



Speech by

**Mr M. HORAN**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH**

---

Hansard 30 July 1998

**MOTION OF CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT**

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.44 a.m.): I do not think that members will ever see another Government that achieved as much in just two short years as did the previous coalition Government. On every single point we got in there and cleaned up the mess that was left behind. That took a few months. The important thing was that what we delivered to Queensland was, first of all, jobs. We delivered about 91,000 jobs in just two years. Those 91,000 new jobs represented 40% of the new jobs created in Australia, even though Queensland had only 18% of the Australian population.

I well remember last November picking up a Sydney Morning Herald and seeing on its front page a very striking graph that showed how far in front Queensland was in the creation of new jobs throughout Australia. It made one feel proud that we had a Government of such calibre at the time—a Government that, according to the Sydney Morning Herald, created something like 60% of new jobs in Australia. Queensland led economic growth in Australia. We had about 4.5% economic growth for the past 12 months, compared with about 2.2% growth in the rest of Australia. We increased by 50% the public Capital Works Program in Queensland. That provided real jobs for people—jobs for contractors and subcontractors and the apprentices who worked for them. That was reflected in the huge increase in the number of new jobs created here in Queensland. But the important thing about that was that, of that huge increase in capital works, we made sure that more than 50% of it was spent outside the south-east corner of Queensland—outside the capital city—because that is where more than 50% of Queensland's population resides.

Some of the achievements of the coalition Government were enormous in their magnitude. I ask members to look at the water infrastructure that was commenced. Over \$2 billion of water infrastructure would have provided real jobs in rural and regional Queensland. Look at what we achieved in Health. Some \$2.4 billion of capital works were commenced and under way under the former Government. At the end of our term, some 125 projects were either under way or completed.

Look at what was achieved in relation to putting extra police on the beat and the additional jails that were going to be built around the State, creating jobs. Look at the lift in education under Leading Schools, whereby communities, towns and districts could be a part of their schools and could have input and some real pride in the type and style of education that they provided. Look at the electricity reforms that the coalition Government introduced and the way in which we were able to reduce by 5% the cost of electricity to small business. That represented a real and solid improvement for small business. Look at what we did with the DPI. We brought staff back there. The heart and soul of the DPI had been ripped out during six disastrous years of Labor.

**Mr Cooper:** Do you know how many they cut out in that time?

**Mr HORAN:** No.

**Mr Cooper:** Six hundred and ninety!

**Mr HORAN:** It is hard to believe that it could be that many. It is no wonder that people could not find a stock inspector. It is no wonder that they could not dip their cattle for ticks. It is no wonder that they could not get any advice. It is no wonder that they felt lost and left alone. That is what the previous Labor Government did.

Members need only go for a drive down the Gold Coast Highway and have a look at the capital construction on that highway to see how the former coalition Government was an achieving Government. Look at some of the things that we did in relation to the Criminal Code, the Juvenile Justice Act and the Penalties and Sentences Act, the improvements that we brought about and the new confidence that came to Queensland with an achieving Government.

I believe that one of the greatest records of the previous coalition Government is going to be the new jobs that it created. We have heard much from the Premier, Mr Beattie, about his new unemployment target of 5%. It is interesting to note that, when he first mentioned it, the figure was 5%. But later he said, "That will be in a little bit of time." By the end of the week it was a one-year target. By the end of the next week it was a three-year target, and now it is a five-year target. So if people want a job in Queensland and they want to get into that little bracket above the 5% unemployment, they will have to wait until three years after the Olympic Games before they can get a job. Five years! How can someone who is 18 or 19 afford to wait five years? What we want to see is some action now. We do not want more consultation, meetings, seminars, talkfests and the whole lot of it. What we want are jobs, and what we want is action.

We were an achieving Government. We are used to doing things and making things happen. That is what we would like to see in a Government in Queensland. In creating those 91,000 new jobs, we increased capital spending by 50%. That was one of the catalysts to making things happen in this State and creating new jobs. We also created the best possible business environment for the creation of new jobs through responsible economic management and practical support for the business sector. Under the coalition, Queensland gained a worldwide reputation as a pro-business State and as an investment destination in which global companies could have enormous confidence. Companies that demonstrated that confidence by moving or expanding were Voxson, Mack Trucks, Boeing, Comalco, Shell Coal, DHL, Dascom, John Deere, Qantas, Filtronic Comtek and Silicon Graphics, to name just a few. They are real companies and real jobs.

In Government, the coalition successfully protected Queensland from the upheaval in Asia. The Australian Bureau of Statistics for April this year revealed a 20.6% jump in trade. Those latest figures confirm the exporting strength that Queensland developed under the coalition. Every month of the 1997-98 year to April showed an increase in trade over the corresponding month in 1996-97. There was a total 18.5% increase over the first 10 months of 1996-97. The coalition worked hard to fireproof and to protect the Queensland economy from the upheaval in Asia through our demonstrated commitment to Asia and our innovative trade diversification strategy. However, through the actions of the Premier and the Deputy Premier, we are already seeing the Labor Government trying to put up a smokescreen about the Asian crisis, because they are not confident that they will achieve their jobs targets or match the performance of the previous coalition Government in creating many thousands of jobs.

