



Speech by

DESLEY BOYLE

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE DEVELOPMENT

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (6.42 p.m.): It is my good fortune to offer Opposition members some feedback on their abject failure to address business development in the regions of Queensland during their term as the Borbidge Government. How dare the former Minister put before this House the notion that he and his department understood the thrust of what small business is about! They hardly showed themselves in the Cairns area and, when they did, it was only to swan around at some functions. Their failure to deliver is a large part of the reason for the loss in those five marginal electorates in the far north that they lost: four to the Labor Party and one to One Nation.

Mr DAVIDSON: I rise to a point of order. The member should appreciate that we opened a business centre in Cairns on behalf of her constituency.

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

Ms BOYLE: In fact, since this Government has taken command, regional business development has proceeded apace, and I give credit to the Beattie Government but particularly to the Minister for State Development, who has reshaped the 16 State Development Centres across the State and recently opened one in the Queensland Government building in Hervey Bay. Those State Development Centres now provide adjusted services according to the region in which they are situated to work with the local business organisations to develop the individual competitive advantages of the different regions.

On top of that, what has this Government done for regional economic development through the Department of State Development? It has funded five regional economic development corporations in Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton and Mackay/Whitsunday, with special individualised arrangements for the Gladstone area development board. What else has it done? This Government has recognised the future advantages, the possible opportunities for different areas and has worked more closely with the private sector so that we can direct our own economic futures.

Not only have there been improvements in delivery to regional centres, such as Cairns, Mackay and Rockhampton but also this Government has funded five remote area boards to the tune of \$100,000 per annum for three years. All of us should pause on this, because it is the first time that those remote areas have had three years' guaranteed funding to really assist them in areas where there are not lots of opportunities week in, week out. Honourable members should listen to the areas of Queensland that have benefited from the remote area program: Cape York Peninsula Development Association, Central Western Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development Board, the Gulf Local Authorities Development Association, the South West Regional Development Association, and recently announced by the member for Mount Isa, Tony McGrady, MITEZ, which will receive funding for regional development activities in the north-west region.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms BOYLE: What? You want more? Yes, this Government has provided more regional business advisory services to the tune of 15 regional business advisers across the State at a cost of \$2.64m allocated over three years. Again that is unprecedented stability for the program. More than that, 126 applicants were assisted through the regional business development scheme in 1998-99 alone and have been provided with \$2.2m in grants. These are projects that are resulting in more

important local employment opportunities and more important investment creation than the business-based TSBI department ever looked like organising for the broader State of Queensland.

As if service delivery on the spot right now is not enough, we are also looking to the future. The Minister deserves credit for the three-year funding of \$200,000 being provided to the sustainable regional development centre at the Central Queensland University to make sure that we in Queensland are ahead of the latest and best practices in regional economic development—in fact, to put us in front so that we can provide advice to other regions around Australia and internationally on the best way to take us forward.

Members on the other side of this House should sit in abject embarrassment. How serious can they be with the little that they did for the region? I can tell them now that their best small business policy in Cairns would be to come to Cairns at the time of the next election and say, "We are sorry for what we did not do and we promise that we will continue the programs started by the Beattie Government and by the Deputy Premier, Jim Elder", because we are on track in the regions in providing true regional business development and economic development that will take us into the future right across Queensland.
