



Speech by

Mr J. HEGARTY

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

Hansard 22 October 1998

INTERNATIONAL GARDEN FESTIVAL

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (7.05 p.m.): The Nursery Industry Association of Australia—NIAA—is left surprised and confused by the Beattie Labor Government's decision not to proceed with the International Garden Festival planned for Queensland for the year 2000. The NIAA held the licence to hold a garden festival in Australia and had been working on it for four years. Originally planned for Gosford in New South Wales, it was decided to move to Queensland late last year after receiving bipartisan Government support. The site for the festival was to be the old Roma Street goods yards, planned since the Goss Government days to be redeveloped into a park precinct. A major legacy for Brisbane from the festival would be a permanent garden of international standard worth an estimated \$97m at no cost to Queensland taxpayers. The gardens were planned to be named the "Millennium Gardens", similar to projects of a lasting nature being planned by cities all around the world to celebrate that event.

Although requiring over \$200m worth of funding, capital and festival running costs are expected to be recouped and provide a surplus. The Government's financial commitment is to underwrite the festival, although private underwriting and insurance will substantially minimise the risk. The benefits to Queensland are considerable. An estimated 13,000 jobs—man years—would assist the mid to long-term unemployed in particular. A further 25,000 jobs would be created indirectly through the festival. The number of ongoing jobs provided through the established Millennium Gardens has not yet been estimated. The economic benefit to the Queensland economy is estimated at \$4 billion. The boost to tourism from a six-month event similar to Expo 88 is obvious. Most importantly for the long-term benefit of the horticultural industry in Australia and Queensland in particular, our industry will be exposed to the world market and show our cutting edge, environmentally sustainable horticultural technology, such as water recycling, waste management and nutrient recycling. That will open opportunities for new markets in Europe, Asia and the Americas for exports, thus creating more jobs.

Despite assurances given to the NIAA by the Labor Government when in Opposition and subsequent assurances of support—

Time expired.

The remainder of the speech which was unable to be delivered due to time constraints does not appear in Hansard.

Despite assurances given to the NIAA by the Labor Government when in Opposition and subsequent assurances of support given by several Cabinet Ministers as late as August this year, there is now a reluctance to continue discussions with the NIAA about concerns over the time frame available for the proposed event and allegations that the budget had blown out to double the original estimates should be fully explained.

I'm calling on the Government to reconsider its decision and urgently recommence discussions with the NIAA to salvage an important project for Queensland.
