



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Community Cabinet Meetings; Far North Queensland

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.40 a.m.), by leave: Nothing sums up my Government's commitment to far-north Queensland more than the fact that we chose to hold our first Community Cabinet meeting at Edmonton. Our Community Cabinet process is designed to listen to all those people in a locality who want to speak to a Cabinet Minister and to the Government as a whole. We chose to listen first to the people of far-north Queensland.

The Government does not need a map to find its way to north Queensland. We have been there right from the start. In Opposition we listened to what we were told about the need for infrastructure and the need for jobs, and in Government we have delivered. The people of the far north received a bigger share of the Labor Government's record \$4.8 billion capital works budget on a per capita basis than the people of Brisbane, for example. In other words, we recognised the special needs of this area and are spending more on building infrastructure there for every man, woman and child than we are for people in the south-east.

The \$28.5m extension to the Cairns Convention Centre is creating the equivalent of 400 jobs. That is about \$7m more than the previous Government's allocation for the project. The second stage of the centre involves construction of a 1,600 square metre exhibition hall, also capable of seating an audience of up to 5,800 people for basketball games, concerts or other functions associated with major conventions. Local subcontractors and suppliers are being used extensively on this project, and that means more jobs for the people of Cairns and the region. It will also generate more jobs in the tourism sector as more and bigger conventions are attracted to Cairns.

Jobs and training opportunities are already being generated by the Manoora Urban Renewal Program in Cairns. At that first Community Cabinet meeting at Edmonton in July, the Government introduced the resurrection of the Community Renewal Program and the injection of an extra \$7.5m this year, taking the Statewide budget to \$27m. Reintroducing the program was an election commitment to the people in a number of areas of the State with high concentrations of public housing, including Manoora. Our aim was to improve the quality of life in those communities. It is a commitment that has been kept. We will be spending about \$25m in Manoora in the next 7 to 10 years. It is already providing opportunities for training and employment.

Q-Build, within the Department of Public Works, has entered into an agreement with the local community group Cairns Career Training. Together they will develop an employment and training scheme as part of the overall project. Between six and eight people will be engaged initially in fencing works as part of the urban renewal scheme. Cairns Career Training plans to take on local unemployed people to carry out the works, and far-north Queensland will get its share of the 140 new apprenticeships being offered by Q-Build in 1999. The 140 apprentices is 50 more than the previous Government put on last year.

These facts and figures demonstrate just part of my Government's commitment to far-north Queensland.
