



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 16 September 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT SES Positions, Merit Selection

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.35 a.m.), by leave: On 24 August the member for Clayfield rose in this House and defamed a number of the State's decent, hardworking public servants.

Mr Foley: It was absolutely shameful.

Mr BEATTIE: He has done that on a number of occasions.

It was a disgraceful and totally unwarranted attack on the reputations of senior public servants dedicated to serving the public interests of this State. Using this House to defame individuals who cannot defend themselves and deliberately seeking to damage the careers of senior and very capable people is absolutely disgraceful. It is degrading not only to the member but also to this Parliament.

The member chose to highlight the issue of merit. I have clearly explained to this House many times my Government's commitment to merit. The process for direct appointment of several CEOs last year specifically upheld merit. Let me repeat what I said at the time: I am prepared to appoint highly meritorious people directly to a CEO position, if they meet the test of established merit, that is, they have been previously appointed to a CEO-level position through a nationally advertised merit recruitment process. This is a tougher test than the appointment process used in recent years by the Prime Minister and the Premier of Victoria. Let me repeat myself: I have every confidence in the quality and merit of the senior public servants the Opposition has seen fit to besmirch in this House under privilege.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: They are continuing that behaviour today. They have no respect for decent public servants.

Let there be no doubt about it, the qualifications and experience of the current CEOs in Queensland is world class. The member for Clayfield continues to play the person. He deliberately refuses to understand the principles at stake. He has claimed that a new directive changed the rules on 23 April 1999 so that all SES positions are now exempt from being advertised. Nothing could be further from the truth. That directive actually imposed a new and tighter requirement that SES positions normally be advertised in the national press as well as the Government Gazette and the local press. The change was to ensure that this Government's advertising was far more thorough than that required by the previous coalition Government, in which the member for Clayfield was a Minister.

If the Opposition wants to undermine public sector professionalism and probity, it is going down the right path by indulging in this sleazy and degrading personal campaign. I want every public servant in Queensland and every Queenslanders to understand that this Government values the dedication, professionalism and experience of its CEOs and the public sector generally. We will stand by the Public Service in this State, because the public sector makes a significant contribution to the quality of life of all Queenslanders by assisting in good government. We will stand by those dedicated people, who serve this community in a professional and dedicated way. My Government will stand behind these dedicated public servants. Let every public servant know that, if the coalition were ever re-elected, it would again be out to have hit lists and destabilise people's positions. If the coalition ever returns to power, no public sector position will be safe.