



Speech by

JOHN MICKEL

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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RURAL QUEENSLAND

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (6.34 p.m.): Two words have been missing from tonight's debate, and they are "Federal Government". It is the Federal Government that controls the key to so many of these issues. The first one that the amendment talks about, of course, is the term that the members of the Opposition just hate—the GST. It is like a wooden cross to Dracula to mention the GST to them. Look at how they perform when I mention GST. They go all wobbly and shaky about it, because they know what is going happen out there in rural Queensland with the GST. They are going to feel it because Queensland is going to feel it. How are we going to feel it? We are going to feel it because it is going to take away from the sovereign rights of this State, because the GST strikes at the heart of the Federation. It certainly breaks away from the financial independence that we have had up until now.

Currently, over 50% of the Queensland Budget comes from the Federal Government. Under a GST, that figure will be 80%. Queensland simply cannot afford any further attrition of its financial base. What members opposite are silent on is this: they will not stand up to rural communities because there has been a cost shift—an absolute cost shift—from the Federal Government to the States. That has occurred already in dental care. It happened years ago, but it is happening out there in regional Queensland as well as in rural Queensland. What about the students this year who were forced to return to the high schools? As a direct result of Federal Government policies, the Queensland Government has to pick that up, and members opposite are absolutely silent on it. It affects rural communities just as it affects the people whom I represent in Logan City.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Callide!

Mr MICKEL: The Federal Government could be using the revenue it has raised from the partial sale of Telstra to give tax incentives to people to encourage them to grow some of the plantation timber we need—some of the hardwood timber we need—on private property. In that way we could go about some of the task of reafforestation. I believe that, with the proper incentives and a package in rural Queensland, that is the way we can revitalise some of Queensland's rural towns.

At the moment, Labor in this State is working to grow the timber industry. The National Party in Government had no plan; it took no action. Even tonight's motion calls for, among other things, protection of the current jobs—to protect the jobs as they are now. We do not want that. We want to go further. We want to create more jobs. We want to create more jobs in regional Queensland. We can do that by offering financial incentives. The members opposite have to get onto that Federal Government of theirs—the one that is going to wreak havoc on rural communities with the GST—and put some of that Telstra money to work to provide incentives for those private landowners.

The Federal Government is forcing change on rural communities, and it is forcing that change because it penalises. It threatens penalties against States that do not participate in things such as the National Competition Policy. I have already experienced that in Logan City. Of course, when the Borbidge Government was in power, it did not lift a finger for people in Logan City when user pays was brought in. It did not lift a finger for the people of Brisbane who have to pay for water on a user-pays basis.

Mr Seeney: That's pathetic.

Mr MICKEL: That is the point. The member opposite reckons his Government opposed it, but it did nothing when it had the opportunity—absolutely nothing!

Members opposite have also stayed silent on the Federal Government tonight in relation to National Competition Policy and what it means to water. The National Competition Council argues that any failure to implement water reforms would involve much higher costs for rural communities. Members opposite have not said a word on that tonight—not one word. The council says that there will be continued degradation of our rivers, coupled with a deterioration in water quality to the point where the demand for water will not be able to be met.

Members opposite have not said a word on it. They are absolutely dog-eyed because they know that to them the Federal Government is like a wooden cross to Dracula. They will all be ducking and weaving at the next election when we hold up the GST and the National Competition Policy. They reckon they can oppose it and do something about it, but they have been absolutely silent on it tonight when it comes to rural communities. They have had nothing to say at all tonight on rising salinity in ground water.

Time expired.
