



Speech by

Hon. R. GIBBS

MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

Hansard 15 September 1998

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

International Garden Festival—2000

Hon. R. J. GIBBS (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (9.40 a.m.), by leave: For some time the State has been progressing a bid to host an international garden festival in the year 2000 on the site of the former Roma Street rail yards. The Premier has already expressed serious concerns to this House that appropriate controls were not exercised by the former coalition Government during the initial stages of the bid. Put simply, the previous Government allowed a gravy train for consultants to flourish in relation to the garden festival bid. The result of this disgraceful situation we have inherited is that Queensland taxpayers are now potentially exposed to significant fee claims of up to \$1m from these consultants. Other factors have since emerged that make it imperative that the Government formally withdraws support for the garden festival in the best interests of Queensland taxpayers.

The initial Budget projections for the capital and operating costs for staging the festival have nearly doubled from \$153m in May 1998 when first considered by the former Government. Current estimates indicate that the total cost for the festival could reach \$300m. On top of this, the Nursery Industry Association wants the Government to pay it up to \$1m, including a \$500,000 up-front payment and a performance fee, plus a percentage of gate takings in return for the rights to stage the event. I point out to the House that it cost the NIA \$20,000 to secure the international event.

The staging of the festival in the year 2000 is not considered financially viable or logistically feasible, given the extremely tight time frame. Whilst moving the festival to the year 2001 would provide some breathing space, the tight time frame is still likely to result in considerable further budget blow-outs. 2001 is already a full year for events for Queensland and Australia. We have the Centenary of Federation celebrations, the Goodwill Games and the World Masters Athletic Championships. The international garden festival would compete with these and many other events for Government and private sector support. Weighing up all these factors, it is now apparent that staging the international garden festival in the year 2000 or 2001 is not only not financially viable as a stand-alone event, but its staging could potentially endanger the financial viability of other major events in what is already a congested events year in Queensland and Australia.

In the best interests of Queensland taxpayers, I wish to advise today that the Government has no option but to formally advise that we are withdrawing from the event.
