



Speech by

**KAREN STRUTHERS**

**MEMBER FOR ALGESTER**

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**TAB QUEENSLAND LIMITED PRIVATISATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Ms STRUTHERS** (Algester—ALP) (2.59 p.m.): Queensland's economic engine room is powering at full steam ahead with the Beattie government at the helm, and the opposition does not like it. It does not want us to get the jobs, businesses and investment in Queensland. They are knockers. We are the ones who are getting the action going in this state. I am very proud to be part of a government that is getting more investment, businesses, activity and jobs in Queensland. Today I was very pleased to attend the launch of our Smart Small Business Strategy. These are all signs that we are moving ahead quickly and are putting things in place to support business and jobs in Queensland.

The racing industry is one of our state's largest industries and a strong economic contributor. Tough decisions have been made in Queensland to ensure the viability and growth of the racing industry. Racing industry supporters have been keen to see prize pools in Queensland grow to make the Queensland industry nationally and internationally competitive. It is expected that the new UNiTAB merged company will generate significantly greater turnover simply because of the size of the pools it will attract. This alone is expected to provide by the third year after the merger up to an additional \$10 million per annum for the Queensland racing industry. That means jobs for the industry and more growth in Queensland. In fact, jobs growth is strong in Queensland, with unemployment being the lowest rate for years—6.5 per cent. We can all be very proud of those achievements over the past decade and more.

The changes proposed in this bill will facilitate the merger between two private sector companies—UNiTAB Limited, the former Queensland TAB, and TAB Limited, the New South Wales TAB. In negotiations over the new arrangements I know that the Premier has been playing hard ball to ensure that the headquarters of the new company are in Queensland. I also know that he is keen to do whatever is in his power to secure jobs for Queenslanders in the company. Ultimately as a private company UNiTAB management hold the responsibility for these employment outcomes, but it is certainly good to see our Premier going into bat hard to secure jobs for the Brisbane based call centre workers and others. It is important that there be a win, win, win for all parties in the new company. We need to score a trifecta—a win for shareholders, a win for the racing industry and racing enthusiasts in Queensland and around Australia, and a win for the workers in UNiTAB. It needs to be a trifecta, and not necessarily in that order—a box trifecta. We need to have a win for all those players in the industry and we need to include in that job security for the workers.

The new UNiTAB intends to update its existing network and expand the number of its agencies. Importantly, the company has provided an assurance that job numbers in Queensland will not decline over the next three years. I commend the UNiTAB executive. It has taken the step and met with the Australian Services Union, Clerks Division—the responsible union. It has already taken that very positive step to begin negotiations over employment outcomes for the workers in Queensland.

The ASU is my union. I am very pleased that it has a good record of going in to bat for workers. We would all recall the great work done in the Ansett dispute, where the ASU nationally and in Queensland fought hard for the entitlements of workers. What did the federal government do? It imposed a levy on travel tickets to create a pool from which to provide some support and entitlements for workers. What has happened? Have former Ansett workers received those entitlements?

**Mr English:** No!

**Ms STRUTHERS:** That is the sort of support our federal government provides to workers—nil. In this negotiated arrangement, I think the UNiTAB executive is doing a very positive thing by meeting with the union early and trying to do whatever is possible to look after the workers who, understandably when there is a merger, feel some insecurity and uncertainty about their job futures. I have met with many of the Queensland UNiTAB call centre employees based in Brisbane. I have hosted barbecues at Parliament House for the delegates of the ASU who work in UNiTAB. Many have given more than a decade of good service to TAB in Queensland. Many of them are the people I have a special interest in, and that is the over 45s. I am not at that age yet, but I certainly have an interest in making sure that people who are in that age group have long-term job security. I have met with many over 45s facing retrenchment. It is important that those people who have given long service get some security out of the current arrangements.

I certainly commend the work that is being done by the Premier and the parties involved in the negotiations. But ultimately, as two private companies are merging, it is the responsibility of those company management teams to actually put in place some very positive steps for that merged company to have a very bright future in this state and also to secure the future of those loyal and committed employees. They are a loyal and hardworking bunch of people. I urge UNiTAB management to acknowledge and value those people and make sure that their futures are secured.

As I said, the merged UNiTAB has a bright future. It is great to see the strength of this company and the opportunities it will now have to grow. I sincerely hope that this future does generate the trifecta—the win for UNiTAB, the win for the racing industry and the win for the UNiTAB staff.