



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 29 October 1999

## SOUTH BANK CORPORATION AMENDMENT BILL

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (11.23 a.m.), in reply: I thank members for their contributions to this debate. Firstly, I will deal with the Leader of the Opposition. I thank him for his support. I welcome the support of the Leader of the Opposition for the amendments to the South Bank Act. I have kept responsibility for South Bank in my portfolio, as did the former Premier. He and I are more intimately aware of the details of this, I suspect, than are most members of this House.

I want to go through the points that the Leader of the Opposition raised, because they are important. I note the comments regarding the impact on traders of the master plan construction. The South Bank Corporation has undertaken considerable efforts to address the concern of traders, as the Leader of the Opposition acknowledged. The corporation has compensated many of the traders for the impact of the construction works. It is now conducting an independent review by Arthur Andersen to ensure that traders have been treated fairly. I am aware of some of their concerns. Some of them have written to me, and I have obviously passed those concerns on to South Bank.

The impact of light rail has been factored into the redevelopment and realignment of Grey Street. In fact, it is expected that the light rail will add to the vitality of the area and bring new business for traders. So hopefully, that will actually work as a plus. The pedestrian bridge will include acoustic and visual screens to ensure that the apartments are shielded from the bridge. This has met residents' requirements. There has been, and will continue to be, ongoing consultation with the residents to identify and address any concerns. We have gone to a great deal of trouble to address those concerns.

I would like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of students from St Peter's school. On behalf of all members, I acknowledge their presence in the gallery.

Coming back to the issues raised by the Leader of the Opposition—I think I have covered the plight of traders and residents' objections. We have worked very hard on overcoming those objections. I think there is a degree of goodwill, and I think that some of the things that are being done in relation to the bridge will overcome their concerns. They are the things that I mentioned before. In fact, we have moved the location of the bridge as a direct result of consultations with the residents, particularly the ones in the units to which the Leader of the Opposition referred. I think they accept that we have bent over backwards to assist them.

In terms of the Mirvac Group and the lease—this is based on the Thiess model. As the Leader of the Opposition knows, when he held this position he introduced that legislation, and I supported him on that occasion; because once Thiess had come to an understanding with the Government, Martin Albrecht then briefed the Opposition. We indicated our full support then, and we are, in fact, reciprocating. We supported Thiess when members opposite were in Government, and they are supporting Mirvac now that we are in Government. I have to say that I was delighted to be the one to actually open the Thiess building. That is the way it goes in this business.

**Mr Borbidge** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** You never know your luck in a big city! I did a good job at the opening of Thiess. Thiess is a great Queensland company, and Martin Albrecht is regarded well by members on both sides of the House. In fact, he is hosting a major German/Australian conference here this week. He is a great Queenslander, and Thiess is a great company.

In terms of some of the other issues, including the contributions made by One Nation members, I have to say that I really found them cheap and base. The bottom line with all this is that we are talking

about private sector investment of \$100m. That is what this Mirvac Group is all about. I do not know whether those members have read the Bill—and I am doing this as kindly as possible—but I suspect that they did not. If they had read the Bill, they would realise that this is about establishing a legal arrangement of certainty to enable them to build this building and the various facilities that will go with it.

The consequence of what those members are suggesting—and let us be very clear about this—would be to destroy jobs and to destroy the private sector investing \$100m. I invite them to show me the logic in that. It is all very well to come in here and have a cheap shot and pull a cheap stunt to get a few headlines at home, but let us be really clear about this. I ask them to think of how many jobs will be created out of \$100m of private investment. I find it extraordinary that they would do that. The issue about being a member of Parliament and about leadership is sometimes that we actually have to ask, "What is good for Queensland?" This is good for Queensland. And I will go out and support, as vigorously as I possibly can, private sector investment and development such as this, particularly to the tune of \$100m. I believe it is absolutely appropriate to do that. This Bill will facilitate that.

As to the purpose of this Bill—firstly, it will amend the boundaries of land over which the South Bank Corporation may, with my approval, grant a perpetual lease. The corporation currently has the power to grant such a lease, which is for a period of 999 years, over land within the commercial precinct at South Bank. This amendment will simply extend the boundaries of this land. Let us be really clear about it. That is what this does. And out of that, the community ends up with a significant amount of investment from the private sector, which will drive jobs.

This amendment will enable the corporation to grant a perpetual lease to the Mirvac Group, which recently announced plans to develop two sites of mixed-use retail, commercial and residential complexes fronting the realigned Grey and Little Stanley Streets, sites 9E and 9F. This is a two-stage development, including 182 residential units, specialty shopping and underground car parking. The project is expected to cost over \$90m and will create more jobs for Queenslanders.

Let us be really clear about this. If those opposite vote against this Bill—which they are entitled to do; it is their democratic right—they will vote against between \$90m and \$100m worth of private sector investment in this State. Honourable members will vote against jobs in this State. They will also vote against the development of those units, which will include shopping centres and underground car parking facilities.

Let everyone understand this, because there will be contractors and subcontractors involved in this work. Not all the subcontractors will live in Brisbane. Some subcontractors will live in Caboolture and some will live in Lockyer. These people will have jobs on this site. The honourable member for Lockyer and the honourable member for Caboolture will deny subcontractors—small businesspeople who live in their electorates and who drive to Brisbane—jobs on this site if they vote against this legislation and if it is defeated. That would be an absolute nonsense. This is the major part of the Bill.

