



Speech by

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

Hansard 10 March 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Regional Communities Program

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth— ALP) (Minister for Communication and Information and Minister for Local Government, Planning, Regional and Rural Communities) (9.42 a.m.), by leave: Over the past three weeks I have launched the Government's new Regional Communities Program, holding conferences in eight regions throughout the State. The response to this program has been overwhelmingly positive, outstanding and unprecedented.

Members of the Government and Opposition who attended, spending a day listening to the concerns and issues in their regions, would have felt the positive energy that flowed from members of the community on these days. Cynics walked through the door and left five hours later feeling pleasantly surprised, thoughtful and, yes, enthusiastic that this just might work. What was particularly telling was that 95% of the people stayed all day to complete the process.

While some media reported it as a magic formula, I believe it is a program initiated by a Government which is determined to listen to communities and work with them to build better regions. Certainly, they have struck a chord with the community, which is obvious by the huge attendances at each function. I will tell the members of the numbers of people who attended each conference. At Ipswich, 450; Nambour, 920; Beenleigh, 570; Townsville, 530; Mackay, 500; Bundaberg, 480; Rockhampton, 610; and Cairns, 520.

What the Beattie Government is doing is taking Government to the people. No longer do they have to come to George Street to see Government Ministers. With the Community Cabinets and now the regional community forums, which will be held quarterly in each region and attended by two Ministers, the Government is going to the community. I know the other States are watching this program closely to see if and how it will work. I am confident that the new millennium will bring with it a new style of governing, which involves the community in Government decision making.

While no-one has said that this program will solve all the problems of a community, what it will do is ensure Government Ministers are well aware of the issues and concerns facing the various regions, giving them a direct line to get direct answers and I believe that will make a difference.
