



Speech by

**Mr DOUG SLACK**

**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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Hansard 2 March 2000

### **GOODS AND SERVICES TAX**

**Mr SLACK** (Burnett—NPA) (10.19 a.m.): I am sure the public are sick and tired of hearing the Labor Party's disgraceful bleating about the GST. The reality is that an election was fought on the issue, the Government was returned, and it is now l-a-w, law. In those circumstances, it is now up to Labor to get behind it and make it work rather than being hypocritical political opportunists by trying to inflame those who do not understand it and fear change.

The facts are that the Federal colleagues of Government members do not have a credible tax policy of their own, and many of their thinking members secretly recognise the benefits of the GST for the Australian economy. Why would Howard put his political career and that of his Government on the line if he was not convinced of its benefits for the Australian economy? Why was former Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating—the world's greatest Treasurer—such a strong advocate of it? Why have other Governments around the world introduced it? Why did the New Zealand Labour Government, with the support of the Opposition, introduce it? Surely they are not political masochists who wanted to blast their economies into oblivion and were unconcerned about their people's welfare. Come on! Commonsense says otherwise, and for the Premier yesterday to be crying foul and claiming that the GST was going to ruin his 5% unemployment target is ludicrous. This is the very Premier who forever sings the value of exports and their job-creation potential.

Surely the Premier knows as well as we all do that the GST is a major plus for exporters in that it does not apply to exports and it is the vehicle by which the hidden taxes that currently apply—some \$4.5 billion worth—will be removed. The Premier should know that exporters will be refunded all GST paid on their inputs. In other words, it will allow our exports to be more competitive in the international marketplace, and for a State which relies so much on exports, that surely must mean the potential for more jobs, not fewer. It would help companies such as EDI—and if the Government is worried about EDI; it should be positive about it—which has just retrenched 230 workers. Naturally, business—

Time expired.

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