



Speech by

Hon. J. ELDER

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

Hansard 27 August 1998

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Overseas Visit

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (9.45 a.m.), by leave: I have always viewed the purpose of overseas travel by Ministers as being to foster good relations with the host nation and to build trade opportunities for Queensland exporters, to look for suitable investors for worthy Queensland projects and to promote Queensland as a venue for tourists and students. Queensland has a series of advantages which makes it easier to sell as a destination.

Potential investors find our natural assets, our skilled and educated work force and our low taxes a desirable lure. Similarly, students and tourists have long been attracted by the natural beauty and highly developed tourism and education infrastructure that we have to offer. Governments of both political persuasions have overseen this growth, even at times when they have been placing different emphasis on how and where our successes should be achieved. These issues are fundamental to every Queenslanders. Every tourist, every student, every investor and every successful exporter means one thing for Queensland: more jobs, and the sorts of jobs that I hope we all want—long-term, secure and well-paid jobs.

My recent trip was radically different from the ones that I undertook when I was a Minister in our former Government. I suspect that many members of this House who have travelled overseas on official business in the past will find very different conditions when they travel overseas now. The difference in this trip was that for the first time I encountered genuine concern about Queensland as a secure destination or source of products. At times, I even encountered hostility towards this State. It is irrelevant whether these concerns are borne out of a full or detailed understanding of our political situation. In many cases, the beliefs that people held about Queensland were very wrong indeed. The fact is that these concerns are there and, if they are allowed to go unchallenged, they will cost Queensland dearly in terms of lost opportunities. That will lead to one thing—more unemployed Queenslanders.

A major challenge lies ahead for all Queenslanders to ensure that an accurate image of Queensland is projected to the world. We must remain a State that welcomes tourists and students, that welcomes investment and that welcomes migrants, especially business migrants, on a totally non-discriminatory basis. Not only must we be such a State; we must also be seen to be such a State. If we fail to rise to this challenge, we will doom ourselves to being an insular, inward looking society that cannot afford to provide economic growth and therefore jobs and wealth for the community. Our quality of life would diminish. Failure would also condemn our exporters to trying to sell in hostile and unwelcoming markets. These issues are being raised by the Premier and many others in our community and they need to be given detailed, rational consideration.

I have a report on my trip to Taiwan and Korea. I have further detail in boxes that I will present to the member for Nicklin. In view of the time constraints today, I table a report for the information of the House.
