

BRISBANE PRESS CLUB  
OPENING STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER  
29 NOVEMBER 1974

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IN THIS CAMPAIGN, I HAVE DRAWN ATTENTION TO THE SELFISH AND SHORT-SIGHTED POLICIES OF THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT. QUEENSLAND'S FAILURE TO CO-OPERATE WITH THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS DEPRIVED THE STATE OF \$50 MILLION IN MUCH-NEEDED FUNDS AND RETARDED ITS DEVELOPMENT. THIS FAILURE TO CO-OPERATE IS NOT CONFINED TO SPECIFIC PROJECTS SUCH AS LAND COMMISSIONS AND GROWTH CENTRES. IT IS REFLECTED IN A GENERAL INDIFFERENCE ON QUEENSLAND'S PAST TO THE GREAT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE NATION. SUCH A PROBLEM IS UNEMPLOYMENT. THE SAD FACT IS THAT UNEMPLOYMENT IN QUEENSLAND IS RISING FASTER THAN ANYWHERE ELSE IN AUSTRALIA. MY GOVERNMENT IS DOING ITS BEST TO CHECK UNEMPLOYMENT. MR BJELKE-PETERSEN IS DOING NOTHING.

THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE IS IMPORTANT IN PROVIDING JOBS. IT IS DIRECTLY IMPORTANT THROUGH THE PEOPLE THE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE; IT IS INDIRECTLY IMPORTANT BECAUSE OF THE CONTRACTORS WHO WORK ON GOVERNMENT PROJECTS AND THROUGH THE EXTRA DEMAND FOR GOODS AND SERVICES CREATED BY ANY KIND OF GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE. STATE GOVERNMENTS' EXPENDITURE IS AS IMPORTANT IN CREATING JOBS AS EXPENDITURE BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT.

QUEENSLANDERS SHOULD ASK THEMSELVES WHY THE INCREASE IN UNEMPLOYMENT HAS BEEN MOST RAPID IN THIS STATE. I BELIEVE THE TWO MOST SIGNIFICANT FACTORS ARE THE FAILURE OF THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT TO CO-OPERATE WITH THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE INEFFICIENCY OF THIS STATE GOVERNMENT IN SPENDING EXTRA MONEY WE HAVE GIVEN THEM. QUEENSLAND HAS THE WORST UNEMPLOYMENT IN AUSTRALIA BECAUSE THE QUEENSLAND STATE GOVERNMENT IS UNWILLING OR UNABLE TO SPEND AMOUNTS THAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS WILLING TO OFFER.

THROUGHOUT THIS CAMPAIGN I HAVE REFERRED TO TWO AREAS IN WHICH THE QUEENSLAND STATE GOVERNMENT, UNLIKE THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN OTHER STATES WHETHER LIBERAL, LABOR OR COUNTRY PARTY, HAS REFUSED TO CO-OPERATE WITH THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT. THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL NOT ALLOW SPECULATORS TO REAP EXCESSIVE LAND DEVELOPMENT PROFITS. WE THEREFORE INSIST ON LAND PRICE STABILISATION IN OUR PROGRAM FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF GROWTH CENTRES OR IN OUR PROGRAM FOR THE ACQUISITION OF LAND TO BE DEVELOPED BY A JOINT AUSTRALIAN-STATE GOVERNMENT COMMISSION AND SOLD AT COST. WE INSIST THAT LAND SPECULATORS SHOULD NOT PROFIT FROM GOVERNMENT DECISIONS OF THIS KIND. OBVIOUSLY THE DECLARATION OF A REGION AS A GROWTH CENTRE INCREASES LAND PRICES.

ALL WE ASK MR BJELKE-PETERSEN TO DO IS TO SIGN PROMPTLY THE SAME AGREEMENTS, IN PRECISELY THE SAME TERMS, AS THOSE SIGNED BY SIR ROBERT ASKIN, MR HAMER AND SIR CHARLES COURT AND ADMINISTERED IN SOME CASES BY COUNTRY PARTY MINISTERS. NONE OF THESE PEOPLE CAN BE DESCRIBED AS CENTRALISTS. THEY COULD NOT FIND UNACCEPTABLE CONDITIONS OR HIDDEN TERMS IN THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S OFFER. THE PREMIERS OF THE OTHER LIBERAL-COUNTRY PARTY STATES HAVE ACCEPTED THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S ARGUMENT THAT THESE PROGRAMS SHOULD NOT BE AFFECTED BY LAND SPECULATION WHICH WOULD INCREASE THE COSTS OF THE PROGRAMS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE AUSTRALIAN TAXPAYER. THE RESULT IS \$50 MILLION LOST TO THIS STATE - \$50 MILLION WHICH EVEN NOW WOULD BE REFLECTED IN YOUR STATE'S ECONOMY IN THE FORM OF EXTRA DEMAND FOR GOODS AND SERVICES AND DIRECT EMPLOYMENT IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY. ONE CANNOT SAY PRECISELY HOW MANY JOBS THIS WOULD MEAN TO QUEENSLAND BUT THE FIGURE WOULD BE COUNTED IN THOUSANDS.

MANY OTHER JOBS ARE BEING LOST TO QUEENSLAND BECAUSE OF THE INEFFICIENCY OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT IN RESPONDING TO OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE. THERE ARE A LARGE NUMBER OF SEPARATE EXPENDITURE AREAS OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WHICH ARE DESIGNED TO TOP UP EXPENDITURES OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT - TO PROVIDE FURTHER FUNDS IN AREAS WHICH ARE THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY OF STATE GOVERNMENTS. TO SPEND MONEY ON SUCH PROGRAMS THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT MUST RELY ON THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE PLANNING OF EACH STATE GOVERNMENT.

