



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 4 October 2000

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Jobs Creation; Mr D. McManus

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.38 a.m.), by leave: As I indicated to the House yesterday, this Government is getting on with the job. This Government is getting on with the job of creating jobs. In fact, 101,200 jobs have been created in Queensland since this Government came to office. That equates to 128 jobs created each and every day—a rate of job creation 40% higher than that of the previous Government.

It is important to note that this strong jobs growth is happening right across the State. The latest regional unemployment statistics calculated by the Australian—

Opposition members: Cheats!

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, the members opposite are attacking jobs. They do not care about the unemployed. They do not care about the regions. All they are interested in is getting in the gutter.

The latest regional unemployment statistics calculated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show a consistent decline in the rate of unemployment in every region since this Government came to office. Two years ago, in August 1998, the unemployment rate in Brisbane was 7.8%. In August this year Brisbane's unemployment rate had fallen to 7.1%. Outside of Brisbane the improvement has been even greater. Unemployment in the balance of Queensland has fallen from 8.9% in August 1998 to 7.6% now. That represents a reduction of more than 1.3% in unemployment outside of the capital city in just two years.

In the Wide Bay region, one of Australia's worst unemployment black spots, unemployment has fallen from 12.6% two years ago to 8.3% now—a reduction of more than 4%. In Mackay/Fitzroy unemployment has dropped to 6.7%. In north and north-west Queensland—the region from Townsville to Mount Isa—unemployment is now down to 7.8%. In far-north Queensland it is as low as 5.6%. Two years ago, under the Borbidge Government, on the Gold Coast unemployment was 12.4%. It is now 9.1%. The south-west has not missed out on the jobs bonanza, either. The unemployment rate for the Darling Downs fell to 3.8% in August 2000.

Members should note that these figures are original monthly statistics that have not been seasonally adjusted, but the comparisons provided today have been between statistics for August 1998 and the same month in 2000, which takes account of seasonal factors.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr Hamill interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I think the Opposition is supporting our huge jobs growth. I am delighted that they are applauding us. I heard applause.

Mr Hamill: Two of the shadow Ministers are still counted as unemployed.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes.

This is a job creation record of which Queensland can be justifiably proud. The whingers opposite will probably complain that the Queensland unemployment rate is above the national average. However, if Australia as a whole had the labour force participation rate of Queensland, national unemployment would not be running at 6.4%; it would be 8.5%. Assuming Queensland's participation rate of 65.4% of the labour force, Queensland records a 7.6% unemployment rate compared with 8.5%

for Australia as a whole. That is the difference that can be made by a Government that cares about the rate of unemployment and is getting on with the job, by a Government that wants to get young people and displaced workers into jobs and by a Government that will not rest until unemployment is at more acceptable levels. We are reducing unemployment, but there is still work to be done.

It is with great sadness that I have to advise the House today of the death in London yesterday of our Agent-General and Director in Europe, Dermot McManus. I know all honourable members will be equally saddened and shocked to learn of his passing. He was not only an extremely able, professional and effective Agent-General; he was also extremely personable and popular. He was the epitome of the exemplary public servant—dedicated to Queensland and to his job. He was a man of flair, broad vision and huge capacity, with long experience in key international roles.

Dermot McManus was born in Brisbane on 25 October 1944 and joined the Department of Trade in 1970 after five years as a journalist. He quickly demonstrated his ability in that job and only three and a half years later he was the Australian delegate to the multilateral trade negotiations in Geneva. He learned Arabic in order to become Trade Commissioner in Saudi Arabia and subsequently served in Nairobi and Rome before joining the Queensland Government in 1989 as manager of the Queensland Office of International Business in Brisbane. Dermot took up his present post in February 1996. As Premier I led two trade missions to Europe, and much of the success of those missions was due to the preparatory work done by Dermot. The latest of these missions was in June this year as part of the Centenary of Federation activities.

I came to think of Dermot as a personal friend and I will miss his unfailing good humour and his storytelling. When I last worked with him in June and July this year there was no hint of the illness that was to cause his death only three months later. On behalf of the House—and I know I speak for the Leader of the Opposition and all other honourable members opposite—and on behalf of the people of Queensland I extend condolences to his wife, Pip, and to his family. He will be sadly missed.

Dermot was well known to a lot of us. When we saw him in June he was in good health and he handled the Queensland delegation in an extremely competent manner. I have to say that I am absolutely stunned, as I know all other honourable members would be, that only three months later he has tragically passed away. He was a great Queenslander and he will be sadly missed. I move—

"That my statement be noted."
