



Speech by

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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PREMIER

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 a.m.): The "can't do" tag is obviously getting to the Premier. This was very obvious last week, as we saw him retreat time and time again into his office to write down on bits of paper that he tabled in this place, "This is a can do Government. I am a can do Premier."

He even tried to give us a list of his achievements, and he started out detailing his achievements by referring to the fact that the Queensland economy has generated some 35,000 jobs in the first seven months of the year, which he said was in excess of the 30,000 forecast in the Budget. Of course, he is right, because what he did in his September Budget was drop the expectation from the 40,000 new jobs that we had projected in the Budget that we handed down in this place in May. So if he dropped the target, of course he stands a reasonable chance, even if he is a can't do Premier, of beating that particular target.

Even that number—our more positive number in relation to the performance of the private sector in its ability to deliver new jobs—was heavily down on 1997-98's 60,000-plus new jobs because Treasury was estimating at that time a far greater impact from the Asian crisis. That impact up until now has been relatively modest. So twisting the numbers does not really serve the can't do Premier's cause. If he sets a target that is down a quarter—a cut of 25%—on the target of his predecessors, then he is giving himself some leeway, plenty of room for failure. He drops the target, he then exceeds it, then he runs around Queensland saying, "Aren't we great? Aren't we achieving enormous things?"

But the real fact is that under this Premier and this Government failure is the name of the game. The real measure in the jobs issue is how Queensland is performing relative to the other States because our strength has been in leading the nation in jobs growth. During the life of the coalition Government, Queensland was generating about 40% of all new jobs created around Australia. A State with just shy of 20% of the population was delivering almost half the jobs. In the first six months of the Government of the member for Brisbane Central we manage just 22% of the new jobs in the country—almost a population base number. That means that the rate of Queensland's job growth has stalled under this can't do Premier. Our performance relative to the rest of the country has slipped, and slipped dramatically.

While the can't do Premier acts, others are performing. That is really the core issue in relation to this Government's performance on jobs—not that the Premier can exceed a deflated target, but that Queensland is no longer out in front. The can do State is back in the pack under its can't do Premier.

Mr HAMILL: I rise to a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition is deliberately misleading the House. The job data that you state—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr D'Arcy): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr BORBIDGE: In fact, another claim was that this Government has started the stalled Capital Works Program. In fact, the capital works programs under the coalition were the largest in the history of the State. There was nothing stalled. But according to the latest Midwood report, construction work plummeted—and that was the very word used—in Queensland in the September quarter last year. The only stalling in the Capital Works Program has been the stalling that has occurred under the can't do Government of the member for Brisbane Central. There was just \$77m in health project starts in that quarter, backing up on \$500m in the last quarter of the coalition.

Another of the achievements the Premier claimed last week was winning the Goodwill Games. Of course, the Goodwill Games were won for Queensland by the coalition. All this Government did was achieve an excuse for an early trip for "Bollinger Bob" to go and sign a few documents. There was no doubt—never any doubt—he would be the first to lift off. The fact that Olympic teams were coming to Queensland for pre-Olympics training was another alleged achievement of this Government. Of course, the major teams had been locked up and announced by the coalition, not by this can't do Government which simply gets more blatant by the day in trying to claim the credit for projects that it has had nothing to do with.

A couple more examples of this were the Premier's references to the airport-rail link and to what he cannot bring himself to call Briztram in the hope that people will not see the eerie similarities between what he proposes and the long announced coalition initiative. I would remind honourable members of some of the Premier's own words on that very topic, uttered when he thought he might lose out on \$65m of project specific funding from the Commonwealth that was linked to Briztram. This is what he said on the Caroline Tucker program. He said—

"I mean, the whole purpose is the same. It's in the same city, it's generally in the same location although there are some changes in terms of not having a cross river link near the university, but it's the same thing."

"It's the same thing", he said when he was scared he was going to lose the Federal money. But now, of course, he has got the Federal money and it is a different project. It is a bigger project. It is a better project. It is a Labor project. It is nothing of the type, by the Premier's own admission. Like almost everything else he claimed last week, it is not the can't do Premier's at all.

Another furphy claimed by the Premier last week was that this Government had revamped the electricity industry. The reality is that the Government has dealt with one corner of the industry by removing from rural and regional Queensland any autonomy and any input into distribution issues. A restructure was rejected by the previous Coalition Government on the basis that it would cost jobs. But what was missing in this Government's restructuring? Only the centrepiece: the break-up of the generators! That was the motivation for the entire restructure. The generators had to be broken up, but the couldn't do Premier couldn't do it.

He said the generators had to be broken up to fix the maintenance problem: the maintenance regime that had given Queensland power station availability at the absolute cutting edge of world's best practice—90% plus, more than 10% better than the world average. Of course, someone—finally someone—somewhere in that well-oiled unit opposite worked out that Wayne Goss had signed off on National Competition Policy and they could not break up the generators anyway, except at massive cost. Of course, they should have known that in the first place. One would think that one member of the Government would have remembered what Wayne Goss had done.

Of course, then there is Expo—the symbol of the can't do credentials of this Premier and the can't do credentials of this Government. They wanted it until it was offered to them. Then they had their second chance—the big chance to host the 2002 event. The Premier in 1999 begged off because he said he would not have enough time. He said he could not do it. He said it was all too hard. He said it was all too difficult and he orchestrated this stunt trip to Paris to orchestrate reasons why the can't do Premier couldn't do Expo.

But then there are a host of other examples. Instead of a new power station in Townsville, we are going to have half a power station. In Roma Street we are back to where we were two years ago. In fact, the big announcement from the can't do Premier yesterday: they did not even have any drawings, any plans, any schematics in terms of the press conference, because the can't do Premier thought he should announce something. We had the Millennium Gardens. We had the opportunity for an international garden exposition to showcase Brisbane and Queensland, but it was too hard for this can't do Premier and this can't do Government.

In fact, the only people this Premier can do anything for are the striking union picketers at Gordonstone and his other trade union mates, with the industrial relations legislation that is just around the corner. With regard to everything else, this is a Premier and a Government without substance and without performance—a Government led by someone who does not know the difference between performing and acting, a can't do Premier leading a can't do Government that is taking Queensland back to the middle of the pack instead of leading this great State of ours in terms of job creation and economic development, a Premier who this morning stood up for a member of his Government who had attacked a major corporation that wants the privilege of spending in excess of \$4 billion in this State.

Time expired.
