



Speech by

Hon. J. ELDER

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Austar

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (9.51 a.m.), by leave: The Beattie Government's drive to make Queensland the Smart State is gaining momentum. Later today, I will officially open the site of Australia's second largest pay TV operator, Austar, on the Gold Coast.

Austar has chosen Queensland to base its national headquarters, bringing with it 1,000 new jobs by the year 2004 and a further 150 jobs in the construction phase of a new 10,000 square metre facility at Robina. Austar currently employs 500 people on the Gold Coast, but the new site is designed to make room for the company's ambitious growth plans in Australia. The pay TV giant has around 420,000 pay TV subscribers, 28,000 on the Gold Coast, and they are adding 1,000 customers a week to their Internet service, Austar-net. Already, Austar is planning to expand its customer service department and upgrade its IT and telecommunications capacity.

For the people of the Gold Coast, Austar's decision will mean more than just jobs; it will play a critical role in helping to diversify the region's economy. The Gold Coast is renowned for its tourism successes, but it is fast becoming one of Queensland's major business centres. Already the Beattie Government has invested \$8m into the Centre for Biomolecular Research and Drug Discovery at Griffith University. We have invested \$100m plus into the Gold Coast Convention Centre at Jupiters Casino, creating 2,300 new jobs. In just a few weeks the Premier and I will open the Gold Coast Marine Park Precinct, which will have the capacity to generate more than 3,000 jobs.

But it is not just the Government which has seen the limitless opportunities on the Gold Coast. Private sector investment is pouring in. Versace is about to open the doors of what is billed to be one of the most prestigious resorts in the world, and the final touches are currently going onto the new Chevron Renaissance project at Surfers Paradise.

Austar's investment on the Gold Coast is not just an endorsement of the Beattie Government's investment in innovation in this State; it also heralds a significant opportunity for the Gold Coast to become a major business centre of Queensland.
