



Speech by

MIKE REYNOLDS

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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THE STRAND REDEVELOPMENT, TOWNSVILLE

Mr REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (12.18 p.m.): Townsville's award winning \$29.8m redevelopment of the Strand has been hailed as a spectacular environmental and recreational success. It beat 50 other nominations to win the national 1999 Case Earth Awards announced recently in Sydney and also took honours in the above \$10m category. That is a fantastic coup for Townsville and a great credit to all those involved in the project's design and construction.

However, equal credit must go to the Beattie Government for its tremendous support in turning a foreshore that was vulnerable to storms and cyclones into a national showpiece that is able to withstand a one in 100 year severe weather event. Without the Government's generous \$15m contribution, Townsville would not have this magnificent attraction, nor would it have won the prestigious Case Earth environmental award. In addition to its impressive national achievement, the new look Strand has also been voted a winner at a local and regional level. This has been a great partnership between the Beattie Labor Government and the Labor Townsville City Council. There has been great vision and great leadership at both State and local levels.

Public support for the opening celebrations, which ran from 18 to 25 October, was overwhelming and the universal opinion is that the project is a world-class one. Damage inflicted by Cyclone Justin in 1997 and further damage caused by Cyclone Sid in 1998 prompted the redevelopment project. Essentially it is all about coastal protection, but the bonus is a beautiful environment that guarantees its status as a tremendous drawcard for the City of Townsville.

As a showpiece and recreational area, with a broad range of facilities and attractions to cater for all age groups from the elderly to toddlers, as well as families, locals and business alike, the Strand is in a definite class of its own. Attractions include three large headlands—one with a pier—cafes, restaurants, sandy beaches, numerous playgrounds including a water and equal-access playground for children with disabilities, shade shelters and picnic spots. In addition, youth and recreational facilities include a half basketball court.

The benefits are by no means limited to recreation and aesthetics. Australian Economic Consultants has identified a number of features that add up to a multi-million dollar economic impact that will flow from this redevelopment. For example, in terms of gross output, the construction phase generated \$127.48m in the value of goods and services transacted during the period. The value added aspect, which refers to the value of gross output after deducting the costs of goods and services used in the construction process, totalled \$64.71m and, according to AEC, defines the true contribution made to the economy. A sum of \$26.32m was paid in incomes for the 522 full-time and part-time staff involved over the duration of the project. The sum total represents a significant economic and employment boost for the Townsville region. We do not see the benefits stopping, even though construction is now complete. There is no doubt that the Strand will be a significant tourist drawcard which, along with the almost-completed Pandora Museum—another great State Government initiative—and the region's numerous existing attractions, gives Townsville real clout in the tourism stakes.

The two-kilometre Strand redevelopment has been designed and landscaped on a spectacular tropical scale. It has the capacity and facilities to accommodate over 70,000 people for massive events such as fireworks displays. It can provide seating for 1,200 people for a glamorous outdoor dinner, as occurred last Thursday night. In addition to those large-scale capabilities, the Strand is an idyllic place

for individual or small group activities. The three and a half metre wide paths—twice the width of the old ones—are wide enough to stroll along in comfort and there are any number of inviting spots where visitors can relax and enjoy the superb surroundings. Three headlands add character and definition to the shoreline profile, while facilities such as restaurants, coffee shops and playgrounds are proving very popular. The Strand has always been a popular swimming spot and this fact has been given substantial consideration in the redevelopment. An additional stinger-proof enclosure and the \$400,000 Picnic Bay lifesavers club are both prominent aspects of the spectacular overall plan.

Our fantastic Townsville climate and relaxed lifestyle lend themselves to casual outdoor activities and people have realised very quickly that the Strand is the perfect venue for such pursuits. Even before the official opening interest was very keen, but since then the crowds have poured in and interest does not look like abating. The redevelopment has always had very strong public approval, but I think few people envisaged how spectacular and how incredibly successful it was going to be. In all my years in political and public life, I cannot remember a project that has captured the public imagination to such an extent or that has been embraced so wholeheartedly. It comes back to the vision and leadership of the Beattie Labor Government and the Labor Townsville City Council.

The statistics for the project are impressive: 400,000 tonnes of beach sand, 250,000 tonnes of armour rock and 390,000 tonnes of general fill were used in the construction process. The landscaping component included almost 16,000 trees and shrubs, 70,000 square metres of turf and 22,500 native ground cover plants, which were planted at the top of the beach. Up to 40,000 trucks went through the weighbridge and jobs peaked at 240 on site. However, this figure does not include the many workers engaged in off-site construction and other aspects of the project.

As Treasurer David Hamill said in Townsville just last week, while important as a stand-alone development, the Strand redevelopment was compiled in synergy with the central business district plan, with water as the common aesthetic ingredient. I join the Treasurer in saying that I have no doubt that the incredible success of the Strand redevelopment will have an enormous economic impact on the Townsville CBD. It will add impetus to the CBD development, which is also exciting.

In addition to the Beattie Government's \$15m contribution, the Townsville City Council contributed \$5m and the Townsville/Thuringowa Water Supply Board contributed \$4m to the project. The remaining \$4m to \$5m came from disaster relief arrangements. I can proudly say in this Chamber today that everyone involved has done a tremendous job. This has been a signature partnership between the Government and the Townsville City Council. MacNorth was appointed project manager following its successful reconstruction of the Crystal Creek water supply infrastructure, which was severely damaged in the January 1998 floods. Sinclair Knight Mertz monitored and documented the environmental process in consultation with the Townsville City Council, the Department of Environment and Heritage, the Department of Primary Industries, the Townsville Port Authority and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

In conclusion, I thank the Ministers of this Government who so wholeheartedly got behind the very important redevelopment of the Strand. As Premier Peter Beattie said in Townsville just last Wednesday, this was a very important investment for the Government and for north Queensland as a whole. We can compare the Strand development with the South Bank development in Brisbane. However, what we have in Townsville is different from the South Bank development as we have a fantastic breeze coming from the sea, and we have a fantastic environment where tens of thousands of people can enjoy—

Mr McGrady: And all the way from Mount Isa and the other side.

Mr REYNOLDS: I can tell the House that a lot of people will come from Mount Isa and the western part of Queensland to enjoy this tourist attraction, which will stand us in good stead for many years to come. This is a signature development for Townsville. I invite all members to visit Townsville and see the spectacular development that has been provided by the Beattie Labor Government and the Labor Townsville City Council.
