



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Thursday, 7 June 2007

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## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Forgan-Smith, Mr W

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.50 am): This month will mark the 75th anniversary of Mr William Forgan-Smith becoming Premier of Queensland, and I would like to pay tribute to one of our state's great former leaders—

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** That is right, he was member for Mackay.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Yes, he was one of the builders of modern Queensland. Seventy-five years after William Forgan-Smith became Premier we remember him for the way he boldly led Queensland out of the Depression, for his state development and defence of state rights. He was a great leader in tough times. I seek leave to incorporate details of that tribute in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Within four years of immigrating to Mackay at the age of 24, Scottish-born Forgan Smith had joined the Australian Workers' Union, become president of the local branch of the Workers' Political Organisation, vice-president of the local Trades and Labor Council, married a farmer's daughter and been elected to this place as the member for Mackay.

His talents were soon recognised and he became minister without portfolio assisting Premier Theodore in 1920, Secretary for Public Works in 1922 and Secretary for Agriculture and Stock in 1925.

Caucus elected him Labor Parliamentary Leader and Leader of the Opposition in 1929 and his leadership helped Labor regain Government in 1932 when he became Premier and Treasurer.

Mr Speaker, Forgan Smith was instrumental in reshaping Australia's approach to recovering from the Depression and went on to finance massive public works schemes in Queensland as he worked to improve the economy and reduce unemployment.

The projects included the building of the Story Bridge, Somerset Dam and an upgrade of Mackay's harbour.

When the University of Queensland decided in 1935 to commence construction at the St Lucia site the project became one of the Forgan Smith Government's major developments of the 1930's depression years, specifically aimed at creating employment.

His involvement is commemorated in the naming of the first completed building on the site.

Three months after the 10th anniversary of his premiership, Forgan Smith chose to retire.

He became Chancellor of the University Queensland in 1944, a position he held until his death in 1953.