



Speech by

Hon. J. ELDER

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

Hansard 24 August 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Exports

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (9.41 a.m.), by leave: As honourable members would be aware, Queensland's exports are under pressure at the moment through a combination of low commodity prices and the general Asian economic crisis, which has led to demand for all products in the State dropping off considerably. In response to this situation, the Government has adopted an active strategy of trying to diversify Queensland's export destinations and move into new markets such as India, the Middle East and South Africa. However we are also taking action to diversify not just where we export to, but also what we export.

The best way to do this is through boosting the export capability and capacity of those small and medium-sized businesses which are ready to export, especially those in regional and rural Queensland. Consequently, this Government is setting up trade action plans for rural and regional Queensland. This export initiative will align the competitive industries of each region with overseas market opportunities. Specifically, the trade action plans will address the hurdles faced by regional exporters and provide a series of practical actions to be undertaken to address identified export barriers. The trade action plans will focus on targeted products and services produced by each of the key industry sectors in each individual region.

Some of the industry sectors to be targeted include agribusiness and primary production, manufacturing, education, health, mining and other tradeable services. In addition to the region's trade action plan, each company involved in the program will receive its own individual plan outlining steps that it can take to increase its exports over the next three years. On completion of all trade action plans, over 2,500 individual companies will receive individual profiles for their company and appropriate follow-up action. The Government has recently completed international trade action plans in Bundaberg, Mackay and Townsville. Plans for Townsville surrounds and far-north Queensland are currently being finalised and implementation planning has commenced. Planning has already commenced in the regions of central Queensland, the Darling Downs and south-west, and Brisbane.

In addition to the regional trade action plans, the Government is also commissioning the export pathways forums, a series of export education workshops that will be delivered throughout regional Queensland from November 1999. These forums will focus on overcoming obstacles to export faced by companies in regional Queensland. Through these actions we are trying to diversify Queensland's exports away from a reliance on large commodities, such as coal and sugar. While commodity exports will always be important to Queensland, our best chance for future growth in exports lies in those innovative small companies which have produced niche products for the domestic market and are ready to produce for the international market. This is one of the best ways to increase exports, especially in rural and regional Queensland—and so put more Queenslanders in jobs.
