



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 29 October 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cairns Convention Centre Extension

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.34 a.m.), by leave: I wish to advise the House that tomorrow evening the Minister for Public Works, Robert Swarten, and I will officially open the Cairns Convention Centre's new hall prior to the National Basketball League match between the Cairns Taipans and the Townsville Crocodiles.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: That is right; the local derby.

The State Government's \$28.5m extension is a sound investment in the future of far-north Queensland. The extension will allow the far north to attract major sporting and entertainment events as well as chase a bigger slice of the conventions market. Construction has enabled Cairns to field a team in the NBL—the first national sporting team to be based in the city. The new extension is an extremely flexible venue, capable of a number of configurations—up to 1,800 square metres of exhibition space or 5,500 seats for basketball matches, 5,000 seats for concerts or up to 6,000 seats for performances in the round. More major events and conventions in Cairns means more jobs in the tourism industry and all of the other industries that supply it. This is about jobs, jobs, jobs. That is why the money spent on the extension is a sensible investment by the State Government in the future of the region.

The construction project is estimated to have generated a total of more than 300 jobs, including 130 tradespeople and six apprentices on site. We were determined that far-north Queensland would have the best facility possible. That is why we looked at what was needed and earmarked about \$7m more for the project than the previous Government had allowed—such is our commitment to Cairns and the far north. The members for Cairns, Barron River, Mulgrave and Cook strongly supported the project. I pay tribute also to the former Treasurer and member for Cairns, who backed the original convention centre project as well as plans for the second stage. I thank the Cairns City Council for its contribution.

The construction was awarded to Abigroup Contractors in October last year. The project had to be ready by September this year in time for the first local NBL match of the season. The consultants, all of whom worked on Stage 1 of the centre, completed the design and documentation in eight weeks. That is roughly one third of the time that would normally be needed for such a project. Abigroup's total construction time of 48 weeks was a highly creditable performance given the seven weeks of delay caused by Cyclone Rona, the protracted wet season and windy conditions.

Another highlight of the weekend will be the two-day Community Cabinet meeting in Cooktown, which is part of our policy of opening up Government decision making to the public. People from far-north Queensland will be able to come along and raise issues with the Ministers and directors-general. I will also be visiting Wujal Wujal for an important function there. And along with the Minister for Education I will also be opening the new Cooktown State School campus. This proves once again that we are a Government for all Queenslanders, regardless of where they live.
