



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 14 March 2000

QUEENSLAND ECONOMY; JOB CREATION

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (6.15 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Delete all words after 'concern' and insert the following—

'the negative impact of the GST and rising interest rates on the performance of the Queensland economy, particularly by eroding business confidence and threatening the rate of job creation.'."

The original motion claims that full-time jobs are falling. The truth is that the latest trend figures show full-time jobs increasing in Queensland month on month on month. In fact, of the 65,374 jobs created under my Government, 38,700, or 60%, have been full-time jobs. My Government has created 108 jobs every day for the past 20 months. The previous trend figure was 8.2% and the latest figure is down to 8%. Seasonally adjusted, it is down from 8.1% to 7.7%.

Everyone is concerned about the recent decisions of Evans Deakin Industries and Telstra to cut jobs—10,000 in the case of Telstra. No-one likes to see people losing their jobs and my Government is doing everything we can to help local manufacturers win business. What was the record of the previous Borbidge Government in its first 20 months? After 20 months of the Borbidge/Sheldon Government, unemployment did not fall, as it has done under Labor. Unemployment rose under Borbidge/Sheldon from 9.2% to 9.3%. The number of unemployed Queenslanders increased by 7,700 in the first 20 months of the Borbidge/Sheldon Government. Under Labor, the number of unemployed Queenslanders has fallen by 10,400.

I would like to point out to members that full-time employment in the manufacturing sector in Queensland has increased by 10,400 since my Government came to office. We continue to encourage investors to use local firms. The Deputy Premier and I have worked through with Cabinet a policy to do so and I would hope that new projects will take up that challenge.

The original motion claimed that the Queensland economy is deteriorating. To the contrary, the Queensland economy is not deteriorating; it is growing by 4% per annum. Four per cent growth and a \$92 billion economy means around \$4 billion of extra activity this year. The only thing deteriorating in Queensland is business confidence, which has been shattered by the looming GST. ABS seasonally adjusted statistics on business investment show growth in Queensland of plus 4.5% in the December quarter. By contrast, Australian business investment as a whole fell by 8.4%. Those ABS figures, released today, reveal that Queensland is the only State showing a positive trend in business investment.

And the growth in Queensland does not stop there. International tourism was up by 7.1% in 1999. Retail sales are up by 6.6%. Dwelling unit approvals are up by 20%. Business investment is up. Tourism is up. Private consumption is up. The housing sector is up. Yet the Opposition believes that the Queensland economy is deteriorating. Its members are continuing to whinge and attempt to undermine jobs and people's future. They are talking down the State for their own shallow political purposes.

The reality is that, under the policies of my Government, the Queensland economy is moving ahead strongly. The only dark cloud on our horizon is the GST. The GST is going to hurt small business. The GST is going to hurt regional and country Queensland. The GST is going to hurt tourism. It will be a slug on bus and train users. It will be a slug on electricity consumers. It will be a slug on families. It will be a slug on students. It will be a slug on the elderly. It will be a slug on charities and the churches. My greatest fear is that after all the hard work that my Government has done to get

Queensland moving again we are going to hit a brick wall called the GST and the economy will stop in its tracks.

Why do the Liberals and Nationals support the GST? What do those opposite say in response to the all-consuming GST? They welcome it. This morning in the House I spoke of my tolerance of people and their beliefs. To demonstrate my tolerance, I spoke about dealing in a professional, even personable way with journalists who had previous political affiliations, such as Courier-Mail reporter Jeff Sommerfeld. My advice on Mr Sommerfeld came from Liberal and Labor sources today. I understand that, subsequent to my comments, Mr Sommerfeld has denied holding an executive position in the Liberal Party. Mr Sommerfeld has confirmed, however, that he has been a member of the Liberal Party.

Being a tolerant and fair person, I offered to table in this House tonight a written denial from Mr Sommerfeld that he had ever held an executive position with the Liberals. Mr Sommerfeld has declined my offer. Even though he confirmed his Liberal Party membership, I am prepared to accept Mr Sommerfeld's word and I therefore withdraw my comments that he held an executive position with the Liberals. This, however, does not in any way detract from the point I made earlier today. Clearly, I have been prepared to be fair, fair in a way that Courier-Mail reporting on this matter has not been to me.
