



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 26 May 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

State of Origin

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.41 a.m.): I have to report that this year's State of Origin series, of which the first match is tonight, has taken on new importance with a challenge from the New South Wales Premier, Bob Carr, adding to the stakes involved. He had the extraordinary audacity to suggest that the Blues may, in fact, win tonight and win the series. All I can say is that one has to be an optimist to live in Sydney.

I have accepted that challenge, which means that a series victory for the Maroons will result in Queensland capturing the biggest trophy of them all, the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Bob Carr has agreed that we will fly the Queensland flag—

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Let me assure the member that it will be a very big Queensland flag. I think that a flag the size of this House would be appropriate.

Bob Carr has agreed that, if Queensland wins the series—or, should I say, when Queensland wins the series—we will fly the Queensland flag over the Harbour Bridge for 48 hours. Thousands of Sydneysiders facing a bleak winter would enjoy the experience of coming under the flag of the Sunshine State for 48 hours.

Looking back in history, I have to say that I have always held the view that the Queensland/New South Wales border was put in the wrong place; it should have been moved further south to about Newcastle. That is where I think it would be appropriate to place the border. However, these days we cannot change such things without a referendum and a constitutional change, so the best that we can do is get our flag flying over Sydney.

I have agreed that, should the unthinkable happen, and I stress that this is absolutely unthinkable, in return we would prove that we are true sports by agreeing to Bob Carr's terms of flying the New South Wales flag at Suncorp-Metway stadium—Lang Park. We would also have to drape a New South Wales Rugby League flag over the shoulders of the statue of the emperor of Lang Park, Wally Lewis, who in the past led us to so many victories.

A Government member: Did you consult the pigeons?

Mr BEATTIE: Let me tell the member that even the pigeons are in favour of that, because they know that there will not be any flag draped over the statue, because we are going to win. It might be a gesture of compassion to hang the flag over the statue, in that the flag might keep the emperor warm during the cold spell that would follow such a defeat. However, as I told Bob, I have faith that the mighty Maroons will give their all for Queensland. The knowledge that their supreme effort will result in the Queensland flag being flown over the Harbour Bridge will be an extra incentive to spur them to victory.

Because of the importance of this matter, I table a letter from the Premier of New South Wales to me on this issue and my response, setting out clearly our position. I believe that, tonight, Queensland will win. To win by one point is good enough, but I reckon that Queensland will win by five or six points. All I can say is: up the Maroons!