



Speech by

**Hon. D. HAMILL**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

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Hansard 21 October 1998

### UNEMPLOYMENT

**Hon. D. J. HAMILL** (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (6.33 p.m.): The Leader of the Opposition believes that if he can say the same untruth time and time again people might just believe him. Let us be clear about this. I will cite the official figures for the unemployment rate in Queensland. The forecast average unemployment rate for this year will be the lowest rate in Queensland since 1994-95. Who was in Government in 1994-95? No, it was not the coalition or the honourable member for Surfers Paradise, it was the Goss Labor Government. At that time, unemployment in Queensland was below the rate applying across the rest of Australia.

If we look at the record through the early 1990s, we see that more times than not unemployment in Queensland was at a rate less than that for Australia as a whole. Well might we ask why that was so. That was because traditionally the unemployment rate in Queensland has been lower than the national figure. I suggest that it was because at that time in the early 1990s we had a Labor Government in this State which was prepared to put its money where its mouth was in relation to employment, training and endeavouring to build a platform for economic growth in this State. That was a time when Labor Governments were committed to training programs such as our then Community Jobs Plan. We had a \$150m Jobs Plan that I remember my colleague the Attorney-General, in those days the Employment Minister, used to tell us of ad nauseam. But it was important that we knew about it, because it was delivering employment and training opportunities.

That commitment is amply demonstrated in the policies of this Government—this Government that came to office but a few months ago on a clear commitment to employment and training programs, programs which we are delivering in this Budget which is yet to pass the Parliament. However, we have not waited for the final vote to be taken on the Budget. No, not at all. My colleague the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and his department have been preparing the program for its implementation. All we are waiting for is the unanimous vote of this Parliament to let us have the money to put that employment program into place to offer those apprenticeship opportunities and to provide those traineeships—to do all of those things which Labor in Opposition said it would do when in Government.

Incredibly hypocritical statements have been uttered by a succession of speakers from the Opposition benches in relation to this Government's commitment to employment and job creation. What was the first thing that they did in 1996 in relation to employment? They scuttled it by cutting dead the Accelerated Capital Works Program which was put in place by the Goss Government in late 1995 when we realised that the drought was finally draining the economic fibre of the State. We put in place an Accelerated Capital Works Program to push economic activity back out into the regions. What did they do? They chopped it off. But not content with that, they put in place the most incredibly stupid, irresponsible and incompetent policy of putting in place a capital works freeze.

I take on board the comment made by one of the Opposition speakers who said, "Isn't it good that they have carried on our Capital Works Program?" We made it abundantly clear that we would not follow the folly of which the Opposition is guilty, that is, its freezing of a Capital Works Program when it tumbled into office without wit, wherewithal or any comprehension of the sorts of tasks that it had to fulfil as the Government of Queensland.

We said that we would deliver on capital works. We are delivering on capital works. Why are we delivering on capital works? Because this is a Government committed to employment, employment growth and regional development. We are doing that through a \$4.8 billion Capital Works Program that will provide not only job security for people who have been working in capital works already—and there are about 48,000 of them—but also new jobs for about 18,000 others.

Time expired.

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