



Speech by

BRUCE DAVIDSON

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE DEVELOPMENT

Mr DAVIDSON (Noosa—LP) (6.37 p.m.): In participating in the debate tonight, I wish to put on the public record the achievements of Alan Davies, who was one of the senior officers dismissed by Director-General Ross Rolfe last week. It should be recognised by all honourable members and all businesspeople in Queensland that Mr Davies came from Western Australia, where he was employed formerly by the Burke Government, to Queensland to work for the Goss Government. Mr Davies is one of the most professional and high-achieving public servants with whom I have ever worked. It should be noted by all honourable members that Mr Davies achieved the only one-stop business licensing shop in Australia—one of only four in the world. I ask all honourable members to appreciate the enormous workload that Mr Davies carried to achieve the one-stop business shop known as SmartLicence. He spent months dealing with the bureaucracy and, in many cases, Ministers. Some departments did not want to relinquish ownership of what many believed to be their own licensing systems. I could not speak highly enough of Mr Davies. I was absolutely devastated to learn that he had been dismissed by the Director-General, Ross Rolfe. I cannot begin to understand why a person such as Mr Davies, who was the Deputy Director-General of TSBI—not appointed by me or by the coalition Government; he was a former Goss Government employee—was dismissed. I cannot begin to understand what he did or could ever have done to be treated in such a manner.

Since SmartLicence was established in Spring Hill back in 1997, I think it has had over 40,000 inquiries from business. It is a one-stop business information licensing shop—over 40,000 inquiries. It has made access by business to this Government or the Government of the day so much easier. It has prevented the run-around that business had experienced for decades in going from department to department to department trying to access information on establishing business. They now have a free call number at Spring Hill. The information they require is sent to them, in many cases, in 24 hours, but mostly within two or three days.

For the life of me I have cannot believe why Mr Davies has been treated in this manner. He was moved sideways the moment this Government took office. He was the highest ranking bureaucrat in my department who worked with the Red Tape Reduction Task Force and the Queensland Small Business Council—a council that the Minister abolished and appointed his backbencher the member for Sunnybank as chairman of the newly formed Queensland Small Business Advisory Council. With all due respect to the member for Sunnybank, he lost the thrust of what small business and that council was about. I have not heard the Minister make a statement about the achievements of the Red Tape Reduction Task Force in 18 months. I have not heard him make a statement about the achievements of the Queensland Small Business Advisory Council. What the hell is happening with those two instruments of Government that achieved so much for business in this State under the tenure of the coalition Government?

SmartLicence—what has happened since then? Nothing has happened! I cannot believe that the Minister criticised me in this House so many times for abolishing the Queensland Small Business Corporation and establishing business centres when he now has adopted State Development Centres. We established those centres up and down the coast and in Toowoomba and Mount Isa. He criticised us all through that process, yet he has now adopted the State Development Centres. I can tell him that his director-general has not even visited some of those State Development Centres in 18 months.

This Minister has centralised all the power—all the decision-making processes of those business centres and the regional directors—back into George Street. He centralised the power back into Brisbane. We struggled to take the decision-making process—the delegation of power—out of Brisbane and into the regions so those business centres could operate on behalf of their business constituencies in those areas. Now it is coming back into Brisbane and is getting held up in reporting processes that the Minister has put in place so that businesses are not getting answers for three to six months. They have given up. They have thrown their hands in the air.

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I am being criticised for centralising and I am being criticised for decentralising. Thirty of the staff go into the districts in the next few weeks.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr DAVIDSON: The word around is that the business centres—the State Development Centres as they are now known—have lost their power. The people working in them have no decision-making power. Everybody is coming back into Brisbane and there is no delegation of power or responsibility to those managers. I established and I opened them all. I think I opened the whole lot—even the one in Brisbane, the one in George Street.

Time expired.
