



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 10 November 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Dr G. Davis; Comments by Member for Clayfield

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (11.47 a.m.), by leave: Yesterday, the member for Clayfield acknowledged a visit to the public gallery by school children from his electorate. He then proceeded to give those innocent bystanders a graphic lesson in why politics and politicians are so often held in contempt, as they had to witness what was, in my view, a callous, cowardly and unprovoked attack by Mr Santoro on a public servant who, of course, cannot defend himself in this place. However, I am honoured to defend the Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Dr Glyn Davis. I remain ashamed that the Leader of the Opposition allows his shadow Ministers to behave with such breathtaking disregard for the reputation of others.

Mr Santoro, the member for Clayfield, asserts that Dr Davis was appointed as a chief executive without going through a merit and selection process. He knows that this is not the case. Dr Davis was appointed to a director-general's position in late 1994 following national advertisement and interview by an eminent and independent selection committee. As I have told the House many times, my Government has appointed CEOs without advertisement only when they have gone through a full merit process in either Queensland or a comparable jurisdiction. We do so in accordance with the Public Service Act proposed and passed by a coalition Government. It is clear from his comments that Mr Santoro, the member for Clayfield, has no real information about the operations of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Dr Davis has proved a talented and able administrator. Let the House note a simple test: when the heads of Premiers' departments from every State and Territory in Australia recently met to elect one of their number as their chair and senior spokesperson for negotiations with the Commonwealth Government, they unanimously chose this outstanding senior public servant from Queensland. That was a decision made by both sides of politics.

The member for Clayfield, Mr Santoro, then criticised travel and entertainment by Dr Davis. He did not mention that every Director-General of the Premier's Department travels with the Premier of the day to Community Cabinet meetings and to major national and international meetings. I accept that costs are associated with Community Cabinet meetings, but this is about listening to the community.

The member for Clayfield did not compare the travel expenses of Dr Davis with those of his immediate predecessor, Mr Peter Ellis. In 1997-98 alone, Mr Ellis travelled overseas with Premier Borbidge to Hong Kong, Los Angeles, London and Paris, incurring travel costs in the course of his duty, just as Dr Davis does now. I have no criticism of Mr Ellis doing that. That was appropriate and he should have been there. The unhappy students from the Eagle Junction State School were then subjected to an outrageous set of assertions about entertainment by the director-general. Dr Davis entertains modestly and appropriately as required by his role as the head of the Queensland Public Service and as a representative of the Premier and the Queensland Government in a range of settings. For example, when the secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, Mr Max Moore-Wilton, recently sought discussions with the Queensland Government, Dr Davis provided him with standard departmental fare—a working lunch in a conference room. Indeed, Mr Santoro remains suspiciously quiet about the costs of entertainment, as he knows from the Estimates hearings that typical working lunches provided by Dr Davis comprise sandwiches, orange juice and a fruit platter.

Mr Santoro made reference also to Peter Bridgman. For the information of the House, I table his personal details, together with his work history. I point out to the House that Peter Bridgman has worked for both sides of politics and, I believe, provided good advice to both sides of politics. If we look at his history, we see that he has worked for both sides of politics—and I have not worked out the exact dates—going back to Terry White and other Ministers. I think we need to rise above this sort of personal attack. For the information of the House, I table the information in relation to Peter Bridgman.
