



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 18 August 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Marlborough Nickel Project

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.35 a.m.), by leave: My Government continues to deliver jobs to Queenslanders by attracting major investments to this State. This can-do Government is delivering. Last week Intergen announced that its Millmerran power station project has secured the necessary financial approvals, and construction is to begin immediately. What that means is financial close; that is the green light. This project, which will have 1,300 jobs in construction and 250 permanent jobs will mean an investment of \$1.4 billion in this State.

This week I am pleased to advise the House that an \$800m nickel mine and processing facility at Marlborough, north-west of Rockhampton, should begin construction in March next year. This was the project that the Leader of the Opposition sought to undermine some time ago. With the help of my Government, the Marlborough nickel project has successfully negotiated a native title agreement and is now proceeding to lock in final approvals, creating 1,000 construction jobs and 300 jobs when in operation. This project is a shot in the arm for Rockhampton and central Queensland.

Mr Schwarten: Best news we've had in a decade.

Mr BEATTIE: Indeed. I thank the local member, and the Minister, for that interjection. This is—and I say it again—1,000 construction jobs and 300 jobs in operation. That is delivering on jobs, jobs, jobs and, in this case, for central Queensland. It will inject more than \$240m each year into the State economy with massive flow-ons to Queensland Rail, which will transport the nickel and cobalt ores north and south. The port of Gladstone will also benefit—and I am sure the honourable member will be interested in this—by being the port of export, and the Yabulu nickel refinery will have a major new domestic source of nickel ore at its disposal.

In late June the Leader of the Opposition demonstrated his ignorance of native title by claiming that negotiations on the project had stalled. The Courier-Mail backed him by suggesting the project could be delayed for years. They were both wrong. Seven weeks later the matter is resolved to the satisfaction of all parties. What was in reality a technical step in the right to negotiate process was dressed up by the National/Liberal coalition as a failure of process just so that it could beat the tired old backyard drum of fear and ignorance which we saw during the days when Mr Borbidge was in this position.

I do think it is important that there be an informed debate about the process of native title so that people in the community understand how it will, in fact, work. There is an obligation on politicians and the media to ensure that that debate takes place. The Government is endeavouring to inform the community. We need the support of the media to ensure that that information is disseminated.

While the coalition plays its childish political games, my Government is keeping its eye on the ball, delivering investment and jobs for Queensland. I congratulate all the parties involved: Preston Resources; the Barada, Barna, Kabalbarra, Yetimarla and the Darumbal communities; and the Native Title Services Unit in my department. This major breakthrough adds to the mounting evidence that the path through the native title maze is consultation not confrontation, a view that we have been taking and, to their credit, so are the editorial writers of the Courier-Mail. That is the way ahead and we intend to continue to pursue it.

There is also further evidence that this is a can-do Government which delivers on its commitments to create workable approval processes and attract investment and jobs to this State. This Parliament has now approved three pieces of legislation which will be the State's native title regime. In addition to that, there has been a fourth piece of legislation which has brought a series of amendments from the Commonwealth. It is now up to the Commonwealth to approve all those pieces of legislation so we can get this native title regime operating.
