



Speech by

Hon. R. SCHWARTEN

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Hansard 28 April 1999

PERFORMANCE OF MINISTERS

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton— ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (6.41 p.m.): Since the members opposite are so interested in ministerial offices, I thought that I would bring a plan along to show the detail to which they went when they were in Government. This is a plan of former Minister Hobbs' office, with his signature on it approving the Grecian bathtub approach to ministerial offices with its lovely Grecian columns and so on. I will table that plan. However, there is more. The former Minister was not content with one toilet roll holder; he had to have two. He was not content with not having a hair dryer—and I would like to know why he needed a hair dryer; he would need one as much as I would—but he had to have one installed. He signed off on those plans; his signature is at the bottom.

The point is that \$999,000 was approved and signed off by Minister Ray Connor for a floor in Mineral House. When this Government took control of this State, we gave an instruction to save money. We outfitted a floor in the same building for \$400 per square metre cheaper—\$595. The member who raised this matter previously occupied an office that cost \$545 per square metre. So let us end the hypocrisy right here and now on that particular issue, because the people who really got their snouts into the trough when it came to fitting out were the members opposite. They cut down a couple of rainforests to fit out former Minister Hobbs' office.

I am delighted to debate the motion, because it gives me an opportunity to put on record the sorts of efforts that we have gone to and the sorts of results that we have achieved. It is a shame that Vaughan Johnson is not present in the Chamber. I am sure that he is going to dodge the vote on this motion, because the reality is that—

Mr Borbidge: He's got the flu.

Mr SCHWARTEN: He would not want to vote against this motion, because it refers to me. This Government allocated \$236,000 to fix the Pioneer Village out at Longreach. Those members opposite had old people living in hovels. Labor has not held that seat for 40 years, yet we allocated \$236,000 as part of our community consultation in that area. Vaughan Johnson rang me about a problem regarding a teacher out at Alpha. I shifted a house to there from Blackwater.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Gregory.

Mr SCHWARTEN: My apologies, Mr Speaker, the member for Gregory. They are the sorts of issues that our Government tackled. We airconditioned houses out in western electorates that Labor does not hold. They are the sorts of issues that we are getting on with. We have created 600 building apprenticeships via the HITT scheme. That initiative was never entertained under the previous Government. It would not have had a ghost's chance in hell of succeeding. Yet thanks to the HITT scheme that I have introduced, 600 young Queenslanders now have the chance of becoming construction apprentices.

I refer to the boarding house program and the seniors program. Fancy the members opposite getting up in this place and talking about seniors! What a hide they have! When they were in Government, seniors were vulnerable because of a lack of security in their accommodation. I found \$4m to put security onto those seniors' accommodation— something that the members opposite would never ever have done. When they were in Government, they busied themselves by flogging off all the

best parcels of land in this State, because they said that it was too good for people in housing commission houses to own.

I approved a \$2m expansion of the Home Assist and Home Secure Programs so that it would help vulnerable people Statewide. More than \$750,000 worth of upgrades were made to a number of St Vincent de Paul hostels. There was \$4.5m allocated to youth housing and of the 15 projects, 10 of those were located in regional Queensland—the very people whom the members come in here and posture about and say that they represent. What rot! Then there is the Abbeyfield project in Babinda, which will look after the elderly people of that area. Because of the consultative nature of our Cabinet, when we went to Edmonton, I sat down with the people of that area and we prepared a plan. Those people had been to see a number of previous Ministers—the two jokes who the members opposite had occupying that particular portfolio for a start; and I will not go into too much detail about how one of them had to be dropped—and those previous Ministers gave those people the complete wipe. The very people about whom I am talking have never voted Labor in their lives, but they got a better hearing out of this Government than they ever did out of the former Government. The list goes on and on. There was \$173m allocated for a five-year program in Aboriginal communities to upgrade their accommodation.

I tell members opposite right now: there is just no way that they will ever hound me out of office with their disruption and disreputable behaviour. The fact of the matter is that we have the runs on the board. We have things such as prequalification in the Queensland system—something that the members opposite talked about, barked about and howled about but, at the end of the day, did nothing about. The fact of the matter is that, when it comes to the construction industry, the members opposite have an absolutely appalling record. For example, in terms of apprenticeships, the members opposite tried to get rid of Q-Build.

Time expired.
