



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 10 June 1999

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Government Achievements

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.47 a.m.), by leave: This Sunday it will be 12 months since the last State election. Queensland is better off today than it was a year ago because of the positive policies of this Government, one of which I have just announced. Official figures show that by last month 39,900 new jobs had been created in Queensland. Eighty-five per cent of them are full-time jobs.

We set an unemployment target of 5% within five years. Unemployment came down from 8.9% a year ago to 7.8% last month. Under this Government, Queenslanders have the lowest unemployment rate for a decade. We have had the strongest growth in full-time employment, at 2.3%. That is double the national average. Major job announcements include 1,000 new jobs in call centres, 600 new Australian Meat Holdings jobs in Ipswich and Townsville and 150 new jobs at a Dalby engineering firm. The list goes on and on.

Gross State product for this year will increase by around 3.75%. That is higher than the Budget forecast of 3.5%. Access Economics has declared Queensland is the fastest growing State and it says that our target of 5% unemployment is achievable. Access Economics forecasts that our average growth in the next four years will exceed 4%. That is a whole percentage point better than the forecast for any other State in Australia. The QCCI Pulse survey recorded the strongest March quarter business confidence for five years. That is a significant achievement.

We are giving young Queenslanders the skills they need to earn a living for the rest of their lives. The number of new apprentice approvals has increased by nearly 50% since we formed Government—up from 7,808 to 11,523 for the year to 31 May, compared with the same period under the previous Government. There is a \$5.4m package which is boosting building and construction jobs, with up to 3,000 apprenticeships being created from a special fund created in the industry.

My Government's \$283m Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative has secured jobs or training for 11,000 unemployed Queenslanders since it was introduced in October last year. We have a long-term vision that includes an ambitious 10-year strategy to make Queensland a leading hub for bioindustry development in the Asia-Pacific region. \$270m has been earmarked for biotechnology research facilities in the State to create thousands of new-age, long-term jobs.

I have led, along with my Ministers, highly successful trade trips to Asia, Europe and the United States and I recently went with the Deputy Premier to the Middle East. Cadets have been placed in our overseas trade offices to give young businesspeople first-hand experience of exporting practices. I have set a target of capturing coal contracts worth \$300m with Germany within six years to take advantage of the removal of huge subsidies in that country's mining industry.

The State Government, the Brisbane City Council, the port of Brisbane and Brisbane Airport aim to turn Brisbane into a global trading capital with hundreds of new jobs through the creation of Australia TradeCoast at the mouth of the Brisbane River. We signed a memorandum of understanding with PNG and the Commonwealth—both Governments—to facilitate the development of a gas pipeline down the Queensland coast, with final contracts now being negotiated. Decisive action was taken to ensure the Century Zinc project is completed on schedule.

We removed impediments and got the \$200m Brisbane Airport rail link up and running. Investment has begun in tilt trains to Cairns, the inner-northern busway and the Brisbane Light Rail Project. In addition, we restored good government. We immediately restored stability and leadership, promising to govern as if we had a majority of 10, instead of complaining about being initially a minority Government. There was no freeze on capital works and no freeze on decision making.

We have returned government to the people by holding 13 Community Cabinet meetings to date, where people can walk into a meeting without prior notice to chat to a Minister on a Sunday afternoon. And here is the track record of success. There have been more than 1,300 formal delegations from regional Queensland to Ministers as well as a considerable number of informal delegations.

We are delivering on our election commitment to review FOI through the all-party parliamentary Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee. Legislation to ensure that new standards for ethical and honest government are set in Queensland has been introduced in Parliament. And super-tough honesty and accountability guidelines for travel and accommodation are the toughest in Australia.

We acted immediately to introduce the Native Title Bill to give certainty on leases issued between 1994 and 1996. And within five months, we had developed a comprehensive and fair solution to the native title impasse. We became the first Queensland Government to establish a properly constituted inquiry into the abuse of children in Queensland institutions. The Government has given a commitment to give detailed and serious consideration to all 42 of the Forde inquiry's recommendations.

An additional \$30m has been provided this year for the provision of services to people with disabilities as part of a \$100m package over three years. That is the most ever allocated to disability services, in real terms, in the history of this State. An extra 1,000 teachers have been employed this year. Another 600 people have been offered State Government traineeships. Together with the Minister, I will personally oversee a wide-ranging consultation process designed to identify the kind of public education system needed early in the next century to give all Queensland children the chance to reach their full potential. A discussion paper called 2010: The Next Decade invites all Queenslanders to have a say in the direction of education into the next millennium.

The Government is working with the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action on a process that will lead to compensation for an estimated 3,500 people who were unlawfully underpaid when working for the State Government between 1975 and 1986. We are going to right this wrong. We are going to right what was an unconscionable act in the past. The Government has issued a formal apology for past Government policies which resulted in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being stolen from their parents.

The privatisation of Q-Fleet, the Government's vehicle fleet manager, was scrapped, saving the jobs of more than 100 Q-Fleet employees. Agreements have been signed with 11 group training schemes under the Housing Industry Trade Training Scheme, paving the way for the training of an extra 600 building industry apprentices over the next four years.

