



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 8 December 1999

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.21 p.m.), in reply: I thank both the Opposition spokesman and the member for Greenslopes for their support for the Bill. I know how the chairman of the parliamentary committee has been pursuing this issue with passion, dedication, commitment and determination, and I thank him for that.

Mr Mickel: He drives me insane with his endless conversation.

Mr BEATTIE: Does he? The honourable member said that he even talks to him at length about it. Obviously, he needs to spend a bit more time talking to him about it; he needs a bit more of an education.

I will come back to what the honourable member for Indooroopilly had to say in relation to a couple of matters. In its response to the committee, the Government has agreed to these recommendations, that is, to adopt the name Queensland Ombudsman. I propose to look at these recommended amendments in the first half of 2000. I wish also to consider the outcome of the upcoming review, before considering further amendments to the Parliamentary Commissioner Act. I endorse the committee's recommendations to bring the Ombudsman closer to the Parliament, and I will look at appropriate amendments also early in 2000.

The parliamentary committee is currently conducting an extensive review of the Freedom of Information Act 1992, which will involve consideration of the role of the Information Commissioner. All honourable members know how passionate I am about freedom of information laws. I know that passion is shared by nearly all—but not all—honourable members. With those few words, can I say that I am looking forward to the review. The reason I am keen for this legislation to be passed this week is so that the review can be up and running and we can get an outcome very soon. The Attorney-General and I have agreed on the appropriate person to carry out the review. Once this legislation has been passed, the person we have agreed on will be appointed. A process has been gone through. That person will be appointed and we will get on with it. Beyond that, I look forward to the freedom of information review.
