



Speech by

Hon. ANNA BLIGH

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

Hansard Tuesday, 9 October 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bligh Labor Government

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier) (9.40 am): On 13 September I was sworn in as Premier of Queensland. I am humbled by the support of my colleagues and of the support I have received from many Queenslanders in the past weeks. But I am also acutely aware of the responsibility that this position brings with it. On being sworn in I committed to keep Queensland the best state in Australia. Here in this place today I recommit myself to that pledge to keep Queensland the best place to live and raise a family, a great place to work and to do business, a great place to visit and enjoy and to keep Queensland ahead of the pack.

I identified a number of clear priorities for my government and I want the opportunity to briefly outline those today. Firstly, a strong economy. It is the strength and the growth of the Queensland economy that creates jobs and creates opportunities. It generates the capacity for us to build our roads, our schools and our hospitals and to create great futures for our children. A strong economy will remain my top priority in this new position.

Secondly, education. Modern economies are fuelled by education, knowledge and skills. Education has been a personal passion of mine and has been at the heart of our government for nine years and this will continue under my premiership. Investing in the early years is critical to later success. And now, following our efforts in the prep year, it is time to turn our attention to those early years before school begins.

Thirdly, managing growth. Growth is our biggest challenge and our best opportunity. Our task is to manage it and to stay one step ahead of it. I want the building of our infrastructure—our roads, rail, ports, energy, schools and hospitals and, most urgent of all, water infrastructure to be one of the hallmarks of my premiership. In relation to transport, there will be a stronger focus on our transport system as an early priority of my government. Later this morning I will be outlining initiatives in this regard.

In relation to health, many of our services are experiencing pressure due to high demand. Health and ambulance services are key areas where meeting demand will be paramount. Our Health Action Plan is beginning to see results, but there is much more to be done. For example, bringing online the extra beds we committed to in the 2006 election and building three new tertiary hospitals are among our biggest tasks. Preventing injury and disease will also be a priority for our government. Queensland's investment in our Ambulance Service is the highest per person in Australia. Clearly we need to be working harder to see that investment reflected in service quality. Concerns in this area have already received my attention with the establishment of an audit and the development of a new roster system.

Climate change looms as a critical issue on the horizon for all of us. I have initiated a new portfolio to put a new emphasis on this long-term challenge to ensure a sustainable future for our state. Finally, on becoming Premier I outlined the importance of regions to Queensland's economy and to our future development. Growing Queensland's regions is the key to our economic strength. It is also a key to

managing our population growth. I want more of those people who are moving to Queensland to move to regional Queensland. I have already renewed our focus in this area with the shape of my ministry, with half of the cabinet from outside of the metropolitan area and a dedicated ministry for regional development held by a minister from a Queensland region. I have wanted a greater focus on the regions, and the best way to achieve this is to get out there and meet Queenslanders face to face. Since my appointment as Premier I have travelled to Townsville, Charleville, Rockhampton, the Gold and Sunshine coasts, Cairns, Toowoomba, Mount Isa, Burketown, Normanton, Karumba and Mornington Island. I will continue, along with my colleagues, to be out there talking to regional Queenslanders.

I have also clearly stated my government's position in relation to daylight saving. It will not be considered by our government. There might be benefits for those in the south-east, but it is not welcomed beyond that. This will not be a matter I return to.

In concluding this statement, I pay tribute to former Premier Peter Beattie. Queensland, without a doubt, is a better place because of Peter Beattie. His every waking moment in the nine years, two months and 18 days that he served as the Premier was about making Queensland a better place. Some scoffed at his Smart State mantra. After all, a decade or so ago we were still the butt of jokes from southern states. But in less than a decade Peter Beattie's Smart State agenda has turned the Queensland brain drain into a brain gain. Today, be it our economy or our work in research and education fields, the arts or on the sporting field, we are regularly leading the nation. Be it cutting unemployment from 8.9 per cent to 3.5 per cent, long overdue education reforms, a virtual rebuilding of the health system, setting about the righting of shameful Indigenous wrongs, making a quantum leap in funding and support for Child Safety and Disability Services, expanding our scientific research capabilities to be among the world's best, developing a nation-leading school based apprenticeship system or putting in place multibillion-dollar long-term water security programs, Peter Beattie gave it his all. Peter will be remembered as one of the most influential, forward thinking and successful state premiers in Australian history. On behalf of the people of Queensland, I thank Peter for his wonderful service to Queensland and his contribution to the public life of our state and I am sure that others will join me in wishing him well in the future with his wife, Heather, and his family.