and approvals system which is responsive to the aspirations of the community for ecologically sustainable development. It will also respect investors' requirements for planning certainty and for timely responses to applications for development approvals. Appropriate revisions will be proposed to planning and approvals legislation, and impact assessment procedures and approvals management will be reviewed.

The overseas office network will be upgraded and consideration will be given to new trade and investment initiatives in Asia and the United States of America.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

My Government believes the quality of the family and social relationships is central to the good order of the Queensland community. To that end it proposes:

- to improve the status of women through the creation of inclusive legislation and services;
- a broadening of the word 'gender' to ensure that all Queenslanders, male and female, will be fairly represented at all levels of decision-making;
- the provision of additional funds to assist people with disabilities and their carers, particularly those supporting people with intellectual disabilities;
- that family support services policy will focus on early intervention and prevention where family relationships are at risk of breaking down; and
- the extension of Seniors Card concessions.

My Government has identified law and order as a major priority. Consequently, the following initiatives are proposed or are presently being implemented:

- an independent committee, working with the Criminal Justice Commission; to review the Queensland Police Service and to identify where efficiency, effectiveness and accountability may be improved;
- an extra 2,780 police to raise the total number of police positions to 9,100 by 2005. This \$1.1 billion program will involve expanding the capacity of the recruit training program and introduction of an accelerated program of employing civilian staff. A new temporary recruit training facility will be opened in Townsville in 1996 and planning is under way for a new

and permanent North Queensland Police Academy.

Further initiatives include:

- the development of a magistrates' courts and watchhouse complex to replace the Brisbane City Watchhouse;
- an independent inquiry into drugs in prisons to report on measures to prevent the entry and use of drugs as well as methods to deal with substance-dependent inmates;
- Police and Corrective Services will pay attention to the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The design of new facilities to take into consideration the cultural needs of Aboriginal people and, where appropriate, purpose-designed facilities to be constructed to enhance Aboriginal prisoners' safety and development;
- legislation to be introduced to increase the length of imprisonment a serious violent offender must serve. Remissions of sentence for these people will be abolished and eligibility criteria for release programs tightened; escapees will have their remaining sentences doubled in addition to any penalty imposed for the escape;
- in the case of multiple or repeat murders, a Court to be given the power to sentence the offender to a minimum number of years' imprisonment exceeding the mandatory minimum of twenty years - the minimum sentence to be served in prison;
- proposed legislation to contain measures to increase significantly penalties for car theft; special penalties for graffiti vandalism to be introduced; and courts to be required to take the trauma suffered by victims into account when imposing sentences for burglary and break and enter offences;
- the establishment of a State Crime Summit with community participation;
- amendments to the Penalties and Sentences Act to be introduced to remove requirements for courts to consider imprisonment as a penalty of last resort. Sentences for offences committed while in prison to be added to the existing sentence of a prisoner, and not served concurrently;
- powers for courts to require the attendance of the parents of a child

appearing on criminal charges; and powers to compel parents to contribute up to \$5,000 towards restitution in appropriate cases will be introduced. However, prevention, rather than punishment, will be the focus of the strategy for Juvenile Justice. Orders will be re-introduced under the Children's Services Act to allow young offenders to be referred into counselling and rehabilitative programs where they can rebuild their young lives;

- the Criminal Code 1995 to be repealed, and an expert advisory working party established to assist in enhancing the original Criminal Code;
- the rights of victims of crime will be enhanced through recoupment of compensation from the assets and incomes of offenders; information to be provided concerning the conduct and outcome of the prosecution for the relevant offence or offences and on the impending release of offenders into the community; and
- individual privacy to be protected through the adoption of an information privacy regime based on the Guidelines developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

In relation to Health, my Government will give priority to continuing the announced capital works program, including hospital construction and refurbishment, minor capital works, community health centres and equipment. \$1.2 billion remains within this allocation at present. Closed hospital wards and operating theatres across the State will be re-opened.

A Statewide Surgical Taskforce will be established, consisting of experienced surgeons, nursing and hospital administrators. This will assist hospitals cut waiting lists by providing direct planning advice and reporting to the Minister on hospital surgical and resource needs.

The Regional Health Authority structure will be abolished and be replaced by a decentralised system of community District Health Councils.

Improved provision of health care and medical services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will also be a priority area.

