



Speech by

**Hon. R. SCHWARTEN**

**MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON**

---

Hansard 18 November 1998

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**State Purchasing Policy**

**Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton— ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (10 a.m.), by leave: For some time I have been concerned about certain aspects of the State Purchasing Policy. Since becoming the Minister responsible for the policy, many businesspeople have told me that it can be improved. In particular, local firms are concerned, as I am, about the impact that Government purchasing decisions have on jobs. The current policy does not explicitly apply employment criteria. Others say that they are concerned about local firms missing out to interstate or overseas operators. While that is a perennial complaint, I am still keen to hear suggestions on how we can address that issue.

I want to find out from suppliers whether the State Purchasing Policy is smoothing the way for business, or getting in the way. Therefore, today I am announcing a process that will identify areas of policy that need to be overhauled. I want business operators to let me know of any particular problems that they have with the policy and how they think those problems can be overcome.

The current State Purchasing Policy has been operating, with amendments, since 1991. It outlines the objectives and guidelines for the purchasing of a wide range of goods and services by the Queensland Government. The policy is overseen by an advisory body, the State Purchasing Council. The 18-member council comprises representatives of both the public and private sectors. Council members themselves recognise that there are areas of the State Purchasing Policy that need improvement and they will be involved in this process.

The existing policy is contained in four rather hefty volumes. If it fell off a table, it would break a person's leg. It took me 60 hours to read the policy.

**Mr Johnson:** In large print, is it?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** I bet that no-one opposite has read it. They would not be able to, because there are no pictures in it. To my mind, it could not be described as user-friendly.

The 14,000 State Government officers with the power to purchase goods and services are expected to have a working knowledge of the policy. It follows that suppliers themselves must be——

**Mr Johnson** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Obviously the member has never read the policy or taken any notice of it. He is not interested in creating jobs in places such as Longreach. Considering the region that the member represents, it is reasonable to suggest that if he listened he might even agree that the policy needs to be overhauled.

It follows that suppliers themselves need to be familiar with the policy if they are to successfully meet Government purchasing requirements. In its present form, that is a lot to ask of anyone. I will certainly consider any suggestions from business or others about how to streamline the policy.

I am not beginning any long or expensive review of the policy. I have set specific guidelines for progress. For the next month, written submissions will be accepted through my office. They will be referred to a small secretariat that I have established within the Department of Public Works, which will be under the direct control of the director-general. I have asked my director-general to provide me with a status report on submissions and possible changes to the policy by the end of December.

I look forward to hearing the views of suppliers and business operators, and members of the Opposition. I am determined to ensure that the State Purchasing Policy helps rather than hinders business in this State and has, as one of its objectives, the creation of jobs in Queensland. If reasonable changes are needed, then they will be made and they will be made quickly.

---