



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Pass the Hat Around Concert Tour

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.41 a.m.), by leave: I draw the attention of honourable members to a recent event that highlights the Australian spirit of mateship. I am talking about Lee Kernaghan's Pass the Hat Around concert held in Yaraka last Friday. What a display of heart-warming generosity it was. I was fortunate enough to attend the final concert of the seven-stop tour. As members would know, the Queensland Government subsidised this tour to the tune of \$50,000. The tour also took in the Queensland towns of Julia Creek and Charleville last month.

The atmosphere was electric. Locals prepared for weeks for the 40-strong group—complete with buses, trucks and a refrigerated train to transport food and drink. That is not to mention the hundreds of fans who flocked to the town in support. It is hard to work out how many were there, but it could have been as high as 3,000 by the end of the concert.

As Queenslanders, we pride ourselves on coming together in times of need. This is just another example of the Aussie spirit shining through. When Lee Kernaghan embarked on this mission, he said that his main motivation in taking the show to the bush was to give something back to communities in need and to those who have supported him.

Each one of these concerts raised somewhere between \$50,000 and \$70,000. That in itself is an enormous achievement, but the wonderful thing about this event is that every cent taken at the gate went straight back into the community. All of the proceeds have gone towards funding special projects and services for these struggling outback towns. The money has funded vital equipment, such as defibrillators for hospitals and radio sets for emergency workers. Concerts were staged in five other Australian towns with equally inspiring results.

When I heard of Lee Kernaghan's generosity, I decided that the Queensland Government should help. We wanted to back the tour because of the enormous benefits which would flow on to these communities. I am not just talking about financial benefits; I am talking about social benefit—the feeling that people care, that their work is recognised and that the hardships they face are not faced alone. I am talking about the morale boost our bushies so badly need. Our way of pitching in was to help offset the huge cost of this venture. As I said, my Government donated \$50,000 to this very worthy cause—money well spent. Along with other sponsors, including Westpac, Telstra and Toyota, we made a mammoth task just that little easier.

I take this opportunity to thank Lee Kernaghan and all the backers of the Pass the Hat Around tour for their spirit, generosity and support for the Queensland bush. They have boosted the morale of those doing it tough in the bush and achieved something that all Queenslanders can be proud of. This is the sort of event that spurs the battlers to keep battling and make Queensland the best place in the world to call home.

The honourable member for Gregory also attended that Lee Kernaghan concert. He and I spent a considerable amount of the evening talking to locals and to local constituents about a range of problems, ranging from a lack of services in the bush to the need for the provision of power, extra roads, health services, education and so on. At the end of those consultations and discussions I was left with a very strong impression of the need for the Commonwealth and the States to work even more closely to provide services to people in the bush. The cost of providing a lot of these services, such as electricity, is incredibly high. We are talking about millions and millions of dollars. It is clear that those

services should be provided, but there is a very heavy community cost—a very heavy cost for Government. In the long term, the only way those services can be provided to the bush is if there is a sympathetic Federal Government that is prepared to work with the State to make those services available.

Having spoken to the bushies over a long period of time that evening, I was touched by the need for additional services in the bush. There is no doubt that it is needed. The Queensland Government cannot do it alone. That is why I am saying to John Howard today: let's develop a partnership with Australia to look after the bush and let's make certain those services are there. I look forward to a financial contribution from the Commonwealth to make that a reality over the next few years.