Free ambulance services are being delivered to up to 850,000 Queensland seniors, pensioners and their dependants as our way of saying thank you to seniors who have been contributors to society for many years and of helping those most in need. We rescued the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority with a package which will inject \$25m a year into urban and rural fire services. It will also enhance protection of communities and firefighters across the State. They will be better equipped, better trained and better resourced to do their job—protecting people and property.

Corrections administration has been restructured to improve Government control of our prisons. The first major assault on drugs in prisons was launched. A high-powered Crime Prevention Task Force, including top executives from 10 Government departments, will use the full resources of the State Government to be tough on the causes of crime. We instituted a \$47m crime prevention program, and Queensland's stalking legislation was reformed. We have made significant contributions to the arts to enrich this community to make certain that it is a community with a culture of which we can all be proud. Funding to victims of crime groups was boosted by \$1m. Queensland's first female judge to be President of the Court of Appeal was appointed.

We acted quickly to win the Goodwill Games for Brisbane in 2001 and poached the Sandown 500 from under Jeff Kennett's nose. The \$8m Where Else But Queensland campaign was launched in Sydney and Melbourne to resurrect Queensland's tourism industry. Only this week, the Minister outlined to the House how successful that advertising campaign has been. A Gold Coast convention and exhibition centre will soon be under way with Government funding assistance. The successful tenderer will be announced by the Deputy Premier in the coming weeks.

The Queensland Biennial Music Festival has been resurrected and been given a Statewide focus. We have introduced a 2% public art policy in the construction of Government buildings. And I

have announced the \$115,000 Queensland Premier's Literary Awards to lift the profile of writing in Queensland and add further encouragement to Australian writers, especially Queenslanders.

The Environmental Protection Agency has been established to deliver a new approach to managing environmental impacts. And we have transformed the environmental regulation of the mining industry to the acclaim of all stakeholders. It was unprecedented to have the Mining Council and environmentalists sit down and applaud what the Government has done. It was unprecedented in the history of this State.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has been revitalised, and we have reignited the CYPLUS process by launching the Cape York 2010 Action Plan. Rural production and job creation have been stimulated by establishing a rural water use efficiency initiative. We have preserved the dairy industry by maintaining the farm gate price and market entitlements. We have initiated a strategy to attack the falling c.c.s levels in sugarcane. And we have rescued the meat processing industry with a \$20m industry development package which has already stimulated investment to create 600 new jobs. A fair and balanced solution to the issue of fisheries bycatch was negotiated.

We have developed a comprehensive new whole-of-Government drug strategy which builds on and includes—

- an effective Queensland School Drug Education Strategic Plan;

- a buprenorphine and naltrexone trial to help addicts stop using heroin;

- a \$1.3m boost to the State's methadone program; and

- a Statewide training program for general practitioners to enable them to deliver methadone services.

The first of 100 school nurses to provide better treatment, support and advice to Queensland children have been hired. In the first nine months of the financial year, an extra 4,600 operations were carried out in Queensland's public hospitals. We invested \$600m in one year in the construction of new public hospitals around Queensland. We now have a fairer workers compensation system, with lower premiums and greater solvency. The unfairness and harshness of the coalition's industrial relations regime has been removed and replaced with a balanced system with a real umpire.

TAFE Queensland has been re-established as the primary training provider with a \$30m package. Overdue recognition for the IT industry has been provided through the establishment of the first Department of Communications and Information. Within three months of taking office, we delivered a surplus Budget, incorporating all spending initiatives promised during the election campaign. We won from the Howard Government a \$350m concession as part of the new Federal-State financial arrangements. A nationwide review of the National Competition Policy has been initiated with a stronger emphasis on testing the public benefit of proposed competition reforms.

The electricity industry has been restructured to improve the reliability of power supply and efficiency in distribution whilst protecting job security, delivering cheaper prices and maintaining it in public ownership. We strengthened the mining safety regime and re-established the solar hot water rebate scheme, which had been scrapped by the coalition. We promised that we would become a Government for all Queensland—and all regions have benefited.

I do not have time this morning to list all the other achievements, but I will mention a few others. I do not want anyone to think that this is an exhaustive list. The tilt train project between Rockhampton and Cairns will generate 300 jobs, providing a major economic boost for Maryborough, where the trains will be built at Walkers Limited. We have announced the building of a new prison at Maryborough, together with a major extension of the prison at Rockhampton and the Smart City project at Rockhampton.

In Cairns, Abigroup Contractors has won the contract to construct the \$28.5m extension to the Cairns Convention Centre, creating the equivalent of 400 jobs. We have the Cairns Esplanade facelift and revitalisation of the Cairns central business district. The rebuilding of the Strand at Townsville is happening. The CBD revitalisation at Townsville is happening. The Centenary of Federation budget is providing \$65m for projects throughout rural and regional Queensland. \$39m has been allocated to the Cultural Heritage Trails network, and \$26m to the celebratory and activities program. A further \$12m has been allocated for the airconditioning of Housing Commission homes.

The list goes on. The massive South Bank redevelopment with its pedestrian footbridge is happening under this Government. We had the opening of the Boral gas power plant at Roma which was built in a record 17 weeks—a world record! We have appointed consultants for the Roma Street garden development. The list goes on. This is a can-do Government that is delivering for Queensland.

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