



Speech by

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Hansard 3 April 2003

INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING

Dr WATSON (Moggill—Lib) (7.01 p.m.): This morning the *Courier-Mail's* new business editor, Paul Syvret, published an article titled 'Smart State running on empty'. In that article, he addressed a number of the issues that the opposition has been talking about for some time, namely, that there has been a budget deficit for the last three years and there are sectors crying out for more funding—areas such as Health, Education and the like. However, the part that really caught my attention—I thought Paul could have done more on it—was a paragraph which said this—

As it is, Queensland outspends on infrastructure on a per-capita basis vis a vis the other states. We need to, given the population growth.

Mr McNamara: Hear, hear!

Dr WATSON: I note the 'hear, hear'. But what Paul did not say was simply this: in the 1990s there was a big decrease in the amount of infrastructure spending following the National Party government at the end of the eighties. For the whole of the Labor government infrastructure spending fell dramatically in Queensland. It was not until the coalition government came into power in 1996 that infrastructure spending increased. Members do not have to take my word for it. All they have to do is look at a Queensland Treasury document called *Capital infrastructure in Queensland* put out last year, which shows quite clearly that the reason we had a significant increase in infrastructure spending was that the hard decisions were made by the coalition government to put the money in there. How did we fund that? We funded that through making hard decisions with respect to the way we use capital tied up in certain industries in the Queensland government. In particular, we ended up privatising Suncorp. Where was the Labor Party on that particular issue? The Labor Party was against it. The State Financial Institutions and Metway Merger Facilitation Bill 1996 was opposed by the Labor Party. The Labor Party opposed getting the money to pay for the infrastructure—the Gold Coast motorway—which they are now lording and saying were part of Queensland's great infrastructure development. Where were they on that particular issue?

On the same day as they opposed that bill a motion was moved by then Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Jim Elder, along the lines that the parliament expresses its grave concern at the government's proposed \$1.2 billion upgrade of the Brisbane-Gold Coast highway. Today the Beattie Labor government can lord the expenditure on infrastructure development because of the decisions made by the coalition government when we were in office—

Time expired.