



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Premier's Awards; Business Confidence

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.36 a.m.), by leave: Tonight I will be attending a ceremony that underlines my Government's commitment to a richly diverse yet unified society. Tonight I will be announcing the winners in the 1999 Queensland Multicultural Service Awards. Nominations for the awards have come from across the State. There are 49 individual nominations, 25 from organisations and 29 for the school awards. I introduced the school awards last year to remind our young people of the importance of their contribution to multiculturalism. Tonight we will be congratulating two schools that have brought to life the principles of multiculturalism. I look forward to meeting these winners and the winners in other categories and generally celebrating multiculturalism.

Our society is diverse, with people from about 150 different countries of birth speaking 120 languages and practising 43 religions. We have more than 200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups in Queensland alone. Each of those different groups brought with them their traditions and cultures, thereby enriching the social fabric of this State. Multiculturalism and tolerance are not only the underlying strengths of our community, they also bring economic benefits. My Government is working with various communities to further open up opportunities in trade, investment and business. We have already held a tourism and trade summit in Brisbane at which I and other Ministers addressed leaders of our ethnic communities while sending the message to Asia and the rest of the world that we want to do business with them.

Last week's International Business Diversity Summit in Cairns brought together Government and business representatives to develop strategies for increasing exports and employment. Our Multicultural Queensland policy, which has scored significant achievements since its introduction 14 months ago, is working well. They include an additional \$1.28m for our Multicultural Assistance Program and a community relations plan which is a blueprint for Government and communities when developing multicultural programs, projects and events. There is much to celebrate about multiculturalism. Tonight we will do just that.

Also there is much to celebrate about business confidence. While we are talking about these issues, I am happy to report that business is booming under the policies of my Government. Despite the criticism and nonsense that we hear peddled from time to time by various people, business confidence and results are running at near record levels in Queensland. Yesterday the Yellow Pages Small Business Index showed that a net 20% of the State's small business proprietors reported increased sales revenues for the three months to the end of October. That is good news. This is the second-highest level recorded in Queensland since the survey started in July 1994.

So let us get this straight. I want everyone in this House and all Queenslanders to take note. In two and a half years of coalition Government, business results as recorded by the Yellow Pages survey were never this good. The coalition maintains that its industrial relations legislation was better than ours and that our legislation is detrimental to small business. The results speak for themselves. According to this survey, business has never been better since 1994 than under my Government. That is because the only higher results figure ever obtained was also under my Government in January this year. I want to underline that these are business results for the three months to the end of October and they are not predictions. It is good news from a can-do Government.