



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Visit by Chinese President, Jiang Zemin

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.34 a.m.), by leave: Late last week, Queensland was privileged to play host to one of the most powerful leaders in the world, the President of China, Jiang Zemin. He is someone who has now enjoyed Queensland's wonderful tourism industry and all the charm that goes with it. I was fortunate enough to spend a day with the president on the Great Barrier Reef off Cairns, and the Minister for Transport was fortunate enough to enjoy a dinner with him in Port Douglas. I am pleased to tell this House that he and his entourage thoroughly enjoyed their brief visit to tropical far-north Queensland.

Jiang Zemin is one of the most respected elder statesmen of the People's Republic of China, and he expressed a very high regard for Queensland and Australia. I cannot overemphasise the importance of this official visit to our State. This was the first visit to Australia by a Chinese president. The Prime Minister indicated, when the Premiers met and had lunch with him at Kirribilli House, that this is the most senior Chinese leader to have ever visited our country. It demonstrates the strength of Queensland's relationship with greater China, and it will significantly raise Queensland's profile in China. Australia is the first nation to be granted approved destination status by China. China is one of our emerging tourism markets, and the growth potential is huge. The other day, the Minister for Tourism attended the airport to welcome a number of tourists from China.

Even though his time with us was brief, I was able to point out the natural beauties of Queensland's coastline and the Great Barrier Reef to the president. In fact, we went swimming together in the Low Isles. I want to advise the House that there is no truth in the rumour of there being a beached whale off Low Isles when I went swimming with the president. There is no truth in that at all, and I find those remarks offensive. There is absolutely no truth in that at all.

Mr Barton: No-one harpooned you, either.

Mr BEATTIE: No-one harpooned me, either.

As I said, even though the time was brief, I was able to point out the natural beauties of Queensland's coastline and the Great Barrier Reef to the president. Dr Ian Macfarlane, who was there, was able to—along with myself—talk to the president about the reef and explain it. He was fascinated by and interested in the Great Barrier Reef. The important point here is that we were able to showcase Queensland tourism to the world—to the international market and to the growing importance of the Chinese market. Here we were, with their president, highlighting the natural beauty of this State.

Queensland wants to attract Chinese visitors to this State because China offers huge potential to our tourist industry. It is the most populous country in the world. We are targeting the Chinese market with tourism campaigns similar to those that were such a success with other Asian markets. We are also currently working on exchange programs with the Chinese tourism market. I told the president that we are proud of our strong trade and cultural links with China and we want to strengthen them. The People's Republic of China is a country which I regard as one of Queensland's—if not Australia's—most significant emerging trading partners. I told Jiang Zemin that this State wants to strengthen existing ties with China and develop new relationships as we move towards the next millennium.

His visit gave the State—and me as well—an opportunity to continue to spread the message to our friends in Asia that Queensland is a tolerant, multicultural society that welcomes and encourages foreign investors and foreign tourists. The People's Republic of China is one of Queensland's emerging

major trading partners, offering lucrative markets for our traditional mining and agricultural products as well as our new exports, such as education, health, town planning, engineering and architectural services. My message was simple: Queensland is open for business with China. I believe this visit was so successful that it will make our economic and cultural ties with China grow even stronger.

On the 747 that brought the president, he was accompanied by a very large contingent of Chinese press—television, newspapers and radio—who have been able to use that visit as an opportunity to give detailed exposure of Queensland into the Chinese market. There have been a number of visits by key Ministers to China in the 15 months that my Government has been in office. Those visits will continue as part of developing trade opportunities and jobs, jobs, jobs.
