




Speech By
Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Record of Proceedings, 15 September 2016

MOTION: NORTH QUEENSLAND, SECESSION

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Transport and the Commonwealth Games) (6.32 pm): As already noted, the government will oppose the motion. In doing so, I note my respect for the position of the Katter's Australian Party on this issue. I know that it is a matter it feels very strongly about and it has advocated for it for an extended time. However, the government's view on this matter is that the state functions best working together as a whole. In balancing state revenue and spending across the range of government services, we need to have the widest base possible. I have never been convinced that, by cutting off the south-east corner and its revenue, the result would be the north and the west of Queensland receiving a greater amount of expenditure from their own funding sources.

We live in a decentralised state. As a society, Queenslanders have decided that the quality of the public services provided, whether they be health, education, roads or housing, should not be determined by their postcode. We know that that choice comes at a higher cost, but we do not begrudge that. We accept that that is part of the social contract that we have with the people of Queensland. As a state government, we provide for the entire state.

Today's ABS figures underline the Palaszczuk government's strong focus on providing for the entire state. Queensland's unemployment rate for August remained steady at 6.3 per cent on a trend basis. The Treasurer has announced that these latest figures show a net 41,500 jobs created since the January 2015 election. Results like that occur only by working across the state, using the full base of revenue and deploying it to the areas in most need.

The motion moved by the member for Mount Isa states—

That this House supports, in accordance with section 124 of the Commonwealth Constitution, the separation of Queensland into two states—

I will come back to section 124 in the moment—

and that the boundary of the two states is to be as recommended by an independent body, such as the current Queensland Redistribution Commission.

I note that, basically, every member who has spoken to this motion so far has presumed that we are talking about separating North Queensland from the rest of Queensland. If we take the experience that we have had with the Queensland Redistribution Commission, it is more likely to create a north-south boundary. It is not very sensible, but it is what that commission might create. I warn members to be careful of what they might wish for.

The member referred to section 124 in his motion. In opposing the motion, I thought that I would also look at section 123 of the Australian Constitution as it also relates to state boundaries. Section 123, titled 'Alteration of limits of States', states—

The Parliament of the Commonwealth may, with the consent of the Parliament of a State, and the approval of the majority of the electors of the State voting upon the question, increase, diminish, or otherwise alter the limits of the State, upon such terms and conditions as may be agreed on, and may, with the like consent, make provision respecting the effect and operation of any increase or diminution or alteration of territory in relation to any State affected.

On reflection of section 123 of the Australian Constitution, I thought that it might be worth starting a community conversation about the realignment of some of our other state borders. Why should we consider only splitting our great state when we can consider growing it? Perhaps the New South Wales parliament might want to consider the realignment of its state's borders and see the north coast of its state join the great state of Queensland? Many people have suggested moving the Queensland border south to Grafton. Granted, that might entail us rolling out stages 5 and 6 of the light rail to Byron Bay, but we are happy to consider that.

New South Wales has long complained about the Bowraville junior, Greg Inglis—I should say Shorncliffe's own Greg Inglis—playing for the Maroons. We can fix that with section 123. A few other parts of the southern state might want to be considered to be annexed by Queensland. I suspect that there might be some punters at Wentworth Park and Dapto dishlickers who might want their part of New South Wales to be an enclave of Queensland. In fact, these days, with Queensland having the lowest payroll tax in the nation, businesses in New South Wales—and, indeed, in Victoria—might want to be considered Queenslanders. I think Collins Street, Queensland and Martin Place, Queensland have a nice ring to them. That is the direction we want to be looking. We want to be looking forward to how we can grow our state, how we can improve our state and make it the best state in this country.