



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 23 November 1999

DEPARTMENT OF STATE DEVELOPMENT

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (6.17 p.m.): I move—

"That all words after 'House' be deleted and substitute—

'Congratulates the Beattie Government for delivering record levels of investment to Queensland, through the creation of the Department of State Development which continues to drive growth and job creation for this State.' "

The Opposition's motion defies belief. The performance of those opposite today can only be described as pathetic. They must have been locked in a black box at the bottom of the sea for the past 17 months.

Tomorrow I will be meeting with the national executive of the Australian Industry Group and I will have the honour of telling them just how much has been achieved by my Government, which is now almost halfway through its first term. Industry knows that after some years of political uncertainty and policy stagnation in Queensland under the coalition, my Government has delivered a clear direction of reform, economic growth and job creation. All Queenslanders, no matter what their political persuasion, are relieved that the days of optimism are back and the indecision of the previous coalition Government has been removed.

We have tackled the hard issues. With clearer policy frameworks aimed at delivering fairer business processes and lower costs, business can get on with business, which is what they want to do. We achieved a fairer balance in industrial relations—consulting with both employers and the union movement. One of the most important results of that process was Australia's first statutory three-month probation period for new employees. This was unprecedented, and will now be followed in the rest of Australia.

WorkCover is back in the black, to the extent that the WorkCover board removed the 10% premium surcharge in April. Now, 87% of Queensland employers are paying lower WorkCover premiums. My Government has extended lower electricity prices to industry, with medium sized businesses now enjoying the price cuts that an increasingly competitive market can deliver. We have dealt with the anachronism of six regional power distribution boards outside Brisbane, and folded them into the new Ergon corporation.

We have now delivered two surplus Budgets, meeting all our election commitments as promised. We have delivered cuts in land tax and reduced the rate of payroll tax, while making the base more consistent with that used in other States. Queensland's AAA credit rating has been reconfirmed by Fitch IBCA, Standard & Poor's and Moody's. My Government delivered a record \$5.2 billion capital works program in this Budget, after exceeding our capital works target for 1998-99. This is a massive investment in strategic infrastructure that will underpin future growth.

The Government has implemented a \$1 billion road program, including a new road connecting Fisherman Islands to the Gateway Bridge and the completion of the Pacific Motorway. The Deputy Prime Minister and I announced the new road project on the weekend.

Another \$600m has been allocated to bring our public hospitals back to modern standards of hygiene and efficiency. We are investing \$1 billion in new energy infrastructure, including the interconnection to the national grid. That project should be finalised in March next year and fully

operational later in 2000, which is a year ahead of schedule. As part of my program to make Queensland the Smart State, we are investing \$270m over 10 years in important research infrastructure to consolidate our competitive advantage in biotechnology research and development.

We are delivering the conditions for business to invest and prosper, and business is responding. Thanks to the efforts of the Minister for State Development, his coordinator-general and his department, Queensland has secured massive new investment that is creating thousands of jobs. There is the \$1.4 billion Millmerran Power Station. Three new call centres will result in 1,000 new jobs for the Gold Coast and Brisbane. We have turned around the massive meat processing industry, winning new investments by Australian Meat Holdings in Ipswich and Townsville and Australian Country Choice, saving 700 jobs at Cannon Hill.

Austar has chosen Queensland for the location of its expansion into Internet support, which will mean 1,000 jobs for the Gold Coast. Today the Deputy Premier and I met with a major German corporation that is thinking of relocating to Queensland. We simply say: stay tuned. The Government has worked closely with Boeing to secure a \$1.5 billion defence contract that will yield substantial flows to Queensland companies.

The result of this range of concerted activity by my Government has been strong growth and business confidence. The gross State product for 1998-99 was 4.75%, which is well above the Budget forecast of 3.5%. This was the strongest growth of all States in 1998-99 according to ABS estimates of State final demand. We even beat New South Wales, despite the peak in Olympic building activity. Queensland is leading the nation in investment growth with a remarkable 11% increase year on year—

Time expired.
