



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 30 May 2000

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Fiji

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.45 a.m.), by leave: State Cabinet yesterday gave its wholehearted and unanimous support for the democratically elected Fijian Government and urged the Federal Government to apply maximum diplomatic pressure for the immediate return of democracy in Fiji. State Cabinet recorded its total opposition to the violent coup that has already resulted in at least one killing.

Australia must be seen to totally oppose the downfall of a democracy in one of our near neighbours, and we must give our total support for a democratically elected Government and for a return to democracy as soon as possible. Queensland has close ties to Fiji and we have a significant Fijian population living in Queensland who all have relatives and friends who are suffering from the descent into lawlessness, looting and violence. It is essential that the Queensland Government speaks out for democracy in Fiji and that we give bipartisan support for strong action from the Federal Government.

The Queensland Government shares the concern of other democratic Governments and the general community about the situation in Fiji. We are a culturally diverse society and find it unacceptable that racial divisions have led to this crisis. We are also concerned about the Fijian community here in Queensland, whose members are worried about these developments in their country of origin.

During the weekend representations were made by community leaders both at the Community Cabinet meeting at Redlands and to the Executive Director of Multicultural Affairs in my department, who attended a meeting of leaders of the local Fijian and Indian communities. Those present included the President of the Fijian Association of Queensland, Dr Viliaseri Tuicolo, who is an indigenous Fijian and related to one of the members of the Fijian Council of Chiefs. He has consistently worked to unite the Fijian community here and to ensure that those of all backgrounds can succeed in Australia and Queensland. He is highly respected by the entire spectrum of the community and was recommended for a Queensland Multicultural Service Award, which he received in 1998.

At these meetings the community representatives expressed concern about the situation in Fiji, the welfare of family and friends and the future of the nation. I am heartened to learn that all community leaders present at the meeting expressed their unequivocal commitment to multiculturalism. My Government and my department will continue to be alert to developments and to work with the Fijian community in Queensland. We share their concerns and hope that the situation might be peacefully resolved. We urge the Federal Government to take urgent and appropriate action and do everything it possibly can to see the restoration of democracy in Fiji.

I move—

"That this statement be noted by the House."

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