



Speech by

Mr D. BRISKEY

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard 6 August 1998

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (2.43 p.m.): The State election on 13 June identified crucial issues for all Queenslanders. Those are the issues that affect their daily lives, particularly health, crime, education, unemployment and the environment. Labor's priorities are to put people first. Queenslanders deserve a Government that takes decisive action on vital issues, that actually makes a difference to people's lives. They deserve accountability and integrity from their Government, not pork-barrelling and broken promises. The results of the election made clear that a strong Labor Government was the only viable option to ensure stability for Queensland's future. Indeed, the political reality was that the coalition could not govern without the help of One Nation members, who not only were unfamiliar with the political process but also would not be called upon to act as a cohesive force by their own party. Thus it was impossible for the coalition to form a strong, stable Government for Queensland.

Certainly the member for Nicklin's decision in supporting Peter Beattie and Labor was the right one. I take this opportunity to congratulate him on his decision to enable the Labor Government to form a stable Government for Queensland. Queensland has suffered enough under almost two and a half years of coalition leadership. The steady progress that was initiated by the last Labor Government ground to a halt and opportunities passed us by while the Nationals and Liberals dithered. During its term of Government, the coalition failed Queensland on a number of fronts.

On the jobs front, Queensland spent less than any other State on jobs programs. Bankruptcies almost doubled while Mrs Sheldon wasted \$200m abolishing the toll on the road in her own backyard. Labor's comprehensive jobs program is set to benefit large numbers of unemployed people in my electorate and in Queensland as a whole. Presently, the unemployment rate in Cleveland is 8%. Many of those are young people. Queensland's record unemployment rate, especially among the young, comes at a time when significant skill shortages are emerging across a range of industries. Prior to the election, Labor set a target of 95 per cent employment in five years. Labor's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle plan focuses on skill provisions and training—6,000 traineeships and 500 apprenticeships will be created within the public sector; up to 9,000 traineeships and apprenticeships will be created within the private sector, as will up to 8,980 work placements for the long-term unemployed. Our community Jobs Plan will ease the skill shortages and the lengthy unemployment queues that Queensland is suffering by providing life-long skills for young people making the transition from school to the work force.

Queensland's vocational training facilities play an integral part in combating the legacy of unemployment left by the previous Government. The Bayside campus of the Moreton Institute of TAFE has contributed heavily to increasing the skills and employment prospects of people in my electorate—young and old. However, Bayside TAFE was dealt a severe blow by the coalition Government, which axed \$8m from the campus. The previous Labor Government allocated those funds, and I shall continue my fight to see that those deserved funds are restored. The students of the Bayside campus deserve a quality education—just like any other Queenslanders.

During the coalition's term in office, many constituents in my electorate contacted me with horror stories of inadequate treatment and waiting list blow-outs in the public health system. The health system also suffered under the coalition with 12,000 Queenslanders waiting longer than medically acceptable for surgery. Underfunding in the Ambulance Service led to response time blow-outs, with ambulances taking on average 10% longer to get to sick and injured Queenslanders. The millions of dollars of taxpayers' money that should have been spent on hospital beds and other health-care services were instead spent on self-promotional advertising. Those problems could have been avoided or alleviated through proper funding and staffing levels. Labor's waiting list strategy includes, where possible, transfer patients to hospitals with shorter waiting lists and an increase in day surgery of \$6.8m extra each year for extra surgery for complex procedures. Labor is committed to delivering the best health treatment possible for Queenslanders and will not be throwing money away in political advertising campaigns when there are people ill or in pain.

Cleveland residents have also suffered from the coalition's lack of action regarding policing and crime. The coalition talked tough on law and order, but during its term in office violent crime rose by 21%. Property crime increased by 14% and dangerous criminals such as Brendon Abbott escaped from prison as a result of the incompetent management of the prison system. The coalition broke its promise to increase the police presence. At election time, there were still 19 police for every 10,000 Queenslanders—the same ratio as when it came to office. In the Cleveland electorate, the police to population ratio is one officer to 1,640 people. The coalition Government failed the people of my electorate and they failed the police, who were unable to do their job properly because there simply were not enough of them to go around. Labor's commitment to improved policing will see an additional 1,061 police officers by June 2001. Labor has resolved to restore Queensland to a State of equality and fairness with systems and services that deliver.

Through the coalition's elitist Leading Schools policy, Queensland's education system became divided into the haves and have-nots. It forced schools to take up inappropriate managerial activities to make up for budget shortfalls, preventing teachers from concentrating on their real job of educating our children. Within a week of regaining Government, Labor began to redress these inequities. The Leading Schools program was abolished and hundreds of thousands of dollars were injected into schools that would otherwise have been denied the additional funding.

In the Cleveland electorate, two primary schools have benefited from this Labor initiative of equal education. Birkdale State School received a grant of \$19,000 and Wellington Point State School received \$17,500. These schools plan to use those funds to provide classroom computer technology, dictionaries and atlases, and also to employ teacher aides to improve the education of students. These extra funds will make significant improvements in these schools' ability to enrich learning. However, under the old Leading Schools program, neither school would have been eligible. Through its policies, the coalition showed that it is interested only in helping those who can already help themselves and, in turn, disregarding the rest of the population who have fewer facilities and resources.

