



Speech by

Hon. ANNA BLIGH

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

Hansard Thursday, 11 February 2010

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Sir Leo Hielscher

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.40 am): Members may have noticed that we have a very special guest in our gallery this morning. It is with great pleasure that I welcome Sir Leo Hielscher, and members of his family, the former Under Treasurer of Queensland and inaugural and current chair of the Queensland Treasury Corporation. I think all members in this chamber and many, many Queenslanders will be aware of the remarkable contribution that Sir Leo has made to the development of Queensland. Indeed, his name, the name Hielscher, is synonymous with the growth and prosperity of our state.

It is therefore with a sense of history, of a chapter drawing to a close, that I report to the House that Sir Leo Hielscher has advised the Treasurer and me that he will not seek reappointment to the role of chair of the QTC when his current term expires on 30 June. It is, however, with pleasure that I note that he will be taking up a new role with the QTC which the Treasurer will outline in more detail in a moment. I can say it was with some reluctance that the Treasurer and I accepted Sir Leo Hielscher's decision, but if anyone deserves retirement I think it is Sir Leo. It is hard to think of anyone who has worked as tirelessly as Sir Leo has for the benefit of Queensland.

Today I would like to take a brief opportunity to pay tribute to Sir Leo, his extraordinary career and the remarkable contribution he has made to our state. Sir Leo began his career in the State Audit Office in 1942 as a very fresh-faced 15-year-old. He was soon whisked away by the Royal Australian Air Force as part of the British Commonwealth occupying force to Japan at the end of the Second World War, thereby beginning a lifelong relationship with the people of Japan that has stood Queensland in very good stead during his career. During his time in Japan Sir Leo picked up what he likes to call some soldier's Japanese. For those who have travelled to Tokyo with Sir Leo as I have, and met with Japanese bankers, we all know that these language skills have stood him in very good stead and helped build many enduring relationships. However, Sir Leo would be the first to concede that some of the Japanese he learnt while undertaking military duties was not always suitable for the boardrooms.

Upon his return to Brisbane and the Audit Office in 1947 Sir Leo restarted a career within government that would see him serve as Under Treasurer of Queensland for 14 years from 1974 to 1988. During his time as Under Treasurer, Sir Leo's vision and hard work delivered much prosperity throughout Queensland. Just a few of his achievements include the establishment of Gladstone as an industrial and resources hub; negotiating key contracts with mining companies to secure royalties for the Queensland taxpayer; facilitating the development of Griffith University, the casino industry in Queensland, the Queensland cultural centre and the Hay Point and Dalrymple Bay coal terminals; the development of the Queensland government fully funded public superannuation scheme; and, of course, the establishment of the Queensland Treasury Corporation, Queensland's stand-alone financing authority, where Sir Leo has served as chair with great distinction since QTC's inception 22 years ago.

I think anyone who knows Sir Leo knows that this is a man who absolutely loves Queensland. His passion for our state is legendary and it is infectious. As QTC chair he has always been generous with his

time and ever ready to share his knowledge, experience and wisdom. On a personal note today, I want to take the opportunity to say how deeply grateful I am to him for the many insights that he shared with me during the time that I was Treasurer. I am sure I speak for all who have had the honour of being the Treasurer of Queensland during Sir Leo's stewardship in acknowledging what a great debt each of us owe personally to Sir Leo for his tireless assistance with our many duties—sometimes accompanied by a very fine scotch.

Very fittingly, Sir Leo has been honoured far and wide for his contribution to Queensland and the economy, and is greatly respected on both sides of politics and in financial markets around the world. Sir Leo, at the young age of 83, has in the last 12 months still been travelling for the QTC in financial markets around the world. He was awarded an Eisenhower Fellowship in 1973, a Knight Bachelor in 1987, an Honorary Doctorate of Griffith University in 1993 and a Companion in the Order of Australia (AC) in the General Division in 2004. I was very pleased to see him honoured as a Queensland Great in 2007.

It is for these reasons that today I am very pleased to announce a further fitting tribute to emphasise the role that Sir Leo has played in Queensland's economic development. It was Sir Leo who drove the planning, the financing and the construction of the first Gateway Bridge in the early 1980s. Indeed, the prosperity that followed this bridge could be said, I think, to be one of Sir Leo's crowning glories. Financing of this bridge was a herculean effort and some of the stories that surround it could fill a book, although I am sure Sir Leo will keep some of them to himself. As the House is well aware, my government is currently investing a further \$1.88 billion in the construction of a duplicate bridge to cater for the needs of a growing state. It is therefore with great pleasure that I advise the House that the government will rename the gateway precinct the Sir Leo Hielscher Bridges, recognising Sir Leo's contribution to Queensland. If anyone deserves two bridges named after them I think it is Sir Leo Hielscher, a remarkable man and a great Queenslander. Sir Leo, on behalf of a very grateful state, I thank you for your unrivalled contribution to Queensland and I wish you and Lady Mary every happiness in your retirement.