The Treasurer, Mr David Hamill, has put the record straight. On 23 July an article in a newspaper stated—

"However, Treasurer Mr David Hamill said the news was not all bad, with a 1.8% growth in Queensland's economy in the March quarter.

This compared with a 0.3% growth rate for the rest of Australia."

I thank him for his compliment and imprimatur of the performance of the previous coalition Government. The article continues—

"According to the report, in the year to March, the economy grew by 4.7% compared to 3.3% nationally."

The article goes on to say—

"However, Mr Hamill said yesterday that a 21.5% jump in exports suggested the Queensland economy was well placed to absorb any negative impact from Asia.

"The March quarter Queensland State Accounts showed only a slight moderation in the rate of economic growth in the wake of the Asian economic crisis," Mr Hamill said."

The fireproofing and protection of the economy by the previous Government, the exports and the trade that we put in place are of such dimension that they can protect this State from that problem.

The Queensland coalition promoted a significant presence in Asia through the Government trade and investment offices in Tokyo, Taipei, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Jakarta and Semarang. Queensland exporters are now supported also in China through the coalition Government's opening in 1996 of a trade and investment office in Shanghai. The extension of the Government's international network has complemented our Brisbane-based secretariats specialising in Japan, Korea, China, South-East Asia and Papua New Guinea. The coalition's trade diversification strategy has been a major driving force behind Queensland's strong export performance. A key plank in that strategy has been the expansion of trade and investment resources in Europe and North America. Queensland's trade and investment office in London was given a broader focus to target markets in Europe through the

appointment of associate business advisers in France, Scandinavia, the Netherlands and Germany. Industry sectors targeted in Europe included IT & T, light metals, food, education, commodities and agribusiness. In the USA, Queensland opened a trade and investment office in Los Angeles, which is working to boost tourism numbers and film and television production investment.

A further key element in the coalition's trade diversification strategy was the targeting of non-traditional markets such as central Europe, India, South America, South Africa and the Middle East. I note that one of the Deputy Premier's first announcements was that he was going to target non-traditional markets. Obviously, he was reading from information about the various projects and programs that were put in place by the previous coalition Government. Coalition efforts to diversify our trade markets have been rewarded. The latest ABS figures show that exports to the United States are up 27.1%. Exports to the United Kingdom are up 20.6%. Exports to France are up 20.9%. Exports to Italy are up 72%. The coalition was the first Queensland Government to establish a Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. The coalition concentrated on market development and many productive relationships have been established with Governments and business leaders around the world. The coalition Government demonstrated an ability to open up new markets, find trade, make things happen and generate confidence in Queensland.

The latest trade figures—plus the \$16 billion in major projects committed, planned and proposed for Queensland—offer great hope for Queensland's future. Queensland is at a crucial stage in its economic development. The achievements of the coalition Government should return even greater dividends over the next three to five years. Unfortunately and tragically, Queensland has a Labor Government, which, on its past record, will ruin much of that great work that has been done. The last thing that the people of Queensland need is a Labor Government that has a track record of completely mismanaging the economy and a Premier who is responsible for multimillion-dollar debts in the Health Department and a \$1.2 billion blow-out in the Hospital Rebuilding Program. As I have said before, the Premier, Mr Beattie, the member for Brisbane Central, should never be let near a chequebook. One needs only to look at his previous record with the Health Department to see that, after only seven months, he left that department with a budget overrun of \$54m. Worse, he endeavoured to cover up that \$54m recurrent budget overrun by transferring \$43m of one-off capital funds from the Hospital Rebuilding Program.

**Mr Johnson:** All their capital works programs for hospitals—we put them on Budget after Budget for six years.

**Mr HORAN:** What happened? Under Labor they never happened. We put them on and did them.

As I was saying, the member for Brisbane Central tried to take \$43m of capital funds to cover up a deficit in recurrent funds. One of the worst accountancy mistakes that you can make is to use capital funds to cover recurrent expenses. If you do that, where will you find those recurrent funds in the next year?

Let us not forget that, under Labor, economic growth was 2% and unemployment rose to 11.2%. The record speaks for itself. Under Labor, for the first time in a generation, Queensland had unfunded liabilities worth \$320m in Queensland's formerly great Workers Compensation Fund. When the coalition took office, Queensland had a Health budget with a \$120m problem consisting of unpaid accounts, \$54m worth of budget overruns, unfunded enterprise bargain payments, unfunded workers compensation payments and the \$24m worth of debt left behind by the previous Health Minister, Mr Elder. That was paid off at a rate of \$8m per year. The final \$8m payment is being made in the Budget this year.

