



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 24 November 1999

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Doomadgee

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.33 a.m.), by leave: The House will be aware of some unrest within the community of Doomadgee in north-west Queensland. My Government takes seriously the concerns of Doomadgee residents for quality service delivery and the concerns of our health workers for their safety. Doomadgee residents are entitled to the same level and quality of public provision as other Queenslanders and we will seek to meet that expectation. But my Government also takes equally seriously the need for those who serve remote communities to do their job without fear or intimidation.

Over the last 48 hours the Government has been working hard to restore health services in Doomadgee and to address some of the underlying issues which fuelled unfortunate incidents such as those which occurred over the weekend. While media reports have focused on tensions at the local hospital, I have spoken to a significant elder of the indigenous community who told me of a range of strongly held views about the issues confronting people in Doomadgee.

To get to the heart of these matters I am sending a Premier's task force, headed by the member for Mount Isa and Minister for Mines and Energy, to Doomadgee today after question time. I am proud to announce that he will be joined by the Executive Director of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Ms Kerrie Tim. Ms Tim, a Kalkadoon woman from this area, is the Government's most senior Aboriginal officer and she will report directly to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy who will jointly sign the resulting Cabinet submission.

The task force will be supported by a small team of officials familiar with the issues confronting remote indigenous communities and will provide the Government with first-hand information and advice. This will include health issues but extend to—

concerns about the range of services provided by the State and local government;

the operation of the criminal justice system;

and support for Doomadgee people trying to make their homes and lives in this often-isolated and difficult region of the State.

I commend the Minister for taking on this task and those public servants accompanying him as well as the other Ministers involved. I also thank the Leader of the Opposition for agreeing to provide a pair for the Minister, thus maintaining the balance of power in Parliament.

It is essential that my Government should do everything it can to try to fix this problem once and for all. We cannot impose decisions. I am demonstrating that I am prepared to lead in seeking long-term solutions and I call on the leaders in Doomadgee to seize the initiative so that together—in partnership—we can build a strong future for the community. To achieve this, the community leaders must also provide leadership. I urge them to do so today. A report on the initial findings of this task force will be made to Cabinet on Monday.

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