



Speech by

Mrs J. SHELDON

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

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STATE GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP) (5.35 p.m.): The real facts about the last Budget that was brought down in this State were revealed in the comments by economic, independent, well-known people who said, "Beattie sends State into red". Also, there was a \$350m deficit. Of course, it would have been a lot worse because there was \$568m in capital carryover—the biggest carryover ever. That should have been added to the \$350m. Another headline was—

"Can you believe it? Queensland, financial paragon of the federation, brought to the verge of bankruptcy."

These are comments from independent commentators. Another comment was—

"In his second Budget, Beattie has the dubious distinction of bringing down the first effective deficit in Queensland for two decades."

I think that shows that, in terms of the real economic performance of this Government, the Treasurer and the Premier should hang their heads in shame.

I might also say that in terms of major economic reform—for instance, the reduction of tax and particularly tax for business—this Government has not delivered. The Treasurer said that the Labor Government has delivered on land tax. I notice that that is guaranteed for one year only. There is no guarantee in the out years that the Government will continue to reduce land tax, as the coalition said that it would, and completely abolish it. We have the absolute furphy that payroll tax is being reduced. Yes, it is being reduced by 0.1% per annum over the next two years. Of course, for the first time, employer superannuation contributions are going to be added to the payroll tax equation. This means that many more small businesses will be brought within the purview of paying payroll tax—another clear demonstration of hypocrisy on the part of the Beattie Government.

I would also like to comment on unemployment. The Government was going to get the unemployment rate down to 5%. We know that the last real unemployment figure released was 8.7%—the highest for any State in the nation—and yet we are hearing from the Treasurer and Premier Beattie what strong economic growth we have and how they are delivering on jobs.

I would like to refer to the November 1999 Queensland Treasury Queensland Economic Update. I am sure that the Treasurer is very familiar with it. It states—

"The number of persons employed in Queensland fell 0.1%"—

which is 1,300 jobs—

"in trend terms during October 1999 (rest of Australia, up 0.3%), with revisions to the trend data indicating that employment in the State has now fallen for two consecutive months. This follows a long period of sustained strong economic growth in Queensland, with the State's annual employment growth rate having exceeded that of the rest of Australia for 39 consecutive months prior to September 1999."

We know who was in Government for most of that time: the coalition, not Labor. So Labor in Queensland is following exactly the same trends as Labor Governments did when they were in power in other States. The update also goes on to state—

"Queensland's annual growth has eased in recent months and is currently at its lowest level since June 1997."

The Treasurer made much of the sale of the TAB and the sale of the Bank of Queensland. Of course, before the election we saw the figures showing how Labor was going to fund its election promises, so we know that the Government had factored in the sale of the TAB and the Bank of Queensland. It would be very interesting to know how it is going to pay for the Lang Park stadium. There is no money for that. Instead, the money will come out of the funding for hospitals, schools and roads, purely so that Mr Beattie can deliver on the promise that he made to Bob Gibbs and Rugby League before the last election. It was in writing and he had to deliver. That is the only reason that he did deliver. Members have not seen what is in writing; that has been well hidden. But I am sure that at some stage it will come to the surface.

The mastermind behind "Technoflop" is sitting on the opposite side of the House. I still hear from people throughout the IT industry in Queensland, Australia and overseas how it has set back our State in terms of people's perceptions of Queensland's ability to manage such important economic issues. All we hear from the member opposite is that it was the Federal Government's fault, but it was very much his fault. He did not do his homework and his answer was to sack five innocent public servants. Jim is a real big bloke! He sacked those people. He finds his foil; he finds his scapegoats.

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive. They are untrue and I ask for them to be withdrawn.

Mrs SHELDON: They are very true, but if the Minister finds them offensive I will withdraw them.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will withdraw.

Mrs SHELDON: I did, Mr Speaker.

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. I find her second remarks offensive and I ask for them to be withdrawn.

Mrs SHELDON: The Minister is very touchy. I withdraw.

Mr Elder: Tell the truth.

Mrs SHELDON: That will be the day when the Minister tells the truth.

One of the other taxes that this Government could not follow through on reducing was stamp duty for the refinancing of businesses.

Time expired.
