



Speech by

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PNG GAS PIPELINE

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.19 pm): Last week finally saw the demise of the long-touted Papua New Guinea to Queensland gas pipeline, with PNG's Oil Search revealing it would not spend any more on the proposal and would instead look at using its PNG gas reserves within the country. At the outset of this speech I want to declare as per my pecuniary interest register that I hold Oil Search shares, albeit a small bundle. The *Courier-Mail* reported that the state government was an enthusiastic rhetorical supporter, and that is a very apt description given that the Premier previously boasted that this now defunct project would create thousands of jobs and inject billions into the Queensland economy.

As always, the rhetoric from the Labor spin doctors rarely matches the reality. A visual illustration of the Beattie Labor government's enthusiastic rhetorical support can be seen in this inch-thick stack of media releases which I table in the House today. Between 2 October 1998 and 26 January 2006 the Beattie Labor government issued 32 media releases which mention the PNG gas pipeline—32 media releases about a pipeline project for which not a single pipe was ever laid. I want to outline just a few examples of the spin we have heard from the 'do nothing' Beattie Labor government and its string of state development ministers over the years about a project which was known to many as the mythical pipeline.

Tabled paper: Bundle of media releases regarding PNG gas pipeline.

In April 1999 there were media releases from the Premier headlined 'Gas agreement opens way for supply contracts' and 'PNG pipeline boost'. In August 1999 the Premier jetted off to Port Moresby and issued a statement claiming the 'PNG to Queensland gas pipeline secures foundation volumes'. In December 2002 the Premier was off on another trade mission to Papua New Guinea during which the PNG gas pipeline was said to be 'the focus'. Fast forward to October 2004 and guess what? The Premier was once again boasting of significant news on the PNG gas pipeline, with proponents proceeding to the 'front end engineering and design stage'.

In July 2005 then state development minister Tony McGrady welcomed the sale of PNG gas to AGL, saying 'it was a major step in making the pipeline a reality'. In October 2005 our current state development minister, John Mickel, in his role at that time as energy minister got in on the act, scoring a trip to Papua New Guinea to yet again talk about the pipeline. On 16 January 2006 the Deputy Premier and then state development minister, Anna Bligh, was welcoming yet another agreement on the PNG gas project and boasting of the 1,000 jobs expected to be created during the construction phase, which she said would start in 2007.

Not wanting to miss out, in January 2006 the Premier was also trumpeting according to the headline in his media release 'PNG gas pipeline project a step closer'. After that we had an unusual year of silence from the Beattie Labor government on the PNG gas pipeline until last week, when it was revealed the project was being dumped. But even with confirmation that the project had gone belly up, this shameless state government was doing its best to put on a positive spin by claiming in its 1 February media release that the 'PNG gas suspension opens new opportunities for Queensland'. Remember, this is the project that

the Premier said would deliver thousands of jobs and billions of dollars and which former state development minister Tony McGrady breathlessly proclaimed would be a catalyst for further industrial growth in Queensland's regions. The Beattie Labor government for so many years focused its attention and energy policies around this gas pipeline and there are now a lot of unanswered questions about how power will be provided to drive industrial development in the north.

The pipeline axing is just another in a long list of major projects that have fallen by the wayside under the Beattie Labor government's reign, including Aldoga's decision to put a proposed aluminium smelter at Gladstone on hold indefinitely, the breakdown of the planned AMC magnesium plant in central Queensland, and cane harvester manufacturer Austoft's decision to move from Bundaberg to Brazil to name but a few. It just goes to show that we should judge this sleazy Beattie Labor government on what it does, not what it says. Judge it on its actions or lack of actions, not its meaningless words. The canning of the PNG gas pipeline is yet another example which highlights that the Beattie Labor government is big on talk and short on delivery.