The people of Cleveland and of Queensland at large have demonstrated their desire for a fair and honest Government. As a representative of Queensland's Labor Government, I will work hard to ensure that all Queenslanders, regardless of background or race, receive the highest possible quality of life. Once again, I thank the people of the Cleveland electorate for the opportunity to continue working for their interests and these goals of justice and equality for all.

I want to take a moment to thank a number of people who helped get me re-elected as the State member for Cleveland. I am always very careful, as we all are, in naming people, because often one will forget some very important person. So I apologise now if I do forget anyone who worked hard to see the Labor Government returned to Queensland, and especially to see me returned as the member for Cleveland. I wish to list a number of people. These are very special people, as we all know—people who worked tirelessly just to see a good Government in Queensland. I wish to name a number of people now, including Blanche Lunt, Ava Jones, Ian Moore, Hazel White, Pat Bradshaw, Deirdre Morrow, Lorelle McKillop, Ray Thompson, Rebecca McMahon, Gerry Tilson, Fabian Sweeney, Col McPhail, Glynn Jones, Elsie Gibson, Don Elkins, Estelle Bertossi, Jack Geran, Kathy Wacker, Mike Mann, Virginia Mort, Norma Webster, Valda Wolter, Freda Earnshaw, Ros and Jim Abbey, Bob Pedley, Gloria and Derek O'Brian and Bill Martin.

Mr Littleproud: No wonder you won.

Mr BRISKEY: I take that interjection from the honourable member who said, "No wonder you won." Those people are some of the people who made sure that I did win. I thank those people sincerely from the bottom of my heart, as do all Labor members of this House.

I did not mention the two most important people in my campaign—my campaign director, Shirley O'Neill, and her husband, Gordon. Those people in this place who know Shirley and Gordon O'Neill know how hard they work for the Labor Party and how hard they worked to see me re-elected as the State member for Cleveland.

A Government member: Don't forget Cathy.

Mr BRISKEY: Shirley is one of those people who, once she starts something, will not stop. Shirley worked long, long hours on the campaign and kept everybody working hard, including Gordon. Often Gordon said that he had to get used to cooking his own meals, which he had never done before in his life, and looking after himself because Shirley did nothing else but work on my campaign. Gordon and Shirley O'Neill are members of the Labor Party and have given their whole lives to this great party to which we belong. They have been members of the party all their lives and will continue to work hard and tirelessly for the party.

As the honourable member said, I have not mentioned my wife and family—Cathy and my four children. I thank them. I know their names. In fact, I will put them on the record: Joanna, Kathleen, Alison and William, who is affectionately known to us as Billy. I thank Cathy and my family for their support during the campaign. Our spouses go through a lot in being married to a member of Parliament, most especially a candidate during an election campaign. I thank my family for their support and their love.

I would also like to thank my father and mother, Bob and Bev Briskey. My father is retired and puts in a great effort to see me re-elected, not just because I am his son but because of his belief in Labor and good Government for Queensland. I thank him sincerely for the work that he did during the campaign. There is one other person whom I wish to thank—and I am sure members are happy to hear that—and that is my electorate officer, Sue Hanlon. As all members know, our electorate officers work extremely hard for us. No-one could work harder than Sue has and continues to do for me and for the electors of Cleveland. She is the sort of person whom people come in to see just to say hello and to have a chat. She is a tireless worker for me and for the constituents of the Cleveland electorate. I thank Sue most sincerely for her efforts and help.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr Speaker on his appointment and wish him well in his new role in implementing Labor's commitment to a higher standard of parliamentary conduct. Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask you to pass on my congratulations to him. I am proud to be part of a Beattie Labor Government—a Government of action and initiative. Labor cares about people; it does not see them just as numbers and potential dollar signs but recognises them as real people with genuine concerns and needs. This Government has a difficult road ahead. However, it is committed to fixing the problems that it inherited from the former Government and moving ahead with action and integrity.

I would like to comment briefly about something that the member for Gregory said yesterday in relation to the high price of fuel in his electorate. I agree with him; the constituents of his electorate pay far too much for fuel. However, as I have said in the past in this place, the residents of North Stradbroke Island pay for their fuel an amount equal to that of most of the residents of Gregory and other places in western Queensland. North Stradbroke Island is only 20 minutes by water taxi from the mainland, yet my constituents there are paying up to 20c a litre more for fuel than are people in Cleveland. That is far too much to be paying for fuel. It is not just those Queenslanders out in the bush or out in the electorate of Gregory who are paying far too high a price for fuel.

As the member for Gregory has said, we must work hard to ensure that all Queenslanders get a fair go and that they do not pay too much for their fuel. I assure the residents of North Stradbroke Island that I will fight to ensure that they do not pay the exorbitant price for fuel they are paying at the present time. I congratulate the Chairman of Committees on his election to that position and ask you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to pass on my congratulations to the Speaker.