More community mental health services will be established in regional and rural communities throughout the State, with a new focus on encouraging a change of community attitudes towards mental illness.

My Government believes that our present State education system can be improved by re-arranging expenditure priorities to ensure that a greater proportion of the education dollar actually reaches schools.

In addition, the number of guidance officers and student counsellors will be doubled to overcome the severe shortage of staff in this important area. Additional specialist services such as remedial teaching, speech pathology and occupational therapy will be provided to raise these necessary services to an adequate level.

A 'Global Classroom Project' will be established to provide students with access to the "information superhighway". An 'Enterprise Education in Schools Program' will be developed to assist the business leaders of tomorrow achieve their potential.

#### HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

An inquiry will be held into the Workers' Compensation system. It will report by 30 June 1996 and will propose solutions to financial problems which has seen the scheme make a net operating loss of \$102 million this financial year.

My Government will soon announce a range of initiatives to support the tourism industry through focussed research and development aimed at specific markets.

These initiatives will include a State Tourism Strategy and Ecotourism Plan; a specific Queensland Cruise Industry Strategy; an Olympics Tourism Strategy; and a proposal for Queensland to bid for the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

My Government believes that the regulatory and licensing environment militates against growth in the small and medium business sector. An industry task force will work with Government to review all regulations and their administration. The administration of licensing will be streamlined. A business licence forms redesign project will be implemented across all agencies.

A Small Business Council will be established to advise my Government on matters of concern to small business. Business advisory services will recognise the particular needs of the growing number of Queensland business women, and programs will be developed to increase the number of indigenous business owners.

My Government will adopt a more integrated approach to innovation, science and technology under the 'Innovative Queensland'

group of programs. Construction will shortly commence on the new \$6 million Queensland Clunies Ross Centre for Science and Industry. The Centre will be funded by the Queensland Government and operated by the Ian Clunies Ross Memorial Foundation. Support for the Information Industries Board will continue, and a special program will be instituted to encourage small and medium businesses to take advantage of Information Technology.

To ensure that a stronger focus is given to road infrastructure, the new Department of Main Roads has stewardship of the State's roads system. The highest priority for this Session will be given to upgrading the Pacific Highway from Brisbane to the Gold Coast.

Other major road initiatives will include improvements to the Bruce Highway, sealing of the Texas-Yelarbon Road and remaining unsealed section of the Injune-Rolleston truck route, and upgrading of the northern highway approach to Townsville via Woolcock Street to a four lane divided carriageway.

Queensland Transport will assume responsibility for the School Transport Program from the Department of Education, and will absorb the functions of the South East Queensland Transit Authority as part of its charter to improve transport infrastructure and support services across the State. In co-operation with other States and Territories, Queensland will implement nationally consistent regulations for road transport. A Road Safety Action Plan will be introduced to tackle the road toll, incorporating a Speed Management Strategy as well as a Driver Safety and Education package.

In rail transport, my Government will strive to achieve better service delivery standards from Queensland Rail in both the passenger and freight markets. Bulk commodity freight will be a particular priority. A rail safety audit will be undertaken to improve safety arrangements for Queensland Rail passengers and staff.

My Government is committed to working closely with local government while recognising that local governments must have the freedom to operate autonomously within their jurisdictions.

Legislation will be introduced to provide a process for possible de-amalgamation of certain local government areas. Under this legislation, electors of amalgamated areas will be able to petition the Minister for Local Government and Planning to conduct a referendum of affected electors on the question of de-amalgamation.

My Government will work towards streamlining planning and development approvals processes.

The Queensland Government Agent Program (QGAP) and QDIAL arrangements will be retained and consideration will be given to expansion of QGAP offices to redress the loss of services in certain areas of the State.

Rural communities will also benefit from the expansion of drought relief arrangements to include the rural small business sector and contractors. A Rural Support Agency will be established to co-ordinate State and Commonwealth assistance to the rural sector, including the provision of direct financial assistance to those affected by the drought or severe industry downturn.

Communication strategies will aim to ensure that rural women are better informed about available government services and that young women are encouraged to stay and work in rural and regional areas.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

The new Department of Natural Resources will work closely with the Departments of Environment and Primary Industries, Fisheries and Forestry to manage the State's natural resources for the benefit of future generations.

