



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 25 August 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Court Funding; Employment

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.38 a.m.), by leave: The front page of today's Courier-Mail confirms that my Government is getting on with the job of the Budget and getting on with the job of improving the circumstances of all Queenslanders. It is particularly important that in the Budget we focus not just on the macro-economic side of the equation, such as Budget surpluses and economic growth. That is why I can confirm that in next month's Budget we will be allocating more than \$700,000 to boost court funding and education for magistrates to help eliminate the traumas that child witnesses often face in court cases. A court appearance should not leave children traumatised and the Attorney-General will be detailing a range of initiatives in relation to this issue later this morning.

No matter what the issue, my Government is a Government for all Queenslanders, and that applies when it comes to job creation. When we say "jobs", we do not mean just any jobs, we mean jobs in workplaces that are safe and equitable, where workers have choices and employees have access to superannuation, sick and holiday pay, workers compensation and maternity and long service leave.

It is vitally important that no worker in Queensland is unfairly disadvantaged. This is especially true when it comes to women in the work force. For instance, a social and economic profile of women in Queensland, 1999, produced by the Office of Women's Policy reported that women's average earnings are lower than men's across all occupational groupings, at both managerial and non-managerial levels. Women also continue to be employed on a part-time and casual basis at a much greater rate than men.

We must not forget that the Federal coalition's draconian industrial relations laws—laws that the Opposition tried to mirror in this State—are skewed to make things worse for women. This is why a key initiative of the Budget that my Government will deliver next month focuses on ensuring that women get a fair share of the jobs growth—the opportunities—generated by this Government. This initiative of next month's Budget will provide funding to help eradicate gender inequity in the workplace.

Our commitment to jobs for women will be strengthened by \$240,000 of funding for the Premier's Council for Women to run a women and employment project. This is a very important initiative. This Government is about jobs, but most importantly it is about quality jobs—jobs that enrich the lives of both employers and employees. The 12-member council has identified two priority areas affecting Queensland women. These are economic development for women of all backgrounds throughout the State, and education and training. A research project will flesh out the needs of Queensland women in these areas and will assist an all-of-Government response to these issues.

The council will inform women and the Government on such issues as the pros and cons of casual work, working in non-traditional areas, balancing work and family commitments, workplace harassment, education and training. These are the issues affecting the cannery worker at Northgate, the George Street lawyer and the Mount Isa mineworker.

The Premier's council will look at ways of helping women get a foothold in new and emerging industries—such as information technology—and progress up their career ladders. But it will also address the fundamental concerns of women who do not have the luxury of a career path. This

Government will not forget the women who have worked the same job for more than a decade but are still employed on a casual basis: women who have little job security. We will not take the coalition's John Howard/Santo Santoro approach of a white picket fence, no opportunity and no equity when it comes to women's employment issues. These women will be brought under the umbrella of Women and Employment—a jobs strategy for all Queensland women. This initiative will help deliver equity in the workplace for Queensland women.
