



Speech by

DAVID DALGLEISH

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

Hansard 20 June 2000

GST AND RELATED MATTERS BILL

Mr DALGLEISH (Hervey Bay—CCAQ) (5.01 p.m.): Earlier this year I attempted to get the Beattie Labor Government to seek the thoughts of the people of Queensland on the GST through a referendum held in conjunction with the local government election. They would not be in it. Instead, this call to uphold democracy was rejected by the Premier and his mates with misleading excuses as to why they could not do it. Perhaps we should call them the Beattie can't do Government. My suggestion was brushed off because it was unable to be done in such a short time frame. In fact, nominations for candidates had not even closed, so I do not know why it was going to take so long for the ballot paper to be drawn up. The Government could have done something itself before I suggested a referendum on the issue. If the Premier was really against the GST, he would have come up with the idea himself long before I suggested it.

I ask members to listen to the lame excuse given by the Premier's Department spokesman in the Hervey Bay City Independent on 5 February this year. He said—

"To include a question on local government ballots to gauge public opinion of the GST would be costly and a waste of taxpayer funds. A decision on the GST was made by the people at the last election and it is not a State Government responsibility to seek to change that decision."

This comment clearly shows that they knew what the outcome would have been: no GST.

What could be a better example of a costly waste of taxpayers' funds than the GST scam? If Queensland were to receive its fair share of the \$400m being wasted on advertising to try to convince people that the GST is good for them, so many much-needed projects could be carried out. One such project is the highway between Maryborough and Hervey Bay, which was promised to be done in a five-year plan some seven years ago by the then Minister for Main Roads, David Hamill. It is still waiting to be done. How much money did the Premier just spend on the fuel subsidy debacle engaging the public's opinion? What about the money swindled by the fuel companies? It is just like the deregulation of the dairy industry. The Government does not have the money for dairy farmers, but it seems to have the money for pretty bridges—

Mr Black: No pink bridges.

Mr DALGLEISH: Yes, and flash new subdivisions in the city. Fancy a Government spending money on gauging public opinion on an issue! The Premier's spokesman shows his ignorance about democracy when he makes comments that support Howard's supposed mandate. As for the State Government not having any responsibility to change that decision, is it not a State Government's responsibility to represent the interests of the people of that State? A groundswell of opposition to the GST is growing in Queensland and the Premier takes the coward's way out by stating that it is a Federal issue. It was good enough for Mr Beattie to hammer the GST legislation in a desperate bid to cling to Government in the Woodridge and Bundamba by-elections.

I recently asked the Premier a question on notice. I asked him to explain what he was doing about stopping the GST rather than just taking about it. His response was more dribble. He has opposed the GST at every opportunity. He has missed many opportunities. Local council elections are

just one of them. The vote on this Bill is such an opportunity. Will he oppose the GST with his vote on this Bill? No. Will Labor? I refer to my press release dated 6 March, which stated—

"If Mr Beattie had been a man of vision, and if Mr Beattie were genuine in his opposition to the GST, there is no doubt that he could easily have achieved the necessary authorisation from the Parliament. He has the numbers to do so, and has never been bashful in using the numbers—even to protect himself and his discredited 'fatal five' frontbenchers involved in the shredding of evidence.

If Mr Beattie were prepared to seize this opportunity—"

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! "The Premier".

Mr DALGLEISH: The press release states—

"If the Premier were prepared to seize this opportunity to gauge the depth of public opposition to the GST and, if the Premier really cared about Queenslanders and, if the Premier really wanted to stand up for the people of this State, he may just have taken a stronger stance on this socially destructive and morally unjust legislation."

The Treasurer sent me a letter saying that the abolition of stamp duties, which was supposed to happen, is now only subject to review in 2005. He says that Queensland needs to continue to collect stamp duty to ensure its Budget position is maintained. Again, the people of Queensland have been misled with another GST promise that is not going to happen, not for at least five years anyway. Is this a Government that can be trusted to do what is in the best interests of Queenslanders? It says one thing and does another.

It is interesting to hear what members on the Government side have been saying in this debate. They say that they do not support the GST and yet it has to happen. The one thing that amazes me is that, if that is their attitude, why are we going to pass it and let it run free? Why not stop it now and have more discussion on it with the Federal Government? Why let them get away with it? Once it has started, we are not going to be able to stop it. We know what is going to happen.

Mr Howard was the Treasurer who in 1982 brought in an airport departure tax. He said at the time that it was only for 12 months until he could balance the books, and we let him do it. What happened? It was only for 12 months and then the price of the tax went up. We know what is going to happen with the GST. Why do we have to let him get the ball rolling now? Let us stop him now, sort it out and make it realistic. I heard what members opposite said. However, we should at least give the people a chance first before we let it out of the paddock. Once we open the gate, we are not going to be able to stop it.
