



Speech by

**Hon. P. BRADDY**

**MEMBER FOR KEDRON**

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Hansard 25 November 1999

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

#### **Queensland Public Service; Wage Offer**

**Hon. P. J. BRADDY** (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (9.45 a.m.), by leave: The Beattie Labor Government has made a new wages offer to replace the current round of enterprise bargaining in the public sector. The offer—to be approved by public sector employees employed in major State Government departments, including TAFE employees and public servants in Education and Police—is to run from 1 January 2000 to April 2003.

The new wages bargain—the first major agreement to be proposed under the Government's new fair and balanced industrial laws—has focused on addressing key public sector priorities of employment security, training, skills development and improved services for the Queensland community. Under the new deal, no jobs or services will be cut to pay for wages. Instead, the new bargain contains a fair and responsible wage increase and restores wages parity for public servants working across the sector. The average 9% offer over three years is economically responsible and fair and reasonable. It will mean that average public sector workers will receive an increase of around \$80 per week over the life of the agreement—\$32 in the first year, an additional \$24 in the second, and a further \$24 in the third year. It will ensure that Queensland public servants maintain real improvements in their living standards.

When this Government came to office, it did so with a promise that we would do things differently from the coalition in the public sector. This new wages deal is proof of that commitment. We have recognised the inherent problems of previous enterprise bargaining deals and their impact on the public sector. The new wages bargain represents a significant turnaround in the way wages are bargained, rejecting trade-offs and cuts to services and jobs as the way for gaining increases in wages. We have rejected notions of buying off conditions and trading away security and existing entitlements.

The new bargain also offers a new way of delivering improved services and efficiencies to the Queensland community. The new deal will complement the Government's reform agenda and is designed to provide better services to Queenslanders. We will do this through implementing our Managing for Outcomes agenda, ensuring that all Government agencies focus on delivering improved client services consistent with our policy objectives— objectives such as more jobs for Queenslanders and skilling Queensland—the Smart State.

In adopting this approach, the Government has emphatically rejected measurements of productivity based solely upon budget cuts and crude notions of trading off employment conditions. We have rejected the notion of wide-scale redundancies and contracting out of Government services so favoured under coalition Governments. We have rejected the low wage/low skill approach to our work force.

The new deal is a fair and reasonable offer and a fair and reasonable approach to bargaining in the public sector. It addresses key issues impacting on the public sector and it will deliver better services for Queenslanders. It maintains real improvements in employees' living standards, improves employment security, and focuses on skills, training and development.

For the first time, all public sector workers will be guaranteed access to nationally accredited training and portability of qualifications. In addition, the agreement also will provide reassurance to public sector workers through a strong commitment to enhanced employment security.

A Central Peak Consultative Committee— an employer/union consultative forum—will oversee the implementation of the new employment security provisions and the training agenda. The forum can provide advice to Government on any matter, including recommendations to ensure employment security for public sector workers.

The new public sector wages offer contrasts starkly with the extravagant remuneration increases awarded to some senior executives of Australian companies. According to a recent review conducted by the Australian Financial Review, salaries alone for chief executives of the top 100 Australian companies are now worth, on average, \$1.45m per annum, with the total salary packages for the private sector rising by an average of 22% in 1999. While these executive salary packages skyrocketed by 22% from the previous year, many Australian workers are struggling to subsist on bare minimum wages, with wage rates rising by only 1.8% in the last quarter.

The member for Clayfield's recent attack on the fair remuneration package offered to Queensland public sector workers comes at a time when the gap between rich and poor is continuing to widen—when coalition Governments and employers continue to begrudge workers minimum award safety net adjustments targeted at the low paid. The member for Clayfield's comments demonstrate that he believes one rule should apply for the rich and another for everyone else—including the public sector.

His views are not only wrong, they are out of touch and indicate that he is anti-worker. On the very day that the member for Clayfield made his attack, it was the conservative Prime Minister of Australia, Mr Howard, who highlighted that Australia did indeed have serious pay equity problems—problems the member for Clayfield has never even noticed. The member for Clayfield did not have a problem with some greedy senior executives in Australia getting richer through extraordinary and extravagant salary increases off the backs of the workers—he only had a problem with public sector workers achieving moderate wage outcomes.

The new deal demonstrates that the Beattie Labor Government and its public sector work force can work together in a constructive and positive manner delivering better and improved services for Queenslanders.

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