Queensland also had declining police numbers, hospital waiting lists that were blowing out and criminals being sent to jail as a last resort. That was the legacy that we were left. We fixed the problems in just two short years. The coalition moved quickly to promote jobs growth through the introduction of industrial relations reforms that encouraged more flexible workplace arrangements to benefit both workers and employers and to help create jobs. The coalition amended unfair dismissal laws to ensure that everyone got a fair go. Unfair dismissal laws are now fairer and simpler for employees and employers. That is of great assistance to small business in particular. By winding back industrial relations laws in this State, the Labor Party wants to rob Queensland's small businesses of the opportunity to grow and prosper.

Labor's draconian industrial relations policy will stifle small business and slash hundreds of jobs that can be created by small business. When the coalition came to office, the Workers Compensation Fund was financially crippled, with spiralling common law costs and an unfunded liability of \$320m. Clearly, a decisive overhaul was needed to protect the rights of workers and employers. The coalition introduced the reforms that gave us one of the fairest and best-funded schemes anywhere in Australia. Once again, Labor wants to wind back the clock and reverse all the good work done by the coalition. It would once again cripple that fund and drive up the cost of premiums with the result that people will lose their jobs and the opportunity to have employment.

The Premier, Mr Beattie, has \$1.7 billion in unfunded election promises. How is he going to pay for them? He can do it only by putting Queensland in debt, raising taxes and charges, cancelling important recurrent programs or cancelling important capital works programs. That is the scenario that we are going to see as Labor struggles to find this \$1.7 billion for its unfunded promises that just simply is not there. Already, we have seen a Labor Government that will destroy jobs by scrapping major projects in rural and regional Queensland. The \$2.1 billion worth of dam building projects, some of the most important projects for this State, including the proposed \$120m Nathan dam project on the Dawson River, are now all under threat by another Labor review. The State Development Minister, Jim Elder, has indicated that the new Labor Government does not support the expansion of the Callide power station or the Tarong power project. What about the jobs of those people in Biloela, Nanango, Kingaroy, or around Wandoan or Miles where there are other associated projects? What about the jobs of all of those people? Are they not real people? Do their jobs not count? The minute Mr Beattie came to Government, he sold them out.

**Mr ELDER:** I rise to a point of order. I find the remarks unparliamentary and I ask for them to be withdrawn. They are not true. I have not said that. I ask them to be withdrawn.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The member will withdraw those remarks.

**Mr HORAN:** Whatever the Minister finds offensive, I withdraw. Basically, he is debating the point, but I will withdraw whatever it is that he wants withdrawn.

The point I am making is that the Minister has indicated already that he is going to turn his back on Tarong and Callide. The jobs of those people in Biloela, Nanango, Yarraman, Blackbutt and Kingaroy are all at risk. Those people have had their first taste of a Labor Government that is prepared to put at risk the jobs of people in rural and regional Queensland—their families and their lives—where employment is at its worst. Labor has already signalled its plan to axe the coalition's policy of building three 200-bed prisons in locations in regional Queensland in favour of one 600-bed prison. Again, that decision could cost up to \$54m in lost economic benefits to regional Queensland cities and hundreds of jobs. Are they not the people about whom we are talking who desperately need jobs? Have a look at the figures! The unemployment figure for the State might be around the mid 8% level, but the people in some of those regional areas where there is high unemployment desperately need some form of anchor or foundation to provide them with additional employment. That is what these three prisons would have done for those areas of high unemployment. Once again, Labor has turned its back on the people of regional and rural Queensland. So we see the Labor Government already back to its old ways of ripping jobs and services out of the bush and not supporting regional and rural development.

Of course, we also saw the scrapping of the \$210m Briztram project just to appease the member for South Brisbane. How convenient that would have been for all of those students who wanted to use the footbridge or the tram bridge to get across to the University of Queensland. What a difference it would have meant to the people of West End. I wonder how they feel. In the process, \$65m has been lost.

In the time left to me, I turn to what the coalition Government achieved in Health and, once again, put that on the record. In summary, the coalition took a Health Department that was devastated by six years of Labor neglect and incompetence and dreadful morale, turned it around and made it a professional outfit that was confident in what it could do. It was a Health Department that could work within its budget, treat thousands more people, turn around the waiting times for urgent and semi-urgent elective surgery from the worst in Australia to the best, and set difficult targets—something that the Labor Party will not do—and achieve those targets. We reached targets in immunisation and targets in breast screening. What was achieved in Health was typical of what was achieved in all the other departments of the Queensland coalition Government.

We were an achieving Government which in two years delivered some of the greatest benefits that this State has ever seen and certainly will not see under a Labor Government. We are entering a period of great uncertainty as Labor comes in and tears down things which were achieved under a great coalition Government which made this a great State.

---