



Speech by
**Mr DENVER
BEANLAND**

MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY

Hansard 7 September 2000

MACKAY; SUGAR INDUSTRY

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (6.43 p.m.): All we have had this evening are the apologists for the can't do Beattie Labor Government and that, of course, commenced with the Minister for Education. What we have had this evening is a litany about this and that but nothing about jobs, jobs, jobs, nothing about generating growth in the Mackay area at all, and no guarantee for the railway jobs in Mackay, Sarina and the surrounding area. There has been not a word about jobs, not a word about investment, which leads to the creation of jobs—not a word at all. Instead of that, all we have had is talk about what the Government might have done or might not have done. We have heard nothing at all about jobs. Of course, we know that this Government is great at carrying over its capital works projects. The Minister never mentioned how much of the capital works budget was again carried over. There was not a word about guaranteeing the jobs of the Sarina railway workers—not a word about that at all from any of the speakers on the other side.

The Government, of course, is very silent on this issue, as it has been in the past when it has cut the jobs of railway workers. There has been not a word about the opportunities that would have come to the Mackay region had the new dam, the Elliot channel and so forth been constructed—not a word at all. In fact, the projects have been scrapped; the whole issue has simply been papered over as the Government moves on and talks about something else and tries to create a diversion. This Government is very good at creating a diversion, but it is not very good at creating jobs, jobs, jobs. It has failed to do so again in the Mackay region.

Speaking of diversions, I should say that it has also failed to establish a diversionary drug court in the Mackay region. I mention that because Mackay is one of the worst parts of Queensland for drug issues and drug problems. The State member, my colleague the member for Mirani, has been asking the Premier all year to trial a diversionary drug court in the Mackay region. All the drug courts are being trialled here in south-east Queensland, within a short distance of Brisbane; there is nothing in the Mackay region.

Drugs is one of the major issues of concern in society. They are associated with crime, a major problem in the region. I notice that there has again been discussion about police from the other side of the House, but there was no talk at all about the fact that the Mackay district has one police officer for every 697 people, while Rockhampton has one police officer for every 548 people. People are considerably better off in Rockhampton than they are in Mackay. We did not hear a word about that. It was all about trying to create some other perception.

Of course, police numbers in the Mackay region have been reduced, despite a steady increase in drug-related crimes in the area. This is what people are concerned about—the fact that the crime rate has been going up and there are drug-related crimes occurring within the Mackay region. The member for Mirani, Ted Malone, has been vigorously trying to get a diversionary drug court established there. There have been a number of public meetings highlighting the fact that there is a lack of detox and rehabilitation facilities in that region, which has one of the worst drug problems in Queensland. These people know that if they had the opportunity to get on top of some of these problems associated with drugs, the whole region would be much better off.

It was this Government that recently abolished the Life Education program, which was serving such a great purpose in the Mackay region also. Even before that, Queensland was well down in the

expenditure per student. The independent figures show that Queensland was spending some 50c per student compared with \$10 per student in Victoria. They are the independent figures, not the Opposition's figures or the Government's figures. So the Life Education program was scrapped, and nobody had a bigger role to play than the Minister for Education, the first speaker from the Government on this debate.

The very important issues are glossed over or brushed aside. That is a major concern, a major issue, in the Sarina area. I will look at other issues. The sugarcane farmers have been duded. They get \$800,000 worth of benefits from this Government, compared with \$83m of benefits from the Federal Government. Approximately 25% of Queensland's sugarcane farmers are in the Mackay region. So this Government has certainly duded the Mackay region in the assistance provided to sugarcane farmers.

The same situation applies to the Mackay Hospital, as the member for Maroochydore indicated. We had the debate last night about the cutbacks right across-the-board, particularly cutbacks in services and staff, which puts increased pressure on staff who remain, and the closing down of many of the services that had previously been provided in our hospital system.
