



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Chevron Gas Pipeline

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.37 a.m.), by leave: In this House yesterday, the member for Toowoomba South inferred that the Labor Government was favouring the Chevron gas pipeline project at the expense of the north-west mineral province. At the time I placed on record my Government's commitment to do everything possible to ensure that the gas pipeline project proceeds and generates 2,500 jobs for Queenslanders. Today I wish to briefly outline my Government's strategy for the north-west mineral province, recognised as one of the world's great mining regions.

Honourable members will remember that it was the previous Labor Government that had the foresight to coordinate the development of this great mining region. It was the Labor Government that set in train the provision of vital infrastructure, such as the gas pipeline from the State's south-west to Mount Isa. It was the Labor Government that initiated the upgrading of rail lines to the coast and port facilities at Townsville. During the past two years, however, the region has marked time, as the previous Government displayed a remarkable lack of vision, drive or leadership. It can try to blame native title, it can try to blame metal prices, and it can even try to blame hard-nosed mining company executives, but it was a lack of Government direction.

The shame of the lost opportunities and lost jobs rests solely with the previous Government. My Government, as a can-do Government, will reignite the north-west mineral province. We will tackle the issues head on. We will ensure that the necessary infrastructure is provided. We will get the mining companies, the pastoralists and the Aboriginal landowners together at the same table to work out land claims. I have already begun that process.

Importantly, we will ensure that jobs—real jobs—are created throughout the north-west and throughout the State. As a demonstration of my Government's commitment to the region I will again visit the north-west next week. That will include an inspection of the Ernest Henry copper/gold mine near Cloncurry. The mine is a clear demonstration of the dual benefits that are flowing to the north-west as a result of Labor's foresight in planning and commitment. Firstly, there are the jobs at the mine; and, secondly, there is the infrastructure that benefits local residents of the region. In the case of Cloncurry, that includes the upgrading of the town's airstrip. Although some people may see that event as of little consequence, I can assure them the people of Cloncurry are justifiably excited by the opportunities that the new airstrip will bring to their region.

Honourable members may also be interested to learn that the work is well advanced in many of the other major projects in the north-west, including the fertiliser plant at Phosphate Hill south of Cloncurry. Total investment by WMC in that project alone is \$700m, generating 600 construction jobs and 250 full-time jobs at the plant once it is completed. As well, WMC is building a sulfur acid plant at Mount Isa that will reduce sulfur dioxide exhaust emissions at the Mount Isa plant by 80%. The sulfur acid will be used in the WMC fertiliser operation at Phosphate Hill. Some additional acid will be used in the Sun Metal zinc refinery in Townsville.

I also wish to inform the House today that the Government is close to finalising an agreement with WMC to provide infrastructure of \$24m to the WMC operations. That includes \$6m for roads, \$8m for site works, \$2m for the airstrip upgrade, \$2m for rail siding works and \$6m for water and power facilities at the Mount Isa acid plant. The investment by WMC would never have been made without

Labor's commitment to the gas pipeline from the south-west to the region. Now Labor will ensure that the job is completed. The honourable member for Toowoomba South asked me to give a commitment to the north-west minerals province. I am happy to do so today based on what I said to the House. The only pity is that his colleagues in the former coalition Government failed to do the same.
