



Speech by

Mr N. ROBERTS

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

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NATIONAL COMPETITION POLICY

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (11.25 p.m.): The current Labor Government provides more than a glimmer of hope for those of us who believe that Governments should intervene in the economy to facilitate a fairer distribution of wealth and to defend the public interest. Significant signs are emerging that the blind faith in the free market so evident in Governments of all persuasions throughout the eighties and the early nineties is on the wane. The recent decision of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services to reassert the role of Government by abolishing the corrective services corporations and re-establishing responsibility for corrective services with a new department is a fine example. Under the corporatisation model he abolished, the Minister was almost reduced to an interested bystander in terms of decision making, but was held fully responsible and accountable when things went wrong.

More important are the recent changes made to the public benefit test guidelines under the National Competition Policy. Despite the rhetoric of the coalition while it was in Government, it allowed National Competition Policy to be implemented along strict economic rationalist lines under guidelines that were kept secret from the public. However, the Beattie Labor Government has moved to humanise National Competition Policy and place much-needed attention on social justice issues. The Labor Government is restoring the balance between the economic and social objectives of our Governments and our communities.

The new public benefit test guidelines are now available publicly and are designed to ensure that the interests of people and communities are put ahead of economic ideology. This is principally achieved by the introduction of a requirement to conduct employment and social impact assessments as part of the public benefit test process. I commend the Premier and the Treasurer for these worthwhile initiatives and encourage them to examine other areas of Government where such reforms can be implemented.
