



Speech by

Hon. Robert Swarten

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Construction Industry

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (10.14 am): Currently there is more than \$8 billion worth of state government construction projects underway across Queensland. This government's record investment in new and improved infrastructure not only has delivered better services for Queenslanders but also has seen our state's building and construction industry boom. The latest data from the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research shows that in the short term the outlook for the state's construction industry is one of future growth. In recent years construction industry activity in Queensland has reached unprecedented heights, peaking at \$23.8 billion in 2004-05, an increase of almost 17 per cent on the previous financial year. While the industry is expected to stabilise a little this year, it will remain strong and will be the engine room of growth in Australia.

The Department of Public Works has more than \$1 billion worth of projects in the pipeline across the state, generating employment for thousands of Queenslanders. Public Works is managing multimillion-dollar projects in Townsville such as the Dairy Farmers Stadium redevelopment—

A government member: Hear, hear!

Mr SCHWARTEN: I take the interjection. There is the Gold Coast Stadium redevelopment—

A government member: Hear, hear!

Mr SCHWARTEN: Thank you for that. There is also the \$400 million prep year program and the statewide asbestos removal program. The \$9.5 million Rockhampton riverbank redevelopment is underway, and I will say 'hear, hear!' to that.

In Brisbane Public Works is managing the Queensland Maritime Museum dry dock upgrade, the refurbishment and restoration of the old museum and the landmark Millennium Arts Project at South Bank. All of these projects stimulate new opportunities and growth for Queensland construction firms. I would like to know what the opposition's position is on some of these matters. Where is it, for example, on the State Purchasing Policy, which has allowed more than price criteria to be taken into account when awarding contracts? Where does the opposition stand, for example, on the prequalification system? Both of these are initiatives of mine and this government, and have been well received by industry but we have never heard a peep from the opposition about them.

We all well remember the capital works freeze under the Borbidge government which saw construction on around \$500 million worth of projects ground to a halt because the opposition could not manage its own capital works. This had a devastating effect on many Queensland firms which relied on doing business with government. There has been no repeat performance of that under this government, but I have no doubt at all that should the opposition be elected to government there would be a repeat performance.

Project Services, the commercial business unit of the Department of Public Works, alone outsourced more than \$570 million worth of work to the private sector last financial year. More than 6,300

jobs were generated by these activities and 43 per cent of the work was done in regional Queensland. Q-Build, the government's construction and maintenance organisation, currently outsources around 65 per cent of its building and construction and maintenance services. This financial year Q-Build expects to receive \$292 million in revenue from client agencies in regional Queensland, and in the same period Q-Build will outsource work in regional areas worth \$186 million to operators in the private sector. Again, I ask the opposition: what is its position with regard to Q-Build and Project Services? Does it have a position on this, or is the Liberal Party's well-known and often-voiced opposition to these business units its current position?

I am pleased to announce this month that 100 more young Queenslanders will kick-start their construction industry careers with Q-Build. This year's intake will take to 850 the total number of apprentices and trainees taken on by Q-Build by this government. This year's trade apprenticeships and traineeships range from full-time apprenticeships to construction and horticultural traineeships as well as 10 school based apprenticeships. Sixty per cent of these positions will be based in regional Queensland. These training positions are on top of the opportunities generated for thousands of Queenslanders because of our 10 per cent training policy on significant construction projects. Is this a policy that will survive under the Nationals and Liberals? How will they ever train apprentices if they get rid of Q-Build?

Queenslanders have benefited enormously from the hard work of local companies that have helped build the billions of dollars worth of new infrastructure right across this Smart State. I look forward to continuing to deliver this government's record capital works investment this year and its training outcomes and working with Queensland's construction industry.