



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 29 April 1999

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Labour Day

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.37 a.m.), by leave: On Monday I will have the honour of marching in the annual Labour Day parade in Brisbane. I have marched in many Labour Day parades, but this will be the first time that I take part as Labor Premier. That will give me a great deal of satisfaction, because the Labor Party, as we know, was born out of the labour movement and we proudly maintain our links with that labour movement. So on Monday I will join thousands of others in celebrating what is essentially the workers' day. This is the day that honours those who fought for a fair deal for workers. This is the day that recognises the gains made in workers' rights and conditions.

This is the day for workers and their families to reflect on the history of the labour movement. It began with the struggle for the eight-hour working day, which most Queenslanders won in 1916 under the T. J. Ryan Labor Government. The movement continues today with the emphasis on creating and securing jobs in a world of rapidly changing technology.

My Labor Government has made job creation its obsession and we are seeing the early successes of that. We have set ourselves a target of achieving an unemployment rate of 5% in five years and I am delighted to see the reduction in unemployment from 8.9% to 7.8% in just 10 months. Today marks 10 months that we have been in Government. The 5% unemployment target is ambitious but worth aiming for. Already we have created more than 30,000 jobs since being in office. We have also focused on apprenticeships and traineeships, all aimed at building up the skills base and giving Queenslanders the opportunity for fairly paid and satisfying work.

As well, this Labor Government has enhanced long service leave benefits for the building and construction industry, amended the Workplace Relations Act and reviewed industrial relations laws. A new Bill will be introduced this year. We are working to wind back the excesses of National Competition Policy to provide job security. That is just the start. I invite honourable members to join me in celebrating Labour Day on Monday. As honourable members would know, the Labor Party was born in Barcaldine. We maintain our connection with the bush in many ways, including our commitment to the Queensland heritage—

**Mr Johnson** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I know that the honourable member for Gregory will endorse what I am about to say, because this is very bipartisan and very good for the bush.

As I was saying, we maintain our connection with the bush in many ways, including our commitment to the Queensland Heritage Trail network. The Queensland Heritage Trail network is one of the most exciting cultural and heritage projects under way anywhere in this State. Under this project, four trails would crisscross the State. These will be: the coast trail from Coolangatta to Cooktown; the mining and dinosaur trail from Cairns across to Normanton and the gulf, down to Charters Towers and west to Mount Isa; the Matilda trail, which will run from Cunnamulla to central and western Queensland and up to Burketown; and the early settlers trail through the Darling Downs and out to Charleville. The trails will showcase the best of—

**Mr Horan:** You are like a brooding hen sitting on old eggs.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I am absolutely delighted with the enthusiasm in the House, endorsing what the Government is doing. I thank all members of the House for their enthusiasm for what we are doing. I commend them.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I heard that they were joining the Premier in the march.

**Mr BEATTIE:** They are, and I look forward to them marching with me on Monday.

The trails will showcase the best of Queensland's culture and heritage. They will link sites of natural beauty, indigenous cultural sites, mining works, small museums, dinosaur sites and art galleries. The network is designed to be a lasting commemoration of the Centenary of Federation. The Queensland Government has committed \$39m, and the Commonwealth \$50m, to the project over the next four years. The Queensland Government has provided a list of 27 capital works projects throughout the State which the Commonwealth could fund. That includes the upgrade of the Qantas facilities and exhibition at Longreach, which we announced the other day—\$5m. Eight of these 27 projects were announced by the Commonwealth in the lead-up to the last Federal election.

Unfortunately, there is a problem. The problem is that the Commonwealth Government has not yet finalised agreement on the individual projects that will make up the network. We are keen to finalise the agreement so that we can announce the projects and they can get under way. We want to get on with it. If we do not get agreement soon, the projects will not be completed in time for the Centenary of Federation. I am sure that members on both sides of the House would agree that that would be a great shame.

The Queensland Government wants to see these projects under way, because we are committed to this network. We are committed to seeing new building work, new infrastructure and new jobs throughout Queensland, particularly in the bush. These sorts of projects can help stimulate local economies and help mitigate the effects of the population drift from the bush to the city. These projects are just the sort of boost that the bush needs, and I believe that they have the endorsement of both sides of the House and the enthusiastic support of the member for Mount Isa.

Who is holding up this process? The answer is: the Commonwealth. Why? Because it does not care, in my view, enough about the bush. My Government cares about the bush. That is why we are doing what we can to get the Queensland Heritage Trail network moving.

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