



Speech by

Dr DAVID WATSON

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Hansard 17 November 1998

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.18 a.m.): In the past few days, the Premier has made much political mileage out of supposedly standing up for Queensland by continuing the fight against the GST. However, the reality is this: if he continues to oppose the GST, he is not standing up for Queensland, he is selling out future generations of Queenslanders. The facts are that in just a few years Queensland will benefit massively from the GST and Queensland will benefit sooner than any other State. In fact, after full implementation of the arrangement, Queensland stands to gain \$1 billion over the subsequent three years. Mr Beattie is calling the final score at half time.

Let us examine what Queensland gained from last week's Premiers Conference. Horizontal fiscal equalisation, the formula that takes into account that it costs more to provide Government services at Wondai than Bondi, was under threat. Thankfully, but no thanks to the Premier, the States voted to retain horizontal fiscal equalisation. Another huge plus that came out of the conference was confirmation that during the changeover to a GST the Queensland Budget would be protected. Not one teacher, one nurse or one dollar would be lost from the State Budget. Our Budget position is protected and our position as a less populous, decentralised State is protected. Even better, our future generations are protected because the GST, being a growth tax, will return more money to a growth State such as Queensland.

If there is a problem for Queensland that emerged out of the Premiers Conference, it is of Mr Beattie's own making. Instead of building alliances with other Premiers and with Mr Howard, he spent all the lead-up fighting Beasley's lost battle. In continuing to fight that lost battle, Mr Beattie risked sacrificing Queensland's long-term future on the Beasley altar. I call on the Premier to put Queensland's long-term interests ahead of his short-term political image.

Time expired.
