



Speech by

Hon. J. ELDER

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

Hansard 21 October 1998

UNEMPLOYMENT

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (6.43 p.m.): This is the sort of activity that makes people outside this place sceptical about our worth. We have said that time and time again. Tonight we have an Opposition which in Government failed to set any targets or goals for employment—none! Time and time again, it walked away from doing that. It failed to outline any plans or put them on the record. Its members still feel free to come in here, mount the high horse and rail against us because we have a plan, but it is not detailed enough for them. They deserted the field when they were in Government. They did not set objectives and plans—none—for the entire time that they were in Government.

The public would be better served by having a full and frank debate about creating jobs—all of us involved in that—instead of this, "You said that and you said that", because, at the end of day, the public will be none the wiser or better off for it. We have always said that this would be a difficult task and one that would not occur overnight. We have never misled anyone in relation to that. A number of factors will be required to fall into place and a number of factors will be required to be put into place. That will require investment, more education, better training systems, and a dedication of Government money for capital works, which it has from this Government, and not just in the traditional areas of schools, education, hospitals or bridges. Money will also be required to be spent in new and upcoming areas of infrastructure which takes us into the information age. That sort of resourcing from Government will be required, and this Government will provide that.

All of that takes time. It is one of the reasons why we deliberately set out and chose a five-year time frame. We did it because we knew it would not happen overnight. It would not suddenly come to pass that a Labor Government would be elected and all those people who require training would be trained, all the unemployed would be employed overnight and all the Government contracts that were there to be let would be let. I can tell honourable members that the tenders are being let because we would not support and could not support—and neither could the economy—the freeze on capital works that members opposite put in place when they first came to Government. All of those prerequisites that I just mentioned will need to be put in place. We did say that we would set the target, we would straighten it out and we would provide the private sector with the certainty and confidence that it needs to get on with its job and that we would provide the budgetary support for those areas that I have just outlined.

I heard the member for Toowoomba South say today that we spend too much time on big projects and not enough on small business. It is not true. Let me say this: I realise that, in some instances, big businesses and small businesses are not the same, but the point I would stress to the honourable member and the Parliament is that big projects bring with them money, and that money flows into the community.

Mr Beattie: Long-term jobs.

Mr ELDER: They do provide the long-term jobs. Townsville is a good case. One has only to look at how Townsville is benefiting from the big ticket items: Korea Zinc and the minerals province—both, I might say, Labor Party triumphs. They were triumphs of the ALP when we were in Government and we delivered on those. For places like Townsville, those projects have meant that more money is circulating and there is more money to spend, and that flows down to the smaller businesses.

I see the member for Thuringowa shaking his head, but it is right. The money from those projects falls into those communities and it falls into the small businesses in those communities: the supermarkets, the fruit stores, the butcher shops, the shoe shops, the book shops—all of the little shops whose survival depends on those projects and whose survival depends on having the money in the projects to benefit from them. That close relationship between big business and small business is not understood by the member for Toowoomba South.

Those opposite are keen to keep the spotlight on us. Let me say that, in spite of all their moaning that I have heard today about support for small businesses in country towns, they know that in Government they did nothing for them. In fact, they walked away from half the regional development plans that I put in place when I was Industry Minister. If they go back and have a look at the record, they will find that they walked away from most of those plans. So it is hypocritical for them to come in here and moan about the impact on small country towns when they did nothing for them. All they are doing at the moment is gathering that resentment, walking in here and trying to benefit from it. They did very little at all for them when they were in Government.

I say to the new member that the best thing he can do is go back and read the Budget papers of the past couple of years to realise how the National Party deserted the bush when it was in Government. At the end of the day, it is about putting policies in place that increase the jobs and job opportunities in this State, and we will get on and do it.

Time expired.
