



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 21 October 1998

## UNEMPLOYMENT

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (6.23 p.m.): In this short debate in which I have only five minutes, I will not have the time to set out the Government's comprehensive strategies and policies to drive employment in this State, although I will go through some of them. However, at the outset I am prepared to say that it seems to me that the Opposition is simply delighted to see that there is a high level of unemployment in this State. They are relishing in it for cheap political purposes. What we want is solutions to unemployment and what the community wants is solutions to unemployment. They do not want politics.

Turning to some of the few things that I will have an opportunity to talk about in the short time available to me, let us look at the first 100 days of my Government. To begin with, we put the mechanism of Government in place to drive jobs. We have established new portfolios to drive Queensland into the next century as part of the can-do State that we will lead.

**Mr BEATTIE:** They include not only the Minister for Employment, but the new Department of State Development to drive job creation and regional development, and the new Ministry for Communication and Information to drive the development of the State's fourth largest industry. This is about developing new jobs, new opportunities and new industries. We have mentioned the new Department of Employment, which will bring down unemployment, increase job security and provide people with the skills to earn a living.

At the first Cabinet meeting, we made an additional \$5m available to promote Queensland as a tourist destination to generate 1,410 new jobs. The Budget supports 65,600 jobs from capital works alone. We accelerated the Capital Works Program to drive job opportunities at a time when there was an impact from the Asian economic crisis. In addition, 24,500 job placements, apprenticeships and traineeships will be created under the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives over the next four years. Also, 685 new teachers, 995 more health workers and more than 370 more police and civilian support staff will be provided for. The forecast unemployment rate by June next year is 8.5%.

A \$5.4m package has been provided to boost building and construction jobs, with up to 3,000 apprenticeships being created from a special fund created in the industry. We are working on the skills to drive employment opportunities. The Government contributed funding to the \$68m Institute of Medical Research at the Royal Brisbane Hospital. About 200 long-term jobs for staff will be created, as well as more than 25,000 weekly pay packets during construction. Departments were ordered to accelerate capital works projects by awarding as many contracts as possible before the end of December.

I hosted a signing ceremony for a contract between Burton Coal and China Steel Corporation of Taiwan. Expansion of the company's Glenden mine will result in 150 extra jobs.

There will be an increase of nearly 150 staff at prisons and correctional centres across the State. A further \$3m was allocated in the Budget for the employment of 50 more prison officers.

A Government initiative secured the world's biggest sporting event of 2001, the Goodwill Games. That has a forecast benefit to Queensland of 1,800 new jobs and an economic boost of about \$167m.

Cabinet added \$7.5m to the \$19.5m due to be spent on the crime-cutting urban renewal programs in 13 areas throughout the State. Scores of jobs will be created in the renewal process.

BP has selected Brisbane for a \$500m oil refinery expansion, which will provide 700 new construction jobs. The Government won 400 new jobs by persuading Stellar Communications to locate its Asian call centre operation in Queensland as part of the State Government's call centre strategy designed by the Department of State Development to attract call centres to Queensland.

The Minister for Natural Resources intervened to save the jobs of 25 sawmill workers in the central coast by allocating a new logging area. A record \$8.5m was made available under the Statewide Sports Development Program to Queensland sporting organisations to create jobs for sports administrators, coach directors and development officers.

We delivered on an election commitment by providing a \$10.7m rescue package for the depressed Bowen area to help generate jobs. Three hundred and five contract employees have been offered full-time jobs with Queensland Rail. There is the PNG gas pipeline, and the list goes on. I table that for the information of the House.

The Government has a clear jobs strategy. We inherited a mess from the coalition and we are fixing it. It is not going to be easy; of course it will be difficult. I have never said that my target will be easy to meet, but this is a can-do Government that will get on with the job. We will not be sitting around making excuses, whingeing and whining with all the negativity that we hear from members on the other side of the House. We will do something.

Time expired.

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