



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 27 October 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Regional Australia Summit

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.38 a.m.), by leave: Queensland does not have a Minister at the Regional Australia Summit in Canberra today because National Party Leader Rob Borbidge withdraw a parliamentary pair that he had granted. I had nominated Tony McGrady, the Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development, to attend this summit, which is so crucial to the future of the bush. With Parliament sitting all week, it is essential for any Minister carrying out official business on the Government's behalf to have a pair so that the Government is not disadvantaged during votes on legislation.

My Government recognised that it was essential to have a representative at this summit—the relevant ministerial representative. I wanted a Minister with clout and the ability to make decisions to be there—a Minister who understands the bush, a Minister who represents the bush, such as the member for Mount Isa. Mr Borbidge, the Leader of the National Party, who leads the party—

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Toowoomba South! Order!

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Borbidge, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party, who leads the party which purports to represent the bush but does not, originally agreed to a pair for Mr McGrady, but at the 11th hour he suddenly withdrew it. He did not want Mr McGrady to attend this summit. He is a man without honour. He is a man from Surfers Paradise who plainly has no regard for the people of the bush. His actions demonstrate that he is anti-bush. We have arranged for a public servant to attend the summit, but it is not good enough.

I just remind the House that the Federal National Party Leader, John Anderson, told me in a letter how he had argued that in much of rural and regional Australia there is a great sense of alienation, of being left behind, and I share his view. This is something which I recognised and dealt with when I became the State Opposition Leader on 19 February 1996. I insisted that shadow Ministers should travel all over Queensland, listening to people and consulting with people as we developed new policies. In Government our Community Cabinet meetings and ministerial forums are providing nearly 50 occasions every year for the people in rural and regional Queensland to air their views. But while we are dealing with trying to find solutions to the problems experienced by these people, the State National Party Leader obviously does not care one jot for them.

Let me read the objectives of the summit to the House, thus highlighting their importance—

to develop a national appreciation of the challenges facing regional Australia—I would have thought any Government should be represented on that issue;

to gather ideas on how these challenges can be met—that is absolutely sensible;

to establish a series of goals for regional Australia; and

to identify the roles that Government, business/corporate and community sectors should play in achieving these goals.

That is why the Government was sending a Minister—the relevant Minister—to that summit: Mr McGrady. That is why we will be attending a Community Cabinet meeting in Cooktown this weekend.

That is why we will be going to Kingaroy. That is why we will be going to Charters Towers—to actually get out in the regions. All those Community Cabinet meetings will be happening this year.

Let all rural and regional Queenslanders know that it was the National Party Leader in this State who pulled the plug on them being represented at this summit by the relevant Minister. There are up to 380 participants and observers, but the State National Party Leader has ensured that the relevant Queensland Minister is not there. I say one thing to the Leader of the National Party: it is a shame.
