



Speech by

Hon. J. ELDER

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

Hansard 10 November 1998

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Call Centres

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (9.48 a.m.), by leave: Members of the House would be aware of this Government's efforts to try to attract call centres to Queensland, especially call centres servicing the Asia-Pacific region. Such centres lock us into a worldwide network and, more importantly, provide long-term sustainable jobs.

On the Gold Coast, I understand that Stellar is now hiring people to staff its call centre at Robina, which will service the Asia-Pacific region, while in Brisbane Citibank is now running a call centre that services its clients in the Asia-Pacific region. We have targeted call centres quite clearly and deliberately. At this stage, we are also negotiating with other companies about further operations to follow. The success of these first two call centres that have been attracted under this Government will be the impetus for that.

Later today, in company with the Premier, I will be signing a memorandum of understanding with Telstra which will give us a combined marketing effort to try to attract call centres to Queensland. Such a move, frankly, is long overdue. Most other State Governments have already moved to form a liaison with a strategic carrier, and having that strategic link in place has helped them to attract call centres. For example, the New South Wales Government has an agreement with Optus which has helped it to attract call centres. This Government realised early on the advantages of having such a strategic partnership, and we have pursued that vigorously. The shame is that we are having to play catch-up with the other States that have already formed those strategic partnerships.

Under this memorandum of understanding, Telstra will be jointly funding marketing and promotional activities with the Queensland Government. Telstra has recently located a senior manager in Queensland with the objective of attracting more call centres to Queensland. Under the MOU, Queensland's network of trade offices overseas will be utilised, as will Telstra staff overseas. The MOU also sets out conditions for cooperation between the two parties. Unlike another MOU that has been discussed at some length in this place, this one is fully public. In fact, we want the Queensland public to know about our MOUs.

One reason why we are pursuing call centres so vigorously is that they offer great advantages for regional Queensland. Already, Stellar Communications has chosen Robina on the Gold Coast as the home for its call centre. But we are working closely with Telstra to target regional Queensland. One of the great advantages for individual companies in seeking regional areas to locate a call centre is that the work force is fairly stable. In large cities such as Sydney and Melbourne, call centre operators note that there is a high degree of turnover in staff. One element of our strategy is to impress upon companies that in regional Queensland we have a strong, stable, reliable work force.

Several members of this House have contacted me in regard to making this strategy work, and I thank them for their interest and determination to help create jobs for their constituents. What we are about is jobs and more jobs, and the memorandum of understanding, which will be signed today, will help achieve that, particularly in regional Queensland.