



Speech by

Hon. J. ELDER

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

Hansard 2 December 1999

STATE GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (5.21 p.m.): It is my pleasure to second the amendment and endeavour to value add.

Mr Beattie: As you do.

Mr ELDER: As I always do. The first thing that we provided to Queensland, upon our election, was confidence. We provided Queenslanders with confidence. They had two years of misery under the Borbidge Government. The Borbidge Government was known far and wide within the business community and broader community for not delivering for Queensland.

Mr Mickel: What about the GST?

Mr ELDER: I will come to the GST. The Borbidge Government did not deliver. Its first big impact was to freeze every project and to do some navel gazing for a year before it started spending money. It crippled the Queensland economy. What Queenslanders got from the election of a Labor Government was confidence—confidence that we would grow the economy; confidence that we had the wherewithal to deliver on the jobs program, on our projects and on our social agenda. And we have delivered on that in the past 17 months.

It is interesting that the hard issues—the tough issues—were the ones that the coalition Government left in the bottom drawer. Those issues included the restructuring of the meat industry, for instance. Members opposite had reports on the meat industry to the effect that 17 abattoirs would close and 5,000 jobs would go. But where was that issue? It was in the too-hard basket.

The RFA—the regional forest agreement—which we have negotiated was in the too-hard basket. It could not be delivered, because members opposite panicked about the belting they would get from One Nation in the election if they moved on it, so they left it in the too-hard basket. The same situation applied with land clearing and all the other large policy issues—whether it was fisheries, primary industries, State development or social policies. All of those tough, difficult decisions—the too-hard decisions—were left in that basket. Theirs was a can't do and couldn't do Government.

It is interesting that the Leader of the Opposition is now trying to remake himself a little and rewrite history. He is right about those projects. During the time of the Goss Government, those projects were vast. The Century Zinc project, the deep ore body in Mount Isa, the George Fisher mine, the south-west Queensland to Roma gas pipeline, the south-west Queensland to Mount Isa gas pipeline, WMC Fertiliser, Korea Zinc, the sale of the State gas pipeline, Ernest Henry and QCL were all generated in the Goss Government's time.

But what about the projects that were lost between 1996 and 1998? The coalition Government walked away from Eastlink. The superstadium faltered. What a farce that was—that it actually put in place the superstadium! What about the cruise ship terminal, the Hail Creek coal project, Calliope Metals and Austeel? The list goes on. But the best was Starland—fantasy land.

I have to say that if it was a Labor Government that had developers walk through its door and, with no due diligence in the project, seek a loan of \$1.4m, and the loan had been granted but never repaid, and one of those directors was the spouse of a Federal conservative member of Parliament, there would have been a royal commission. The matter would have been off to the CJC quicker than

one could blink. But it was okay for members opposite, because that was the way they did business. It is not the way that we do business.

Ms Bligh: It's not too late for that.

Mr ELDER: The Minister is right. It probably is not too late for a little peek from the CJC. The point is that if a Labor Government had done that, there would have been a hue and cry, but that was never the case. Members opposite snuck it under the carpet or left it in a drawer. Their only difficulty is that I happened to come across that drawer. And I can tell those members that I am doing a little more work in relation to looking at the consultancies and who paid the consultants. I am also doing a little more work to see whether or not any political donations were made to their political donation funds from those particular gentlemen. I will take my time, and I will do them slowly. I have a very keen interest in seeing where my investigations lead me.

In terms of his rhetoric, the temporary Leader of the Opposition is trying to save himself from the rat pack, because they are coming at 100 miles an hour. One only has to read the Bulletin poll this week to know that he is in trouble. And when the polls start to plummet and when the next one on his leadership comes out, he will know that he is in real trouble. That is when Opposition members will really come kicking—when they have the nerve and the intellectual fortitude to take him on.

We can see how the Leader of the Opposition is trying to undermine the initiatives of this Government—undermine, whine, whinge, and wreck the economy if he can. Whether it is Tarong, the gas pipeline, Millmerran or Kogan Creek, he is trying to get in there and undermine this Government.

Time expired.
