



Speech by

Mr R. QUINN

MEMBER FOR ROBINA

Hansard 18 June 2002

PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (12.11 p.m.): Today I take the opportunity to bring to the attention of the taxpayers of Queensland the woeful mismanagement and maladministration that has occurred in relation to the state's economy and the Public Service. When the Labor Party took office on 26 June 1998 it took over a strong economy that comprised a work force of some 1.6 million Queenslanders. This included a Public Service that employed 153,502 people, which equated to about 9.6 per cent of the work force within Queensland. However, for about two of the last four years, Queensland has consistently recorded one of the highest unemployment rates within the states of Australia. This situation has played on my mind for some time. It has prompted me to do some basic analysis of the government's own figures.

As I just mentioned, when the Premier took over at the end of June 1998, Queensland's work force was 1.6 million people, with some 153,502 employees within the Public Service. When this is compared with the monthly Queensland labour force figures published within the Australian Bureau of Statistics Labour Force Series and the Public Service statistics published annually within the annual report of the Office of Public Service, Merit and Equity, a very disturbing trend emerges. The financial year 2000-01 annual report from that office shows that as at 30 June 2001 the Public Service in Queensland had grown by a whopping 24,000 people to reach a total of 177,482. This represents a 16 per cent growth in the Public Service in just three financial years.

If that statistic alone is not alarming enough, one should compare the growth in the number of people employed within the Public Service with that of the overall labour force within Queensland. In doing so, one soon discovers that under the Beattie government over 25 per cent of all the jobs created in Queensland since Peter Beattie became Premier were within the Queensland Public Service. That is right—from July 1998 to the end of June 2001 some 90,900 jobs were created within Queensland. Of those jobs, nearly 24,000 were created by a blow-out in the size of the Public Service. Before members oppose claim that these Public Service jobs are solely because of some fanciful increase in the number of police, teachers and nurses, as the Premier tried to convince us this morning, I point out that only 11,800, or less than 50 per cent, of those 24,000 jobs created within the Public Service were actually within the departments of health, education and police. It also should be noted that this figure of 11,800 positions includes the additional education and health bureaucrats, because this secretive government will not come clean and break down the figures in health and education to show actual but necessary growth in the on-the-ground nurses and teachers.

I now highlight the devastating effect that this uncontrolled growth in the Public Service is having on the overall finances of Queensland. The consolidated financial statement produced annually by the government shows that the growth in recurrent revenue since the end of the 1997-98 financial year to the end of the 2000-01 financial year was just under \$1.89 billion. If this is compared with the increase in the employee expenses over the same time frame, one will find that they have increased recurrently by \$2.05 billion. This means that, under the Beattie government, growth in employee expenses has outstripped growth in revenue. In simple terms, for every year that the Beattie government has its fingers in the till, Queensland will continue to go backwards.

With the government constantly complaining about its apparent lack of money, it is amazing that it allows the finances of this state to haemorrhage because of its inability to manage the

Queensland economy and the Public Service properly. If these issues are left unaddressed, they will continue the growing trend of our hospital waiting lists getting longer and will prevent the raising of education standards for our children. These were the exact issues highlighted by Vince FitzGerald in his financial audit of the state in 1996. No doubt, this is a contributing factor in today's admission by the Treasurer that Queensland's growth rate has slipped back to be lineball with the national average for the very first time. So much for the Smart State! If the government continues to ignore this issue, it will erode the strong and stable financial position of the Queensland economy that has been built up by previous governments which, unlike the Beattie government, were sound and prudent financial managers.