



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 22 October 1998

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Overseas Visit

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.34 a.m.), by leave: Last week, I undertook a four-day visit to three key areas of the People's Republic of China—a country which I regard as one of Queensland's, if not Australia's, most significant emerging trading partners. The purpose of the visit was to strengthen existing ties with China and develop new relationships as we move towards the next millennium, particularly as much of the rest of Asia continues to suffer the effects of a serious economic downturn. As the Treasurer informed this House earlier this week, even the Asian economic dynamo, Japan, is forecasting negative to zero economic growth in the short term.

Queensland's ties with China are therefore even more important now than they were when we established sister State relations with Shanghai nine years ago. Indeed, one of the key reasons for the visit was to sign the fifth memorandum of understanding with the Mayor of Shanghai, Mr Xu Kuangdi.

The importance of this relationship with Shanghai cannot be overstated. Queensland is indeed privileged to be in such a close relationship with what is regarded as one of the growth regions of Asia, not just China. The visit to China also provided me with the opportunity to continue to spread the message to our friends in Asia that Queensland is a tolerant, multicultural society that welcomes and encourages foreign investors and foreign tourists.

Two other key objectives of the visit were achieved in the south-western municipality of Chongqing. Honourable members may be aware that this municipality, which was the capital of China during the Second World War, is the most populous in the world, with 30 million people. It was here that I was able to return about 100 ancient Chinese coins to their rightful owners. The coins, some more than 1,300 years old, were found 20 years ago in an urn in the abandoned Chinese goldminers' township of Maytown in far-north Queensland. Now, they have been returned to the Chinese and will be displayed in the Three Gorges Museum, again strengthening the cultural ties between Queensland and China.

Let me turn now to the other major achievement of the visit to Chongqing. Some honourable members, such as the member for Logan, would be aware that there has been an international competition to design the master plan for the reconstruction of the ancient city heart of Chongqing. As a measure of the scope of this project, honourable members may be interested to know that the estimated cost of this project is \$4 billion. The international competition has resulted in six consortia being short-listed for the project, including one from Queensland. During my visit to Chongqing, I was able to meet members of the Queensland consortium and to assist them in presenting their credentials to the Chongqing officials. I make no apology for standing up for Queensland companies and I wish the consortium, and other Queensland companies trying to do business in China, all the best and offer the assistance of the officers in our Trade and Investment Office in Shanghai.

As the scope of this visit was quite extensive—and much more extensive than what I have dealt with in this short statement—I seek leave to table a more comprehensive report with support material for the benefit of honourable members. I will table two copies.

Leave granted.

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