



Speech by

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BLUEPRINT FOR THE BUSH, REGIONAL PLANS

Mr HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (11.44 am): This morning I rise to bring to the attention of the House the action that the Bligh government has been undertaking during the winter recess. I note that we have been getting on with working with Queenslanders while opposition members have been talking to themselves. Yesterday they spent some time in my electorate, at the Chermside Bowls Club, talking to an empty room, from what I could see from television and from what people from the local community have told me. It is interesting that they met with a lot fewer people yesterday than I met with last week when, in the very same room, I met with some 200 members of the Chermside branch of the National Seniors Association. The opposition does not have the ability to get together a decent crowd to talk to about its issues.

I want to focus on what the Bligh government has been achieving since the parliament last met, particularly in relation to regional planning. Queensland's unique decentralised nature features regional hubs located up and down the coast and, most importantly, inland as well. The Bligh government's commitment to the Blueprint for the Bush initiative recognises this reality.

Earlier this month I was pleased to join the Deputy Premier and our colleague the Minister for Main Roads and Local Government in Charleville and Longreach to release three draft regional plans that will become the blueprint for guiding development and sustaining significant rural communities for the next two decades. The draft plans cover the central-west, Maranoa and south-west regions, and will take precedence over all other planning instruments. The draft plans will also help to integrate the planning of all levels of government and ensure the adequate provision of infrastructure and services for those regions. The plans will also provide more certainty to the residents and people in those areas that the government is planning for their future.

As rural members would appreciate, it is challenging to provide infrastructure and social services for such a vast area with a sparse population. In 1901, the time of Federation, almost eight per cent of Queensland's population lived in western Queensland. That figure is now less than half of one per cent, sitting at 0.4 per cent. However, the Bligh government is committed to providing for those Queenslanders through the development of the first-ever regional plans for outback communities. The draft plans represent the efforts of members of the regional consultative committees who have worked with planners from the Department of Infrastructure and Planning over many months to distil the key issues for each of the three regions. It has been my pleasure to represent the Deputy Premier and cochair those committees with local mayors since my appointment as the parliamentary secretary for planning. I particularly want to acknowledge the work that I was able to do with mayors Donna Stewart, Mark O'Brien and Bruce Scott.

This government is committed to outback Queensland. For instance, it is important for all Queenslanders to recognise that the Bligh government's total capital outlay of \$10,000 per person in the central-west region is more than double that of Brisbane, at \$4,200 per capita. But those figures are merely an indication of the investment in our outback regions. The Bligh government is also investing \$800,000 statewide to enhance Indigenous agribusiness development with four initiatives in western Queensland. We are spending \$18.2 million to provide over 814,000 hours of vocational education and training, which

includes \$300,000 to provide additional trade training places as part of the Queensland Skills Plan. This is expected to create 430 training places in western Queensland by 2010. Those places are desperately needed to support thriving rural industries and the great opportunities that are also arising out of energy industries. The Bligh government has also stepped up to the challenge of climate change by providing \$4.2 million to assist primary producers in western Queensland adapt to climate change and support those affected by drought in the short term.

The draft regional plans are open for community consultation until 29 October. I encourage all regional members to speak to their communities about these plans and invite them to participate in the shaping of their future. The Bligh government is listening. The Bligh government is supporting the bush to ensure it remains prosperous into the future. Our regional communities, while changing, bring vibrancy to our society and economy and should be given the support they need to continue to thrive and be a very important part of Queensland.