I am happy to come to the matter of the pedestrian bridge. The position is that \$13.5m has been allocated towards that project. It is part of a redevelopment of the South Bank site. What does the South Bank site mean? Why is the bridge important? Why is the redevelopment of the South Bank site important?

It is important because it is about time that we developed Brisbane as a tourism magnet to attract people to visit this State. Both sides of politics have supported this since 1988 because both sides of politics—and I would hope that the member for Caboolture and the member for Lockyer would think about this—have realised that Brisbane needs to be more of a tourism magnet to attract people to the State. Visitors will spend some time in Brisbane, and then what will they do? They go to the Sunshine Coast, an area which the member for Caboolture represents. They will holiday in the honourable member's area. The visitors will go to the Gold Coast; they will go to the Whitsundays; they will go to central Queensland and they will go to Toowoomba.

Why do honourable members think that the heritage trail is so important? The member for Lockyer spoke about his region. He is going to have a heritage trail all the way through Lockyer. The trail will start at Ipswich, go through Lockyer and Toowoomba, and extend all the way out to Charleville. What does the honourable member think we will do with regard to tourism? It is only a tiny part of the promotion, but we are going to promote Brisbane. We are going to promote South Bank in order to attract people to the city. As part of the attraction, visitors will be encouraged to go on the heritage trail network. That network was a proposal that was agreed upon by Howard and Borbidge. It is supported by Howard and Beattie because it is a good idea. I give the member for Surfers Paradise credit for a good idea. Why is it a good idea? It is a good idea because it gets people into the major cities of the State and it then gets them out into the bush. It puts money into the bush. Lockyer will be a beneficiary of all this.

We have to find things that will attract people to this State. Yes, we have the Great Barrier Reef. Yes, we have the Gold Coast. Yes, we have the Sunshine Coast. Yes, we have our rainforests. But we need something in the capital city. Think about cities overseas! Sydney has the harbour. Too often

people think about the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Opera House as a means of attracting people to this country. We have to turn Brisbane into a magnet—along with other parts of the State. Brisbane should not be the only magnet but we have to use it as a magnet more than it has ever been used before. That is why the South Bank precinct, the pedestrian bridge and the Roma Street development are so important. That is why the Brisbane light rail project and the central business district of Brisbane are so important.

These things will bring people to Brisbane. They will also visit the electorate of the member for Hervey Bay and go whale watching. We have to find a reason to bring people here. We have to look at what this means to every single member in this House. That is why it is important, and that is why both sides of Parliament have supported it. The member for Lockyer's constituents will be working on the site as subcontractors. Tourism operators will benefit in the long term as a result of this proposal because South Bank is not just about Brisbane; South Bank is only a tiny cog in an integrated trails network that is going to put tourists in every part of this State.

When we have these discussions it is important to see where it all fits into the broad strategy. It is a broad strategy which benefits every person in this State. I am absolutely determined that my Government will deliver on the heritage trail proposal. I have given the member for Surfers Paradise and the Prime Minister credit for this very good idea. This is all part of a network. We lose because Brisbane is not as big a magnet as it should be.

People will often fly into Cairns—which is tremendous—but they go straight to Sydney. Sometimes they will come to the Gold Coast and go nowhere else. This is about getting people from, particularly, Europe and the United States to come to Queensland and stay here longer. If they come into Brisbane and spend two days here and then go on to the Gold Coast, that is terrific. If they spend two days in Brisbane and then go on to Cairns, that is terrific. If they go to Cairns and then spend some time in Brisbane, that is terrific.

I say to honourable members that this is not just about the capital of this State. This is a matter of the capital working for everyone in this State. It is a case of the capital working for Queensland. Brisbane has not worked as well for the State as it should have worked. We are trying to turn that around and make sure that the beneficiaries are Statewide.

I know that the member for Caboolture and the member for Lockyer have said that they will vote against the legislation. They are quite entitled to do that. I hope they think about this because this legislation is good for Queensland.

The member for Caboolture and the member for Lockyer mentioned jobs. This project will produce jobs—jobs in construction and jobs in tourism. The members spoke about street children. Of course this Government is concerned about street children; that is why we are putting extra funds into programs for street children. The honourable member for Caboolture spoke about hospitals. For heaven's sake, honourable members must understand that there is a fundamental difference between capital expenditure and recurrent expenditure. It cannot be said that we are going to take money which should have been used for staffing a hospital and put it into a bridge. That is what sent Victoria broke years ago at another time when another Government got it wrong.

**Mr Borbidge:** A Labor Government.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Well, let us not dwell on that. We cannot do that. Recurrent expenditure is an amount of money for staff which needs to be expended every year. Capital is one-off expenditure. Capital is an easier concept. Capital can be borrowed. One can do all sorts of things with capital. It is one-off, and it is gone. Recurrent expenditure is committed year-in, year-out. A Government has to fund it, manage it and look after it.

This argument about putting it into hospitals is a nonsense argument because the capital program has been funded. It started in the Goss years, the Borbidge years continued it, and we are continuing it. Both sides of politics have supported it. We might argue about the detail, but it was supported by both sides of politics and it was funded by both sides of politics. When it comes to extra staff, that is a totally separate issue. Recurrent funding is totally different from capital. We should never confuse them.

I conclude by saying this: this is a very important part of Queensland's future. I will go to any part of this State—whether it is in Lockyer or whether it is in Caboolture—and I will argue this case because every one of those constituents will benefit along with the people who live in Brisbane. This is about Queensland. We need a broad vision—a real vision—about our future.

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