



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 21 July 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Constitutional Convention

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.45 a.m.), by leave: I wish to draw members' attention to two significant achievements for Queensland in relation to our Constitution. They are the success of the Queensland Constitutional Convention in Gladstone from 16 to 18 June 1999, and the release of the Government's proposed consolidated Constitution of Queensland. The convention was jointly sponsored by my Government and the Commonwealth national Constitutional Centenary Foundation. The theme of the Convention was: what are the implications for the States if the Federal republic referendum is carried?

It was a significant bipartisan, national event to facilitate timely public discussion on constitutional issues and give Governments an insight into community attitudes. The convention was chaired by the Chief Justice of Queensland and attended by 120 invited delegates, including members from both sides of this House. I thank them for their attendance. Many members of the public also attended the plenary sessions of the convention.

The convention produced a communique outlining a series of options for the States if the Commonwealth referendum on a republic is passed. The convention considered the processes that the States might follow to make these decisions and other questions concerning State Constitutions, including the procedures for amendment of State Constitutions, review of State Constitutions and the preamble to any new or revised State Constitution. I table a copy of the final convention communique for the information of the House.

The State Government has drawn together the fragmented and archaic Queensland Constitution into two Bills written in plain English which will be presented to Parliament. I table a copy of the Government's Consolidation of the Queensland Constitution—Discussion Drafts—Constitution of Queensland Bill and Parliament of Queensland Bill. The discussion drafts represent the Government's response to the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee's Final Report on Consolidation of the Queensland Constitution. The discussion drafts also address recommendations included in the Parliamentary Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee's first report on the powers, rights and immunities of the Legislative Assembly, its committees and members.

The Government accepts the allocation of existing provisions between the Constitution of Queensland Bill 1999 and the Parliament of Queensland Bill 1999 as appropriate. The Government has revised the Bills, however, to make minor technical amendments as well as amendments to facilitate full consolidation of the Queensland Constitution. The revised Constitution of Queensland Bill does not include the current entrenching provisions (section 53 of the Constitution Act 1867, sections 3 and 4 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act 1934; as well as section 56 of the Constitution Act 1867). This means that the proposed consolidated Constitution could be changed by a Parliament of the day without the need to first refer the proposed change to a State referendum for approval.

At this stage, a State referendum is planned for about September 2000 to consider suggested amendments for reform of the Queensland Constitution, and the consolidated Constitution. The Government will release its proposed Constitution of Queensland Bill 1999 and Parliament of Queensland Bill 1999—and Explanatory Notes—for wide distribution in the community prior to their introduction in the House. It is expected that publication of the Government's Bills will be followed closely by the release of an issues paper by the Queensland Constitutional Review Commission. The

issues paper and the Bills are to stimulate community education and debate about the existing constitutional provisions.

The early release of the Government's Bills will assist the review exercise by providing the people of Queensland with an accessible, plain English consolidated draft Constitution endorsed by Government. I urge all members to get a copy of it and read it. It is from the Government's version of the Bills that the Queensland Constitutional Review Commission can recommend draft legislation. It is fitting that these historic provisions should now be placed on this age's new media, the Internet, so that the public can be informed about this review. The Bills will be available from today on the Government's Constitution web site at [http://www.premiers.qld.gov. au/constitution/constitution.htm](http://www.premiers.qld.gov.au/constitution/constitution.htm).
