



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 28 October 1999

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Native Title

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.32 a.m.), by leave: The Queensland Government has been working hard to deliver a fair and balanced process for native title management in this State. One of my very first initiatives as Premier was to establish, on behalf of the Government, an open and consultative process to deliver a workable system that reflected people's rights and allowed sensible development to progress. In other words, I got all the stakeholders together to work through a solution. A similar model was followed with the regional forest agreement and we are now following it with tree clearing. From the beginning I said that there would be a number of steps to this process: stakeholder consultation, the passage of legislation through the Parliament, compliance with the Federal Native Title Act and allowance through the Senate.

Finally, after a costly and frustrating delay, I am pleased to advise the House that I have now received confirmation from the Commonwealth Attorney-General that we have passed a critical stage in this process. Yesterday, the Federal Attorney-General advised me that he has notified the relevant parties that he proposes to make determinations under the Native Title Act that sanction the Queensland State provisions. That essentially means that, subject to consultation, the Federal Attorney-General has found that my native title regime complies with the requirements of the Federal Native Title Act.

Indigenous groups and members of the public will have until 14 January to lodge submissions, shortly after which we expect a final decision that will allow Queensland to implement its system. I urge those groups to carefully analyse the regime that I have developed on behalf of the Government as they seek to comment on its compliance with the Federal legislation. It is a good scheme that will work in everyone's interests and allow development to proceed.

The Australian Institute of Geoscientists, which represents thousands of professional mineral explorers, recently stated—

"... the Queensland ... Provisions ... provide the only sign of light at the end of a very long tunnel ... They provide the best opportunity explorers have for getting on with their job.' "

It went on to state—

"Acceptance of the Queensland provisions will provide a model for other states, creating potential for nationally uniform provisions with obvious benefits for industry."

The geoscientists have struck gold here. This is indeed a model that should be followed by all other State jurisdictions. The geoscientists have cut through the overburden of political posturing and they have reached the nugget of truth, which is that my Government's scheme is the one that can deliver the outcomes that people have been seeking for some years now.

As members will know, to reach this critical stage we have undergone a long and laborious process of consultation with Federal officials, with a number of technical amendments being brought back to this Parliament at the request of the Federal coalition Government. For a process that was established by the Howard Government, we were hoping that they would be able to allow alternative State provisions to be implemented within six months of their passage through Parliament. Instead, now it will probably take about 20 months from when we started the process in July 1998 to when we finish it early next year.

This point has not been lost on the Queensland Mining Council, which wrote to Daryl Williams last week, commenting—

"We do not see the level of urgency that we would have expected given it was the Commonwealth's initiative to have states implement alternative state regimes, and with a disastrous scenario for exploration being evidenced month after month by tumbling investment."

I table a copy of the letter for the information of the House. I thank the Queensland Mining Council for its unsolicited support. It obviously had an impact. I also table a copy of the letter from Daryl Williams.

No thanks can be given to the Nationals and Liberals who sit across the Chamber, who chose not to exercise whatever influence they have over their Federal colleagues. Perhaps that was because they have no influence at all and are regarded as a joke in Canberra. I am confident that my native title scheme complies with the Federal legislation, and Mr Williams has vindicated my position. I am confident that my scheme will withstand the scrutiny of the Senate or any other forum, because my scheme is fundamentally fair and balanced.

I am delighted to have the support of the Federal coalition Government for the State's scheme. This is the outcome of sensible consultation with the stakeholders, which has delivered a Queensland solution that should become the national model. I table those documents.

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