Tree-clearing guidelines for leasehold land will be developed by mid-1996 and greater emphasis will be placed on the control of weeds and feral animals. As part of my Government's overall economic development package, new water storages will be developed in a program estimated to cost \$1 billion over the next fifteen years.

The maintenance of biological diversity, protection of the natural environment, minimisation of pollution and enhancement of land and soil quality will be achieved by strategies which allow for the integration of conservation and development.

Amendments will be introduced to the Queensland Heritage Act to improve its effectiveness in protecting Queensland's architectural, technological and cultural heritage.

The fee and licence structure under the Environmental Protection Act will be reviewed to enhance its effectiveness and flexibility, thus alleviating, as far as possible, the burden placed on Queensland business.

Staffing and other resources devoted to National Parks will be increased to provide adequate management. Voluntary acquisition of land on Cape York Peninsula to increase the National Park estate will continue.

Arts Queensland's cultural tourism, export marketing, and arts and writing touring schemes will be supported with appropriate resources. Special attention will also be given to the development of museum resource centres and the consideration of critical accommodation needs of major arts organisations.

The primary industry sector is a major earner and contributor to the Queensland economy and the mainstay of many regional and rural communities.

Greater concentration will be given to providing basic services to primary producers through increased access to locally based and experienced extension and advisory officers, and an increased emphasis on restoring research services to key areas. The resource management and water resources functions of the former Department of Primary Industries have been transferred to the new Department of Natural Resources, restoring an appropriate focus to the new Department of Primary Industries, Fisheries and Forestry. Officers of the two Departments will continue to work closely together on sustainability issues affecting rural producers and will be co-located wherever possible to ensure savings in administration costs and simplified management structures.

The Rural Sustainable Development Strategy is a major part of my Government's State Economic Development Strategy and will provide improved services infrastructure in rural and regional areas and will encourage decentralisation of industry.

The Mines and Energy portfolio is crucial to the State's economy, and my Government will encourage and facilitate investment in this important sector.

In the Carpentaria Mount Isa mineral province in the north-west of the State a number of new projects, mainly involving silver-lead-zinc and copper-gold production, will come on stream over the next few years with a potential to earn \$30 billion in export revenue over 20 years.

Coal, however, will remain Queensland's largest export revenue earner into the foreseeable future.

My Government will promote the expansion of and the planning of new mines, particularly in Central Queensland's Bowen Basin.

My Government will also be vigorously addressing the issue of health and safety in the mining industry. A departmental Implementation Committee has been established which will develop plans to implement all the recommendations of the

Warden's Inquiry into the Moura Disaster, and a review of the Coal Mining Act has been reactivated.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

Under existing housing assistance arrangements, a person earning up to \$55,000 per year can qualify for a rental home. A needs-based 'priority listing' will be introduced, giving priority in access to available housing assistance to pensioners, low-income families, ex-service pensioners, people with disability and the sick.

An independent review will be undertaken of the building industry, to examine the security of payments to builders and subcontractors. The review will also examine the Queensland Building Services Authority and the Building Tribunal.

In the area of emergency services, \$1.4 million will be provided in the next year for new ambulance stations, and further expenditures will be provided to construct three new fire stations at Helensvale, Robina and Edmonton. A practical training facility for firefighters will be established at a cost of \$4 million, over three years, and additional training programs provided at a cost of \$2.2 million.

Emergency service provision will be improved and made more efficient through the phased introduction of a Computer Aided Dispatch system for both Fire and Ambulance from 1 October 1996. The system will initially be available in the Greater Brisbane area, and will subsequently be introduced into regional

areas of Queensland. It is estimated that the system in the Brisbane area will yield annual operational savings of about \$1.5 million from a capital outlay of \$14 million over two years.

An increase in recurrent funding to Community Helicopter Providers at the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Rockhampton and Mackay will ensure a continued high standard of aeromedical and rescue services in these regional areas.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I have outlined some of the main features of my Government's program. In opening this second session of the forty-eighth Parliament of Queensland, I trust that your deliberations will be instrumental in advancing the welfare of the people of our State.

I wish you well in your endeavours.

Her 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 2.44 p.m.

#### **SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT**

**Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE** (Surfers Paradise—Premier) (2.45 p.m.): I move—

"That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 2 April 1996."

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 2.46 p.m.