



Speech by

**Hon. PETER BEATTIE****MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL**

Hansard 3 December 1999

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT****Young Australian of the Year Awards; Environment**

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.33 a.m.), by leave: I want to tell members of this House and all Queenslanders that the future of this State is in good hands. The Queensland presentation last night of the Young Australian of the Year Awards demonstrated the depth of talent, initiative, compassion and determination we have among our young Queenslanders. Last night there were 21 finalists in seven categories. Today I congratulate the seven winners and all the other entrants throughout Queensland who are all achievers in their own right.

The Mayne Nickless Community Service Award was won by 27-year-old Melissa Anderson. The QCL Group Science and Technology Award was won by Andrew Roberts, aged 22. The Minister for Youth Affairs Career Achievement Award was won by Brett Jones, aged 27. The Unilever Environment Award was won by Justine Baillie, aged 26. The Abigroup Sports Award was won by Karrie Webb, aged 26. The Main Roads Regional Development Award was won by Daniel Grainger, aged 26. The Golden Circle Arts Award was won by Ali Wood, aged 19. Brett Jones was selected as the Network 10/Courier-Mail Young Achiever of the Year for Queensland. Brett won his award for his dedication in coaching and motivating athletes with intellectual and physical disabilities. I am sure all members would want to join me in congratulating these winners and all young Queenslanders who are seeking to make the most of their lives in these difficult times. I thank the honourable member for Chermide for representing me on that occasion.

I want to discuss another award, but I will come back to that in a minute. Over the past couple of weeks, as honourable members would know, the Federal Environment Minister has gone to some pains to paint me as somewhat of an environmental vandal. He has accused me—quite wrongly, of course—of allowing overfishing on the Great Barrier Reef, of failing to secure land-clearing controls on leasehold and freehold land, of allowing the aquaculture industry an unfettered right to pollute and of wrecking his greenhouse gas targets by allowing further private sector coal-fired electricity generators to be built—all of which is untrue. I have gone to some pains to explain that there is no truth in any of this and that all of these issues are being handled in a constructive, consultative fashion to ensure their resolution does not leave a trail of shattered, broken lives in its wake. As sure as day follows night, that is what Senator Hill's policies would produce.

But it is not for me to make this judgment about environmental credentials—far from it. As honourable members all know, I am far too humble a person for such self-aggrandisement. It is far better that a third party runs its ruler over my performance and the performance of my Government in the environmental area. And I am delighted to be able to inform honourable members that just that has in fact occurred. Just last Saturday night, the Sunshine Coast Environment Council saw fit to present me with a special award for outstanding environmental achievement. I happen to have it here. It carries the subtitle "RFA—Policy Vision". I prefer to call it the "Silver Frog Award". For the information of all members, I show that to the House. I should also add that the Queensland Timber Board and the Rainforest Conservation Society received similar awards in the same category. I point out to the Deputy Premier and the Minister for the Environment the significance of the RFA agreement. I thank my colleague Rod Welford for accepting the award on my behalf.

**Mr Cooper:** The timber industry doesn't agree; you sold them down the drain.

**Mr BEATTIE:** The timber industry is on it. It says that the award is presented to me, Keith Scott, Rod McGuinness and Aila Keto. It shows what can be done when people are brought together in a consensus model.

**Mr Cooper:** A total sell-out.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Here we go—now he is trying to undermine the RFA.

I am happy to leave judgment of my environmental performance to those best qualified to make that judgment—the environmentalists. Perhaps Senator Hill might care to table his Jabiluka, RFA and greenhouse awards from the Australian Wilderness Society. I will not hold my breath waiting. And I will not hold my breath waiting for him to cough up his fair share of the cost of introducing responsible tree-clearing controls. This refusal really intrigues me, particularly when one considers that Senator Hill has three clear wins on offer here for the one price of \$100m. These wins are greenhouse, salinity and biodiversity. I have already covered the greenhouse possibilities on offer, but to recap they are—

Firstly, he starts to meet his 8% Kyoto commitment.

Secondly, he meets his \$400m pledge to the Australian Democrats in return for their Senate support for his Government's goods and services tax.

