



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 12 April 2000

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Smithsonian Institution

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.33 a.m.), by leave: Sometimes a simple signature marks a watershed, and that is the case with the agreement I have signed with the prestigious Smithsonian Institution in Washington on 24 March this year on behalf of the Queensland Government. This is the first time the Smithsonian Institution, the world's foremost research and museum complex, has signed such a broad-reaching agreement with a Government outside of the USA. The agreement marks our emergence as the Smart State and entry into the world's big league of new economies featuring services, innovation and knowledge-based industries. It opens the doors of the institution's 16 museums and galleries and 12 research facilities for our scholars, teachers and scientists.

Over the next five years this agreement is expected to enhance Queensland's position as the Smart State through joint projects such as: firstly, development of online educational materials on environmental and other topical issues that will be accessible to teachers and students throughout the State and in selected American schools; secondly, joint research projects and related activities in rainforest and reef, including an international conference and research into reef issues; thirdly, establishing in Queensland four museum magnet schools linked electronically to the Smithsonian and Queensland museums and Smithsonian magnet schools in Washington DC to share in the wealth of Smithsonian research, digitised artefacts and expertise on the use of objects as a teaching strategy and secondary school renewal; fourthly, establishing an international sustainable environmental and management network with shared membership to foster inter-agency and inter-disciplinary collaboration on sustainable development and environmental management issues; fifthly, a jointly funded Queensland/Smithsonian fellowship program with six fellowships a year; and, sixthly, the Smithsonian representation on a task force to advise on the potential functions, design and development and financing of the landmark building on Roma Street parklands.

The agreement is only the beginning of what will be an evolving and ongoing series of projects that will benefit both Queensland and the United States. Although the Smithsonian Institution has a lot to offer Queensland, we know from the support we have received from the Smithsonian Institution that we have a lot to offer the Smithsonian in relation to rainforest and reef research, environmental management, education and ecotourism and delivery of online education in distant mode. Queensland's research efforts, educational capability and international profile will all benefit as a result of this historic agreement.

It was only in July last year that Queensland and the Smithsonian Institution signed a memorandum of understanding in which both parties agreed to explore opportunities for collaboration over the following 12 months. It was expected that it would be July this year before any detailed proposals would be developed, but exchange visits and inspections by Smithsonian and Queensland Government representatives have produced these exciting developments very quickly. The agreement also means the Smithsonian Institution will participate in a special task force to advise on the landmark building planned for the heart of the Roma Street parklands. The Smithsonian believes the landmark building presents Queensland with a major opportunity to develop an icon project which is innovative, unique and world class. This is in keeping with our Smart State initiatives.

The task force, chaired by Martin Albrecht, Managing Director of Thiess Contractors Pty Ltd, is charged with clearly defining the function of the building, developing a brief for the building's design, preparing a list of funding operations and reporting directly to me by November. Development of this magnitude needs meticulous planning and I envisage the process taking up to a decade from start to finish. We want to ensure the building becomes a major attraction and talking point not just for Queensland but for Australia. I table for the information of the House some relevant media coverage of that trip which I think highlights its significance.
