



Speech by

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard 21 October 1998

UNEMPLOYMENT

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (6.28 p.m.): When I became Premier, one thing I always endeavoured to do was to give credit to the former Premier and the former Government in respect of initiatives that we inherited. The honourable member opposite has never had the common decency to do that. It is a good thing that we had been the Government when he came to office, otherwise he would have had nothing to announce tonight. There would have been nothing on his list. We would have had an empty list from an empty Premier and an empty Government.

The facts are these: 60% more people were on the unemployment queues by the time Labor left office than when it took office. In most of the period that Labor was in Government, the percentage of unemployment was in the 9s, 10s and 11s. In the first six months of this year, the coalition Government recorded the lowest unemployment rates in Queensland for six years, which were constantly in the 8s. What is it now? It is 9.2%. It is getting worse under Labor while the situation has stabilised in the rest of the country.

Some 91,000 new jobs were created in the last year of the coalition Government— 40% of all new jobs generated in Australia. That was the legacy we left the honourable member opposite. That is the legacy that he will not acknowledge. What did we get today? We got the new you-beaut jobs initiative. We got a 1800 telephone number, an advertising campaign, community forums and 24,000 traineeships over four years. Mr Speaker, do you know how many school leavers there will be over the next four years? The Government is providing 24,000 traineeships and there will be 160,000 school leavers over the next four years. In the last year that we were in office, the coalition generated 91,000 new jobs—40% of all new jobs across Australia and more than every other State combined. That is the record.

Everyone on this side of the House and in the press gallery knows how the Premier arrived at his target of 5% unemployment. Originally, it was 5% over three years and then it was 5% over five years. What is the bet that next year it will be 5% over 10 years? Eighteen months ago, the current Premier, when Opposition Leader, was holding a press conference and one of the journalists asked the now Premier what he thought was a reasonable unemployment target for the State of Queensland. The current Premier looked to the back of the room at one of his minders, who held up his hand to say, "No". What did the current Premier do? He took that to mean 5%. That is how the member for Brisbane Central arrived at the 5% unemployment target that he now says is Labor's mission in life. If we talk to the press gallery, they will tell us the story. To have an objective is good, but to provide unrealistic expectations only generates the cynicism that is rampant in the electorate today. That is precisely what this Government is doing.

This Government inherited the strongest jobs growth in Australia. If we look at the unemployment figures in Queensland for the first six months of this year, we see that they were the lowest they have been in six years. That is the mess that the member for Brisbane Central refers to—the lowest unemployment figures in six years. He ignores the fact that, under Labor, unemployment was 8%, 9%, 10% and 11%. In fact, in July 1992 it was 11.1% and thereafter chronically in the 10s and 9s for the balance of Labor's term in office. Under the coalition, employment growth was running at just

over 4%—double the national rate. Of course, in this State unemployment is now 9.2%, whereas it has stabilised across the rest of Australia. What is the excuse from the Premier? He is gaining momentum!

Time expired.
