



Speech by

## Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 26 October 1999

### CENSURE OF MINISTER FOR MINES AND ENERGY

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (6.14 p.m.): I move—

"Delete all words after 'this House' and insert the following—

'applauds the Minister for Mines and Energy for bringing to the attention of the taxpayers of Queensland the lack of control by the Coalition Government over some Government owned corporations and notes—

- the unprecedented rules approved by State Cabinet to ensure that the salary packages of GOC senior executives are transparent and justifiable unlike during the Borbidge-Sheldon years when a blank cheque policy operated; and
- the excellent quality of the board members of GOCs under the Labor Government.' "

This morning in the House I tabled a document which I said I had been advised at that time to be the relevant material. I now table an amended document on GOC CEO salary packages and movements. In there, there have been some updates—minor ones and one major one. The major one relates to the QIC. The amount is \$385,000, with a maximum potential bonus of \$192,500. That bonus was not included in the original document tabled earlier today. I table this one.

The Leader of the Opposition has made much of this. The only reason he found out about this is that I instructed my office, as soon as I was briefed on this, to fully brief all the media on that one amendment. I now table the full document for the information of the House—such is the openness, transparency and decency of my Government. Under the Leader of the Opposition's Government, we never saw this information, because he used to hide it. Under my Government, we see openness and transparency and a decency and honesty that is unprecedented in this State. The document exposes the Leader of the Opposition—when he was in Government—as someone who had an open cheque policy. Boards were able to pay anything. Under my Government, we have strict guidelines.

The coalition members cried crocodile tears last week about the salaries of the senior executives of Government owned corporations. Today they stand exposed for their inaction, dishonesty, incompetence and disinterest. Information provided to me shows that on 11 separate occasions the salary packages of GOC executives increased by up to 65% in the two and a bit years of the Borbidge Government. What did that mean to taxpayers? An increase in salaries by almost \$1m for executives alone every year! Under the incompetent Borbidge Government there were not just grey areas, there were black holes.

The Leader of the Opposition complains about a 40% increase in relation to Energex—one that we do not support, and which the Minister revealed. Under his Government it was 52%. They had no system of vetting these salary movements—none at all. When boards did the right thing and sought to advise shareholding Ministers of substantial movements, those Ministers wrote back to say, "Don't bother." The former Treasurer, Joan Sheldon, and the former Minister for Transport, Vaughan Johnson, wrote back and said, "Don't worry about it. Set whatever level you like." It was a blank cheque. It was a nod and a wink.

The member for Gregory pleads that he refused to sign off on the \$74,500 increase for the CEO of Queensland Rail. But the letter that I tabled this morning showed that the former Minister and the former Treasurer gave the "all clear" to boards to deal with these matters as they saw fit. The coalition's stated policy was that ministerial approval—

**Mr BORBIDGE:** I rise to a point of order. The Premier is misleading the House. On previous occasions, both the shareholding Ministers had advised the board of QR not to proceed with the increase.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** Tell the truth.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will not debate the point.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Why does the Leader of the Opposition not like it? Because we tabled a letter which showed his level of incompetence and the incompetence of the former Treasurer and the former Transport Minister. They just wrote and said, "It is a matter for the board."

**Mr Borbidge** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** That is exactly what it said. The coalition's stated policy was that ministerial—

**Mr BORBIDGE:** I rise to a point of order. No such letter was written by the shareholding Ministers in respect of Queensland Rail.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I tabled that letter this morning in relation to the Port of Brisbane Authority. That was the policy that members opposite had for all of them.

**Mr Borbidge** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Look at him squirm! He does not like it, because we blew him out of the water today. He got sunk. If the member for Gregory did not agree to the QR increase, why did he not do something about it? He did nothing about it, because it was like the letter he wrote to the Port of Brisbane Authority: "It is for you and the board to go ahead."

**Mr BORBIDGE:** I rise to a point of order. If the former Minister for Transport had followed the Premier's advice, he would have been in breach of the caretaker provisions upon which the then Leader of the Opposition insisted.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The Premier's time has expired.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I rise to a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition has misrepresented and distorted the facts. It was on 15 April. They were not in caretaker mode. He continues to lie to this House.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! That is unparliamentary.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** I rise to a point of order. The relevant correspondence was forwarded to the former Minister for Transport's office in May. The election was called subsequently.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member has had his opportunity to speak during this debate. I call the Honourable the Deputy Premier.

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