



Speech by

Michael Choi

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

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APPROPRIATION BILL; ESTIMATES COMMITTEE F

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (5.03 p.m.): At the outset, I thank the chair of the committee, the member for Whitsunday, for the way that she conducted the committee and the time that she put in to ensure that the committee was effective and democratic. She also made certain that the concerns of any member on the committee were properly addressed. I am sure that other members of the committee would join me in thanking her for a job well done.

Nothing worries me more than unemployment, because employment is more than a job. It is about the ability to provide for one's family. It is about self-esteem. It is, rightly or wrongly, about self-worth. When a person is unemployed it affects more than that person. It also affects his or her immediate family. When large-scale unemployment occurs it can have a detrimental effect on a community, particularly in small regional areas.

I am pleased that during the estimates committee hearing the Minister for State Development and Innovation mentioned not only the good news about the fall in the unemployment rate in Queensland—the lowest in 20 years—but also the fact that 40 per cent of the jobs created in Australia came from Queensland. Last month we actually generated 90 per cent of all jobs growth in this nation.

As a Queenslanders and a member of the Queensland parliament, I am proud of the fact that Queensland is now the powerhouse of Australia in terms of jobs growth. Not only are we the powerhouse of jobs growth; we are also the powerhouse of economic growth. But that did not happen by chance. It has been the strategic effort of this government in providing better education, better training to our work force and a better investment environment which has delivered those outcomes.

Before being elected as a member of this House I had the privilege for many years of being one of the honorary ambassadors for the city of Brisbane. My role was to encourage investment into Brisbane and south-east Queensland. In that role I encountered numerous situations where potential investors compared us with other cities, other states and even other countries. Although Queensland has been growing, a foolhardy person would ignore the fact that some countries, such as China, offer very attractive tax incentives. Some states, due to historical development, have far more extensive infrastructure and a more skilled work force in place.

We often think of infrastructure as roads, freeways, shipping terminals and airports. It is true that they are major infrastructure, but infrastructure also means that if a new business needs to service major machinery how many contractors in Queensland can provide that service and, if a part has to be sourced, how many suppliers can provide that part within two hour? This is why I support the offering of incentives to businesses that are prepared to come to Queensland, as outlined by the minister.

A few years ago we did not have an aviation industry. Today this industry employs thousands of people. Having said that, I believe that a high level of transparency should be in place in terms of government incentives. I am looking forward to supporting in the near future the amendment bill proposed by the Premier yesterday to release in the House financial incentives after a period of time.

While we are talking about development we must also remember that our beautiful environment is also one of the reasons investors want to come here. Our environment is certainly one of the key assets of

Queensland. In this respect, I commend the work undertaken by the Minister for the Environment in protecting our environment.

Having said that, I want to raise an issue which I had in the past remained silent about because I was waiting for the release of key documentation before I took a formal position on it. This is to do with the proposed fish farm in Moreton Bay. As a chartered engineer, although not in the environmental field, I felt that I owed it to my profession to be unbiased and have an open mind about this.

I have since then received a copy of the EIS and studied it carefully. Regretfully, the EIS report did not relieve most of the concerns that I had before. It is my understanding that further and better particulars are being sought from the proponents of the fish farm. I can only say that I will continue to study this proposal carefully. In doing so, I echo my concern about a major fish farm in a marine park environment so close to major cities and residents. The question I must ask is: even if the proposed fish farm created as many jobs as indicated in the proposal, would my constituents be prepared to give away job opportunities in return for long-term environmental integrity? I think the answer would be a resounding yes.

It is a pleasure to be a member of Estimates Committee F. Due to time constraints, I do not have time to comment on the work done by the Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development. As she is a new minister in this portfolio, I am most impressed with the work she has done in the last six months. I thank all my colleagues on the committee for their contributions.