BEFORE WE CAN COMMIT SUCH FUNDS TO QUEENSLAND, THE QUEENSLAND STATE GOVERNMENT MUST FIRST DRAW UP PLANS FOR NEW PROJECTS AND BE PREPARED TO IMPLEMENT THEM AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

LET ME GIVE ONE EXAMPLE. IN JUNE OF THIS YEAR I GAVE ALL STATE GOVERNMENTS A BLANK CHEQUE ON WELFARE HOUSING. I SAID THEN, AND I REPEAT IT NOW, THAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL PROVIDE ANY AMOUNTS FOR WELFARE HOUSING THAT THE STATES ARE ABLE TO SPEND. WE HAVE HONOURED THAT UNDERTAKING AND ONLY THIS MONTH WE ALLOCATED A FURTHER \$8 MILLION FOR QUEENSLAND FOR THIS PURPOSE WHEN THEY SHOWED THEY HAD THE PLANS READY AND COULD SPEND THE MONEY. THIS YEAR \$35.4 MILLION WILL BE SPENT IN QUEENSLAND UNDER THE COMMONWEALTH STATE HOUSING GRANT. THIS COMPARES WITH AN AMOUNT PAID LAST YEAR OF \$17.4 MILLION.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY IS WORSE IN QUEENSLAND THAN IN ANY OTHER STATE. IT SHOULD NOT EXIST, AND IF THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT WERE READY TO SPEND FURTHER FUNDS ON WELFARE HOUSING IT WOULD NOT EXIST. THERE IS NO REASON WHY FURTHER FUNDS SHOULD BE SPENT THIS YEAR, EXCEPT THAT THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT IS NOT PREPARED TO SPEND THEM. IT DOES NOT HAVE THE PLANS TO ACCEPT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S BLANK CHEQUE.

OTHER STATES DO. IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA LAST YEAR, WE SPENT \$32.75 MILLION UNDER THIS AGREEMENT AND FOR THIS FINANCIAL YEAR WE WILL SPEND \$45.36 MILLION. THAT IS, FOR THE TWO YEARS OF THIS AGREEMENT SOUTH AUSTRALIA - WITH A POPULATION TWO-THIRDS THAT OF QUEENSLAND - IS ABLE TO ACCEPT AND SPEND MORE THAN \$35 MILLION MORE THAN QUEENSLAND. IF THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT WERE AS EFFICIENT AS IT SHOULD BE, THE \$88 MILLION SPENT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA SHOULD CONSTITUTE ONLY TWO-THIRDS OF THE AMOUNT SPENT IN QUEENSLAND DURING THESE TWO YEARS. FOR THESE TWO YEARS, QUEENSLAND SHOULD HAVE RECEIVED OVER \$80 MILLION MORE THAN IT RECEIVED IN HOUSING GRANTS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT. THERE WOULD BE NO UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY IF THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT HOUSING AUTHORITIES WERE AS EFFECTIVE AS THOSE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

THE COMPARISON I HAVE MADE IN WELFARE HOUSING CAN BE REPEATED AGAIN AND AGAIN. IN CONTRAST WITH THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT, THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT IS APPARENTLY UNABLE TO SPEND AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT MONEY TO THE SAME DEGREE THAT SOUTH AUSTRALIA CAN, PARTICULARLY IN THE NEW PROGRAMS THAT WE HAVE INTRODUCED.

QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE HAS GOT OFF THE GROUND MORE SLOWLY THAN THAT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND THIS DEPENDS COMPLETELY ON THE ABILITY OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT TO PREPARE PLANS AND ADMINISTER PROJECTS. AREAS IN WHICH SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT CAN SPEND MORE OR ABOUT THE SAME AMOUNT AS THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT INCLUDE HOSPITALS, COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES, DENTAL HEALTH SCHEMES, MENTAL HEALTH SCHEMES, HOMES AND HOSTELS FOR AGED PERSONS, TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND URBAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

THERE HAS BEEN A MASSIVE INJECTION OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FUNDS FOR THE BUILDING OF SCHOOLS. BY NOVEMBER 18 SOUTH AUSTRALIA HAD REQUESTED 32% OF ITS ALLOCATION FOR THE YEARS 1974-75 BUT QUEENSLAND HAD REQUESTED ONLY 18% - THE LOWEST OF ANY STATE IN AUSTRALIA. IF THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT HAD REQUESTED THE SAME PROPORTION OF EDUCATION GRANTS AS THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY REQUESTED IT WOULD HAVE RECEIVED IN EXCESS OF \$3 MILLION MORE FOR SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION. BECAUSE OF ITS INABILITY TO DO SO, ITS INABILITY TO PLAN AND ADMINISTER ITS PROJECTS AS EFFICIENTLY AS THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT, THESE FURTHER FUNDS WILL NOT BE SPENT. SCHOOLS WHICH MIGHT HAVE OPENED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE FIRST SCHOOL TERM NEXT YEAR WILL NOT BE ABLE TO OPEN. IF THE FUNDS HAD BEEN SPENT, UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY IN QUEENSLAND AND IN THE DIFFICULT MONTHS AHEAD WOULD HAVE BEEN CONSIDERABLY LESS.