



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 27 August 1998

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Overseas Visit

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.44 a.m.), by leave: I seek leave to table my report on a recent visit to Hong Kong and Japan. In doing so, I point out that about 23,000 Queenslanders owe their jobs to Hong Kong and Japan buying our goods and to tourists from Hong Kong and Japan visiting Queensland.

Leave granted.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, I have a lengthy statement. I seek your leave to incorporate it in Hansard. In doing so, I table for the record of the Parliament the full details of my report. I point out that I promised the honourable member for Nicklin in my correspondence with him that in relation to any overseas trip I would make sure that there was a detailed report to the Parliament. Here it is.

Leave granted.

About 23,000 Queenslanders owe their jobs to Hong Kong and Japan buying our goods and to tourists from Hong Kong and Japan visiting Queensland.

Many of these jobs have been put at risk by the financial downturn in several Asian countries and extensive adverse publicity about the State election.

The Hong Kong Trade Office reported that they continued to receive inquiries from people worried about Queensland's attitude towards Asia.

It was essential for me as the new Premier of Queensland to act quickly not just to minimise that risk but to boost trade and tourism so that we can actually create new jobs.

That is why I spent five days last week assuring the governments and business leaders of Hong Kong and Japan that Queensland is still a State full of friendly people.

And I told them—repeatedly—we are the greatest place in which to invest and to visit in the world.

In Hong Kong, a media lunch and conference attracted nearly 50 senior journalists and media executives to hear the positive message about Queensland.

In addition, I was able to spread my positive message to 20 million households in 29 Asia-Pacific countries in a live interview on CNN.

Other major media outlets such as Radio Television Hong Kong, TVBI, Apple Daily and Ming Pao also requested separate interviews.

About 20 million people watched the interview with TVBI, which is the operating arm of Television Broadcasts Ltd, the world's largest producer and distributor of Chinese language programmes.

I was able to send a strong positive message to more than 70 of Hong Kong's leading business people who came to a reception specially to hear what I had to say.

Many of them bore titles such as chairman, managing director, president or chief executive.

At dinner that night I spoke privately to seven of Hong Kong's most powerful business leaders, extolling Queensland's virtues as a tourist and investment destination.

In Japan about 200 leading business people, including chairmen, managing directors, presidents and chief executives, came to meet me and listen to my positive message about Queensland investment and trade opportunities at an official reception.

The reception was judged to be the most successful ever held by Queensland.

Senior executives from eight of the nine major Japanese trading houses known as Sogo Shosha—which have global sales worth double Australia's GDP—had private talks with me over dinner.

Journalists from Japan's leading news outlets, including Yomiuri Shimbun with its circulation of 4.4 million, interviewed me for nearly an hour.

The first question they asked me was about the influence of One Nation.

The media also attended my meetings with the heads of government which I set out to see: Mr Tung Chee Hwa, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, (pop: 6.5M), Governor Tsuchiya of Saitama Prefecture (pop:6.8M), Governor Iga of Ehime Prefecture (Pop: 1.5M) and Governor Knock Yokoyama of Osaka Prefecture (pop: 8.7M) .

At each of the meetings with these representatives of 23.5 million people I was able to talk at length about the wonderful investment opportunities available in Queensland.

Queensland businesses such as Claypave and Golden Circle have shown how it is possible to ignore the economic downturn and have succeeded in gaining major new contracts.

The Queensland Government is also determined to seek new markets and sales.

I have announced that we will extend the lease of our Tokyo Trade Office by five years and we are restructuring the office to put a new focus on major projects.

As a result of my visit, media coverage about Queensland has been extensive and positive.

And governments appreciated that by visiting them only two months after becoming Premier I was sending the strongest possible signal that Queensland will be a friend through the bad economic times.

And we will be even better friends in the good times.

They applauded my message that our history may be in Europe but our future is with Asia.
