



Speech by

VAUGHAN JOHNSON

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Hansard 20 June 2000

FUEL SUBSIDY SCHEME

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (6.35 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition calling upon the Treasurer to have the Commissioner for Stamp Duties investigate the roting claims made by the Premier and the Treasurer.

Over the past couple of weeks the people of Queensland have become increasingly intolerant of the sick comedy that has been performed by the Abbott and Costello of Queensland politics on the other side of this House. The Premier and Treasurer, in what was quickly perceived by the public of Queensland as a dishonest stunt, have once and for all indicated to regional and rural Queensland what they really think of people who live outside the south-east corner. With the approval of each member on the other side of this House, the Treasurer proposed that the difference between being a Queenslander living in Brisbane—with the benefits of heavily subsidised public transport laid on outside the door—and being a Queenslander living in the bush—without public transport and having to use the car to take the kids to school or travel long distances to doctors, legal people, accountants or whatever—is just \$30 a year. Yes, less than a half a tank of fuel per year.

In common with the Opposition, the people of Queensland saw this as nothing more than a rip-off by the Premier and Treasurer, so we have seen a Beattie backflip of Olympic standard. That is possibly why the Premier ran with the Olympic flame in Brisbane a few days ago. This Government now says that it listened to the people and changed the policy. This, of course, begs the question: why did no consultation take place with the affected parties in the first place? We know the answer to that: because Labor does not know the meaning of the word "consultation", especially the Treasurer, because we have witnessed in the past some of his efforts in in Transport, and now in Treasury—

Mr Quinn interjected.

Mr JOHNSON:—and also, as the former Education Minister says, in Education.

First it was a registration rebate of \$150 a year. Then, the next day, it was to be half the registration fee. Then it was back to \$150, but it excluded heavy vehicles—all in three days; a spectacular policy formation on the run. The Premier finally admitted at the weekend that he was having great difficulty finding anyone who supported the Treasurer's harebrained scheme, yet a week earlier he had found a whole room of supporters. They were very important supporters, because the whole Cabinet—

Mr Elder: Don't read speeches.

Mr JOHNSON:—including the Deputy Premier, supported the scheme, but the support was far wider than that, Mr Speaker, because the whole Labor caucus, including you, then agreed with the scheme. This demonstrates just how far out of touch this Beattie Labor Government is. It clearly does not understand who the real losers are. They are the businesses, industry and, ultimately, the people of Queensland.

The Treasurer was then magically able to produce for the Premier a pre-booked media campaign in support of the scheme. They were wonderful ads, and I hope that the Premier can give them to the Opposition, because I will give him the mail: we will use them in the next election campaign. Of course, the Labor caucus should be used to the former Transport Minister and current Treasurer performing magic tricks, as he tried to do when attempting to construct a koala tunnel. The

magician from Ipswich went even further than that, because he then went on to make the whole Goss Government disappear.

Another sleight of hand by "Mandrake" is that he is trying to use section 92 of the Constitution as the excuse for why he has been unable to act to ensure that the fuel rebate is passed on to Queenslanders. The Premier and the Treasurer made much of using the fuel price in regional and remote Queensland in support of their con job, so I now remind the Treasurer that places such as Longreach are in fact in Queensland, and the failure to pass on the full fuel rebate to those places is not protected by the Constitution.

The Treasurer said in this House this morning that it was possible for fuel to be delivered to Melbourne at 4c a litre. I will give him the mail again: it costs 5c a litre to get the confounded stuff to Cunnamulla. Why is it, then, that the price of fuel in Birdsville today for diesel and unleaded is \$1.08c a litre? The Premier and the Treasurer claim that this is because of the roting by fuel companies. It is all very well to blame the fuel companies. The real reason they are blaming the fuel companies is because of the black hole in their Budget. The incompetence of this Treasurer! Again and again we see that he cannot add up. The Premier may have tried to put an end to this fiasco, but the real problem that remains is the Beattie black hole. Once again it is over to the Treasurer to see what other rabbits he can pull out of his oversized hat. If I could just say to the Treasurer—

Time expired.
