

# The Courier-Mail

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FIRST WITH THE NEWS

### Corby makes final plea for her freedom

Page 4

### Does the movie live up to the legend?

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Page 19

### TV's night of gongs and gaffes

The Guide

# Beattie's building blocks

## \$55 billion plan for southeast

Malcolm Cole  
STATE POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

PREMIER Peter Beattie has made a \$55 billion bid for a place in political history with a regional infrastructure plan he says will guide development in southeast Queensland for the next 20 years.

Mr Beattie and Treasurer Terry Mackenroth handed down their 20-year blueprint for transport, water, power, hospitals and schools in the southeast corner, describing it as "the most significant infrastructure strategy in the history of the state".

The South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan details more than 230 projects aimed at managing the addition of a million people to the region's population over the next two decades.

It is projected to spark a boom with more than 320,000 new jobs to be created in road and public transport building projects alone.

The plan is heavily focused on the future urban corridor to Brisbane's west, where the Government expects the population to grow by at least 250,000 in the next two decades. But it also includes road, rail and water infrastructure to help manage the burgeoning Gold and Sunshine coasts.

And in response to concerns about water, it contains provision for southeast Queensland's first new dam in 20 years.

Mr Beattie hailed the plan as the "substantive legacy" of his Government's time in office, saying it would protect the way of life Queenslanders prized.

"It maps out where and how 3.7 million people will live in the southeast corner of Queensland in 20 years, while still enjoying the lifestyle, open space and clean resources that others in Australia and in the world envy," he said. "It keeps our way of life off the endangered list, that's what it does."

Mr Mackenroth said the Government had implemented a new 10-year budget cycle for critical infrastructure, committing itself to projects well beyond the normal four-year budget period.

He said the approach would lock future governments into pushing ahead with key parts of the plan.

"That's a very important part of this plan - that we have committed the Queensland Government to doing these projects," Mr Mackenroth said. "The only way that they won't be done, if Peter and I aren't here in the future, is the government will have to say 'we are not going to do these projects'."

The property industry and regional councils praised the Government for delivering a long-term vision for population growth, and for divorcing infrastructure spending from the normal political and budget cycle.

Urban Development Institute chief executive Peter Sherrie said the Government had seemed to accept the views of stakeholders and Property Council executive director Robert Walker said that



## Political bushfires remain a danger

Craig Johnstone  
COMMENT

IT has been a long time coming but the Beattie Government has finally settled on a strategy to meet southeast Queensland's mounting infrastructure needs.

The infrastructure plan is full of big ideas and even bigger spending commitments but its success will be judged at the micro-level - how individual suburbs and communities react to the various projects it contains.

Premier Peter Beattie will have to be mindful of the plan's potential to set off a series of political bushfires as community and resident groups realise what is and isn't in the strategy.

Mr Beattie boasted yesterday that the beauty of the plan was that it took infrastructure provision out of the political cycle.

Others, including the region's increasingly powerful residents' groups, may beg to differ. For example, the western outskirts of Brisbane do handily out of the plan but badly needed transport projects for the northern outskirts, which are growing just as fast, do not figure in the strategy for some years.

The Goss government's largely unpleasant experience with proposed infrastructure provision (remember the koala tollway) scared off this government from taking on local pressure groups for the greater good of the region.

It is now paying the price, as the southeast's lack of proper public infrastructure poses a major threat to the region's quality of life and, ultimately, the Government's survival.

Developers of new housing estates have been told they will be required to share the cost of providing roads and other crucial infrastructure for their projects.

The plan will remain under the control of the Treasurer and be reviewed annually.

News Extra: Infrastructure package, pages 13-15  
Editorial: Leahy's View, Page 16  
Perspectives, Page 17

THINKING big ... Premier Peter Beattie announcing his big spending program of infrastructure initiatives. Picture: Nathan Richter

everyone would benefit from the southeast plan. But Opposition Leader Lawrence Springborg branded Mr Beattie a "sneaky little fraud", saying the Government was claiming credit for projects being funded by the Federal Government and local councils.

Liberal leader Bob Quinn said too many of the projects had been pushed back beyond the 10-year

funding cycle announced by Mr Mackenroth, "leaving the hard work to be done by other governments some time in the future".

All the projects in the plan are expected to cost around \$55 billion in today's terms, although the dollar figures will be higher as some of the projects will not be started for more than a decade.

Mr Mackenroth said the State Government expected to bear around 80 per cent of the cost, with the rest coming from Commonwealth and local governments.

He said the state would attempt to fund the projects from its budget surplus, but was prepared to go into debt if necessary.

"If we have to borrow we will borrow to fund this plan," Mr Mackenroth said. "But we'll only borrow

the money borrowed can be repaid from within the operating surplus, to make sure Queensland maintains its AAA credit rating."

He also predicted some projects would be offered as public-private partnerships, known as PPPs, but only if there was a financial benefit to taxpayers.

"I will not support PPPs just to make banks richer," he said.

## PM to attend Joh funeral

Matthew Franklin  
NATIONAL POLITICAL EDITOR

PRIME Minister John Howard will attend next Tuesday's funeral of former premier Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen.

Despite chilly relations between the two men dating from the ill-fated Joh-for-PM push in 1987, Mr Howard will speak at the service at the request of Sir Joh's widow, Lady Bjelke-Petersen.

This week activist Brian Laver and a range of people opposed to the former premier have announced plans to form a picket line

at the funeral in Kingaroy. "Yesterday, Sir Joh's grandson Justin Noack sent an open letter to Mr Laver pleading with him "to allow family, friends and well-wishers to mourn my grandfather peacefully and with dignity."

"I am not writing this letter to ask you to forget your ideals, nor to cease in your opposition to my grandfather's own ideals," Mr Noack wrote.

"Rather I write in the hope you will allow my family during this brief time to spend the day remembering him as we knew him best: as a dearly loved husband,

father, grandfather, great grandfather, and friend."

In order to attend the funeral, Mr Noack, 27, has travelled to Kingaroy from Gold Coast.

He declined to comment further last night, saying all he wanted to express was contained in the letter, but said the last time he saw his grandfather alive was just before he left for Russia in August 2003.

Continued, Page 2  
Justin Noack's letter, Page 2



YESTERDAY was a red-letter day for Lion Jason Akermanis, who has been caught up in a row over allegedly racist comments. Find out what made his day so good, on page 3

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INDEX		WEATHER	
Business	21-26	Perspectives	17
Classified Index	30	OCcidental	32
Comics	31	Sport	33-40
Crosswords	32	theGuide	32
Editorials	16	Theatre	theGuide
Leahy's View	16	Today	18-20
Letters	16	World News	10-12
Life	2	Obituaries	30

Brisbane	Shows: Max 26
Gold Coast	Shows: Max 25
Sunshine Coast	Shows: Max 25
Townsville	Mostly fine: Max 30
Rockhampton	Few showers: Max 27
Cairns	Shower or two: Max 29
Townsville	Mostly fine: Max 23
Full details	Page 31

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