Thirdly, he finds a worthwhile outlet for the \$180m he has squirreled away in his Budget as part of the National Greenhouse Strategy.

On biodiversity, he has a clear commitment to deliver to the people of Australia based on his Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Bill, which was passed by the Federal Parliament in June 1999 and is due to be proclaimed in the middle of next year. In order to achieve its objective, this Act—

"... enhances Australia's capacity to ensure the conservation of its biodiversity by including provisions to protect native species and in particular prevent the extinction and promote the recovery of threatened species and ensure the conservation of migratory species."

I can assure Senator Hill that there is a tonne of biodiversity on offer in the seven biogeographic regions in which tree clearing is currently occurring in Queensland. He could start with the brigalow belt, move to the mulga lands, up to the Mitchell grasslands, over to the desert uplands, down to the central Mackay coast ending up in south-east Queensland and on to the New England Tableland. He would get heaps of value for this same \$100m.

Finally, I turn to the issue of salinity. It was the Prime Minister himself who recently launched his Science, Engineering and Immigration Council's report on dryland salinity and its impact on rural industries and the landscape. This report clearly states that—

"... a sharp increase in salt loads and salinity levels is predicted for the Condamine, Balonne, Border and Warrego Rivers with estimated impacts by the year 2020."

Once the rising ground water trend has intercepted the land surface, then a uniform rate of salt discharge will enter the river system. To step in well before 2020 and save the long-suffering Queensland taxpayer a rehabilitation bill seems to me a fine way for Senator Hill to spend his \$100m. I stress that I am talking about the same \$100m on all three of these issues, not a different \$100m for each. In short, Senator Hill gets three birds with one stone, and he could not ask for better value for money. As I said earlier, I am not going to hold my breath waiting for the Prime Minister's trophyless environmental minion to grasp the opportunity.

As members in this House would know, there have been a number of exchanges between Senator Hill and me over the last few weeks initiated by Senator Hill, but nevertheless I have responded. I do think it is important that we resolve these issues in the interests of Queensland. Today I will be writing to the Prime Minister. In my letter to the Prime Minister, I will be saying this—

"My dear Prime Minister

There are a number of pressing issues for the Commonwealth and Queensland which would benefit from discussions between our two governments.

These include areas in which resolution seems close, such as funding for a Forest Agreement for South East Queensland. As you know, Queensland officials have worked closely with their counterparts in your Department to conclude negotiations about Commonwealth support for our innovative agreement between the State, timber industry and conservationists. I would be concerned therefore if resolution of this issue was compromised by being linked to other matters presently under discussion.

There are also issues on which we await a decision from the Commonwealth. These include support for the Goodwill Games, to be held in Brisbane in 2001, and support for a more cooperative approach on aquaculture regulation and delivery on Cape York Peninsula Land Use Study.

Additionally, I await the Commonwealth's final approval of Queensland's Native Title mining legislation. I am of course pleased by preliminary indications from the Federal Attorney-General that Queensland legislation complies with the Commonwealth Native Title Act. Queensland is seeking a speedy resolution to this matter following the conclusion of consultation.

Unfortunately, there remain some outstanding issues in which agreement with the Commonwealth has not yet been possible. Two of the most complex and important are vegetation management and a plan for the East Coast Trawl Fishery. On both issues I have established a consultative process which embraces all stakeholders. As with the forestry agreement, my government is working hard to reach a resolution which produces a fair and balanced outcome for the many competing interests. However, the cooperation and financial support of the Commonwealth is crucial.

On these issues, as on all aspects of Commonwealth State relations, I am keen to work closely with your government. Both levels of government have a vital interest in the environmental and economic health of the nation's third most populous state. I believe that both our governments have a unique opportunity, and indeed a responsibility, to set aside political differences and act decisively on these issues in the overall interests of the nation.

Given the importance of these issues, I therefore seek an urgent discussion to resolve outstanding differences."

I am prepared to work with the Federal Government in the interests of Queensland. I seek the cooperation of the Federal Government to resolve these issues. I look forward to a meeting with the Prime Minister and Senator Hill to resolve these issues.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Before calling the Attorney-General, I recognise in the public gallery a former member of this House, Naomi Wilson.

**Honourable members:** Hear, hear!

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