



Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Earth Charter

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (9.52 a.m.), by leave: Last week I represented the Beattie Labor government at the Asia-Pacific Earth Charter Conference here in Brisbane. The Earth Charter had its genesis in 1987 in a call for a set of sustainable development principles by the World Commission on Environment and Development.

The Earth Charter is a powerful statement of humanity's aspirations for the 21st century. It pursues justice, harmony and sustainability—three key requirements for a successful society. These principles fit well with this government's priorities of valuing the environment, engaging the community and building Queensland's regions. The state government's environmental priorities and how they complement the goals of the charter can play an important role in promoting harmony, delivering justice and facilitating sustainability. Astute governments recognise the significant roles that individuals, groups, corporations and communities can play. This government has taken substantial steps to further stimulate their involvement.

The Premier has recently released the government's community engagement directions statement, which aims to more constructively involve communities in decision making processes. The government's commitment to this direction can be seen in a range of other areas. One example is the affirmation of the rights of indigenous people, both through management plans for Cape York Peninsula and in moves to involve traditional landowners in management of national parks. The government has also recently released the Queensland greenhouse policy framework and a comprehensive state coastal management plan.

Australia is the driest continent on earth. In recognition of this, the Premier and I released a comprehensive water recycling strategy for Queensland in Bundaberg at the community cabinet meeting last weekend. By the way, the community cabinet process itself is another example of this government engaging the community. There are numerous other examples of the great strides this government is taking towards developing a more sustainable economy in Queensland. We have initiated, as we promised at the last election, the Great Barrier Reef protection plan, and implementation of the historic stakeholder driven South-East Queensland Forest Agreement continues.

The Environmental Protection Agency is working to achieve the shift towards more sustainable development. A Sustainable Industries Division of the EPA was established to actively promote sustainable practices within Queensland businesses, showing them that clean and green operations can help improve both profitability and the environment. So far, about 500 companies have applied to take part in the Industry Greenhouse Partnership Program, while 26 strategic industry collaboration agreements have been signed between peak industry organisations and the Environmental Protection Agency.

On top of this work is the state government's push to expand the role of ethanol and solar power as renewable energy sources within Queensland. I have been running my ministerial car on E10, a petrol-ethanol blend, for almost six months. We are currently exploring plans to introduce this fuel to the wider community. Mr Speaker, you might hear a little more from me and the honourable minister beside me in the very near future on that subject. The EPA is also introducing renewable power schemes to several remote national parks, as well as rolling out solar energy to more than 15 schools

through the Solar Cooler Schools Program. This is the Smart State strategy in action, providing a sustainable foundation for our future and protecting our unique environment.

Sadly, recent international events have highlighted the lack of global harmony and the need for commitment to a document such as the Earth Charter. The charter is due to be presented to the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development at Johannesburg next year. The Queensland government is providing input into the position Australia will present at Johannesburg and will also have a representative at the world summit.

I commend the principles of the Earth Charter to my parliamentary colleagues and reaffirm this government's commitment to its objectives. In a world which is maimed by the wounds of war, there is a special role for healing statements such as the Earth Charter. In every injured body, the healthy parts must heal those parts which are not. It is the same with the world's body politic. Queensland had a special role as host of the Earth Charter Conference, and we have a special role as an uninjured limb of the earth's body politic to promote its healing.
