



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 15 September 1999

BURNETT REGION

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (6.16 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"That all words after 'That this House' should be deleted and be replaced by 'notes the efforts of the Beattie Labor Government to support the Burnett Region.' "

I draw the attention of the House to two simple figures: \$299.9m and \$321.6m. \$299.9m is what the Borbidge Government thought the Wide Bay-Burnett region was worth in terms of capital spending in its May Budget last year—its last Budget. \$321.6m is what my Labor Government thought it was worth when we put our Budget together less than four months later. That says it all!

No wonder the National Party lost support in favour of One Nation in this area! Let us be clear what this debate is all about. It is about trying to save National Party votes from the One Nation Party. No wonder the National Party lost the seat of Barambah to One Nation! The National Party lost because it betrayed these people and it took them for granted.

Look how quickly my Government reacted to the needs of this area. We had very little time in which to put our Budget together. The Government, which the National Party is now seeking to attack for its actions in this area, actually added \$21.7m to the capital works spending in this area within a handful of months of coming to office.

As acting Treasurer, I recently signed an agreement with Suncorp-Metway which clears the way for the bank to pump an extra \$400,000 into the South Burnett Meatworks Cooperative Association at Murgon. This means that the Government is guaranteeing the loan. This is further proof that the Government will do everything it can to support any viable proposition which will help the meatworks to survive. I want that meatworks to survive—not just for the jobs, but for the whole community.

Because of the support of the Government and other organisations, creditors voted against winding up the company. Our \$400,000 agreement was a key to that. Instead, the creditors supported further investment in care and maintenance of the asset. The Department of State Development has offered funding assistance towards the development of a business plan for any viable proposals that may be put forward. The \$400,000 from Suncorp-Metway will help the care and maintenance of the assets, improving the chances of a successful transition to a new operator.

We have done much more to help the Murgon meatworks than the Borbidge Government, which sat on its hands and refused to help the cooperative. The audacity of the Leader of the Opposition is extraordinary. Talk about Borbidge being slippery with the truth! Representatives of the Murgon meatworks came to the Borbidge Government and asked for \$7.5m in assistance. What did they receive? Not one cent! When it would have been viable to assist them before they ran into this trouble, did the coalition help? The answer is no! What did Mr Borbidge do? The answer is nothing! When the Leader of the Opposition talks about "gone, gone, gone", the only one who will be gone from this region and this Parliament, in terms of leadership, will be Mr Borbidge.

On 27 August, Deputy Premier Jim Elder promised that the Government was ready to support any viable proposal, and we are now living up to that promise. For two and a half years, between February 1996 and June 1998, the meatworks received absolutely nothing from the Borbidge Government—not one iota of support. This Government has supported the meatworks.

Let us talk about prisons. Maryborough, which is part of the Wide Bay-Burnett region, got the prison. So, let the people of Maryborough know that the Leader of the Opposition does not support the building of the prison in Maryborough. Let the people of Maryborough know that Mr Borbidge and the National Party do not support the building of a prison in that city. The Leader of the Opposition can rest assured that we will be campaigning on that issue during the next State election.

We have supported the Nanango Hospital. We have a community consultation group investigating the needs of the community and how those needs can be best met, and they will be met. We are consulting with the community. Obviously, we are doing the right thing by Nanango.

I refer to the RFA. The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Borbidge, had two and a half years to deliver. He did not deliver it at all. Again, it is being dishonest, it is Borbidge being slippery with the truth, when he says that there was some deal in place. It is untrue. We will deliver an RFA. My Government has been involved in ongoing negotiations to finalise an RFA, and that finalisation is very, very close indeed. It is a Solomon-type solution that protects jobs and protects these communities but at the same time protects the forest. We have a solution that should be followed by the other States. By bringing the parties together and negotiating a fair outcome, we have a real solution.

The Minister for Mines and Energy explained the situation with Tarong. We have met with them. We are working on it now and we are looking at their application. Let me tell members that prior to the last election there were no preference deals done with the Greens. We do not do deals. We are a party of integrity—something that Mr Borbidge would not understand.

In conclusion, let me say that we are a Government for all Queenslanders. We will look after the people of the South Burnett. They have an unacceptably high level of unemployment and we will solve that problem over time.
