



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 21 July 1999

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Hotel and Conference Centre, Toowoomba

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.49 a.m.), by leave: Yesterday, I made references to what this can-do Government is doing. It continues today. I am proud to give further evidence that my Government is not only a can-do Government but a Government for all Queensland. The development of a \$40m hotel and conference centre at Toowoomba took a major step forward last week when the Government signed an agreement with Malaysian businessman Dato John Fong. The heads of agreement with the Adorna group followed determined work by the Department of State Development to amalgamate the preferred land site. The land amalgamation followed constructive contributions by the Minister for Police, Tom Barton, Minister for Public Works, Mr Rob Schwarten, and their respective departmental officers; Australia Post and the Uniting Church. This project will be a landmark development for Toowoomba, providing not only a 150 room hotel but a 600 to 800 seat convention centre.

The project is set to be a major employer for the region with an estimated 250 jobs during the construction phase and a predicted 150 jobs on completion. That adds together with the jobs for the Millmerran project to which I referred yesterday.

**Mr Hamill:** The downs are doing very well under this Government.

**Mr BEATTIE:** The downs are doing very well: the Millmerran project, the coalmine— things are happening on the Darling Downs courtesy of this can-do Government.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Yes, Darling Downs Bacon—the list goes on.

More importantly, what it will do is put Toowoomba on the map of overseas business enterprises. What it will do is broaden out the economy of the Darling Downs region, which has always depended on primary industries with some secondary industries. This will add the dimension of the services sector, the fastest-growing sector in western economies. The hotel/convention complex will be situated on the block bordered by Margaret and Neil Streets, Toowoomba. The project will have a heritage feel with the retention of the post office, courthouse and police station buildings, which will all be refurbished following Queensland Heritage Council approval. After the completion of necessary council and heritage approvals, work on the project is expected to start early next year.

While others have talked, we have delivered. We have removed the road blocks and these projects are happening. We are a can-do Government, but we are also a listening Government. When Labor came to office, I promised that we would be a Government for all people—no matter where they live—and we are. I am delighted to inform honourable members that we have fulfilled a major election promise to hold 15 Community Cabinet meetings in our first year of office. This is a milestone in the Community Cabinet process and more evidence of a Labor Government delivering for Queenslanders.

These forums are a great opportunity for people to speak face to face to those who make the decisions about important local issues. So far, Community Cabinet meetings have been held in Edmonton, Ipswich, Nambour, Bundaberg, Mount Isa, Springwood, Mackay, Longreach, Barcaldine, Caboolture, the Gold Coast, Townsville, Toowoomba, Jondaryan, Rockhampton, north-west Brisbane and, more recently, Gladstone. This weekend we begin a new round of consultations with another Community Cabinet meeting being held on the Atherton Tableland in my home town of Atherton.

The public response to these forums has been overwhelming. Queenslanders appreciate the chance to have their say and they welcome this style of inclusive Government. In some cases we have been able to deliver outcomes on the same day. That is not the only way we are listening to Queenslanders. We are also taking Government to the people through quarterly ministerial regional community forums, which began on Monday. The first of these forums, as I said, was held on Monday in Loganholme, Toowoomba, Gympie, Maryborough, Gladstone, Bowen, Thuringowa and Cairns. I attended the Loganholme meeting with my colleagues the member for Chatsworth and the member for Currumbin where we met with 20 community representatives. I know first-hand—and I know that my ministerial colleagues share this view—that they were a great success.

We established this program because we know that regional communities are the future of Queensland. The regions are enjoying dynamic and unprecedented growth. We want to tap into that wealth of local knowledge and experience. Indeed, the Minister for State Development, through support for a range of business organisations in the regions, is adding another layer of development which will drive jobs growth across the State. The next round of consultations will be held in October when we will visit the Gold Coast, Ipswich, Caboolture, Hervey Bay, Emerald, Mirani, Burdekin and Tully. I invite all Queenslanders to have their say, to share their ideas and play a part in shaping the future of this great State.

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