



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Parliamentary Entitlements

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.42 a.m.), by leave: I wish to advise members about important initiatives undertaken by my Government in implementing the recommendations of the report of the bipartisan select committee on parliamentary entitlements. The select committee was appointed by resolution on 30 July last year to inquire into all entitlements of the members of the Legislative Assembly. The report of the select committee was tabled on 30 October last year. I am proud to report that all but one of the select committee's recommendations have already been implemented. I thank members on both sides of politics and, in fact, all parties represented in this Parliament, including the Independents, for the work they undertook on that committee.

The Governor in Council has approved the new Members' Entitlements Handbook and the Members' Office Support Handbook to replace the former Members' Salaries, Allowances and Service Handbook. Two distinct handbooks more accurately reflect the nature of the support provided to members and are easier for members and electorate officers to use and for Parliamentary Service staff to administer. This was a commitment that was given to the Independent member for Nicklin after the election, and I am delighted that that commitment has been fulfilled.

The handbooks also contain a number of new guidelines aimed at increasing accountability and maintaining simplicity of administration. In fact, it is likely that some significant administrative savings will be effected in the delivery of some allowances without diminishing accountability. The only recommendation which has not been implemented is the select committee's recommended amendment to the definition of a recognised political party under the Parliamentary Members' Salaries Act 1988. Currently, the Parliamentary Members' Salaries Act 1998 defines a recognised political party as "one of which 10 members at least are members of the Legislative Assembly and none of such members is a Minister". The report of the select committee recommended that section 5(2) of this Act be amended to define a recognised political party as "one which is recognised under the Electoral Act 1992 and has at least 10 per cent of the members of the Legislative Assembly, or if less than 10 per cent of the members of the Legislative Assembly received at least 10 per cent of the primary vote in the general election for the Parliament."

The recent resignation of MLAs from the membership of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party highlighted an inherent defect with the select committee's definition of a recognised political party. Specifically, the second limb of the definition, which requires at least 10% of the primary vote in the last general election, is problematic in that the criterion is not tied to actual membership in the Legislative Assembly at any one time. The entitlement to recognised political party status would remain static at the time of the general election and would not cater for any subsequent changes to the party membership and representation in the House. Such a definition could produce the absurd result whereby recognised political party status could be granted to a party which might have only one or a few party members remaining in the Legislative Assembly. It would be possible, under the select committee's definition, for a single remaining party member in the House to receive additional salary benefits as the leader of a recognised political party, and other recognised political party benefits would accrue.

Accordingly, I advise the House today that my Government has not accepted the select committee's definition of a recognised political party as the suggested definition is capable of producing

absurd results in practice which accord neither with the fair and reasonable resourcing needs of the House nor with the select committee's original intentions, which I accept were honourable. Notwithstanding my Government's position on this last recommendation, I commend the select committee for its report, which has served to streamline administration and increase resource accountability in this Parliament.
