



**HD** **QLD:Joh's cabinet anxious about Labor rise**

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By Melissa Grant

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BRISBANE, Jan 1 AAP - The Bjelke-Petersen era was at its peak in 1983, but the rise of Labor governments in Canberra and WA put Sir Joh's cabinet on the defensive.

The staunchly conservative government was worried that the rise of Labor would put Queensland and the High Court on a collision course, cabinet documents from 30 years ago show.

Attorney-General Sam Doumany declared that the "fundamental realignment" meant all Queensland ministers and officials had to get smarter about protecting the state's interests.

Mr Doumany said the election of the Hawke government had paved the way for the Commonwealth to start making new sexual and racial discrimination laws.

His warning came in the wake of a 1982 High Court decision which found the Bjelke-Petersen government was acting discriminatorily by blocking the **purchase** of land by Aboriginal people in northern Queensland.

He said the High Court would "no longer provide any great protection" because the majority of justices were "opposed to the long-term interests of the states".

But Labor wasn't the only party to cause Sir Joh headaches in 1983.

The Liberal Party elected Terry White as its leader on August 9, triggering a political and constitutional crisis which resulted in the dissolution of the Liberal-National coalition.

The termination of the long-standing agreement between the parties was far from ideal for Bjelke-Petersen's Nationals, two months out from the state election.

In the wake of the dissolution and successive ALP victories across the country, many commentators were predicting a Labor win at the October poll.

However, Sir Joh managed to form a minority government by convincing key Liberal Party members to defect to the Nationals.

While the Queensland government remained the same in 1983, the state itself was changing.

Brisbane continued its evolution into an international city, landing the 1988 World Expo a year after hosting the Commonwealth Games.

The government didn't waste any time preparing for the massive bicentennial celebration by rezoning industrial land in South Brisbane to build a cultural precinct that's now known as South Bank.

Meanwhile, the **Gold** Coast was preparing to get a tourist attraction of its own - the state's first casino.

Construction of Jupiter's Casino began in July after Conrad Investment Corporation, a subsidiary of Hilton Hotels, was approved as a partner in the building consortium.

Plans were also well under way for a Townsville casino, with a draft agreement for the development approved in February.

In the mood to attract more tourists to the state, the government allowed the export of 18 koalas to Japan as a publicity stunt and funded a television program promoting the Sunshine State.

But 1983 wasn't all fun and games for Queenslanders.

Extremely hot and dry conditions wreaked havoc in the state, particularly in the northwest, with more than 50 shires hit by drought.

Unemployment was on the rise, with cabinet considering community-based employment projects as the jobless rate hit 11.5 per cent.

But the struggle of ordinary Queenslanders didn't stop MPs voting to give themselves a pay rise.

The disposal of radioactive sand left over from sand **mining** was also at the fore as the government grappled with where to dump the substance, which had a half-life of 10,000 **million** years.

Sand **mining** may have been controversial, but it was full steam ahead for the **coal** industry.

Major **coal** railways were electrified and new **coal mining** areas were opened at Emerald and Moranbah in central Queensland.

Trial **coal** exports to Spain, Malaysia and **Hong Kong** were also approved.

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