



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Terrorism, United States

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.31 a.m.), by leave: Mr Deputy Speaker and members, today we woke to news of a terrible tragedy. The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington stunned the world and left us numb with disbelief. There are indications that Australians may be among the victims of these criminal acts. This is a time for prayer and hope for those anxiously awaiting news of loved ones. On behalf of this parliament and all Queenslanders, I extend our condolences to the families of all who have lost loved ones in this tragedy. As a mark of respect, flags at all state government buildings will fly at half-mast today.

There is no place for terrorism in this world. Today's attacks on democracy have changed the world forever. A lot of innocent people went to work in New York and Washington and lost their lives as a result of this barbarous act of terrorism. Our hearts go out to their families and to their friends. Nothing can justify this mindless terrorism—mindless terrorism which has destroyed the innocent lives of ordinary citizens. As I say, there is no place in our world for this mindless terrorism.

We need to ensure that, out of this tragedy, if there must be change then it must be change for the better. It is desperately important that we preserve democracy and that we cherish the great democracy in which we live. I hope all Australians today think about our democracy and think about just how great it is and cherish it for what it is, because it is free and it is safe and we have to fight to keep it that way.

I will discuss the upcoming CHOGM meeting planned for Brisbane from 6 to 9 October with the Prime Minister. I have indicated to his office that I want to talk to him, and I will be talking to the Acting Prime Minister a little later this morning. Queensland will be involved in discussions with the federal government and the Commonwealth secretariat on the future of CHOGM. But the standards of planning have been maintained at the highest international level and we stand prepared to host the event. I have reaffirmed with the Police Commissioner this morning that our security arrangements are in place. CHOGM is about improving the life chances of people from around the world, of all people in the world.

Democracy is like a fragile flower. It has to be protected. You cannot hide it. You cannot stop people from meeting. If you do that, then what is the next step? Does this parliament stop meeting? Does the federal parliament stop meeting? Does the British parliament stop meeting? Does the Congress stop meeting? You have to be clear: democracy is about people getting together to solve problems. It is a fundamental right that people have to get together to meet. If we lose that, then democracy is at risk. The flower of democracy can be easily crushed, and without care it will wither and die. The values of democracy dictate that elected leaders must meet and that democratic leaders have to come together to talk and grapple with the problems of the world in order to find solutions to improve people's lives. People must not be afraid to go about their lawful business. That is the fundamental plank. They must not be afraid to travel by plane to other countries.

The Queensland government's United States office in Los Angeles has been closed today and all staff have been told to stay home. It will reopen its doors as soon as possible. I want to reassure the people of Queensland that appropriate security surrounds former President Bill Clinton, who is in transit in Queensland at the moment. He is understandably keen to return to the United States in the near future.

If this must be a day that changed the world, then we must ensure that it ultimately changes the world for the better. Each of us must be committed to that purpose. The perpetrators of this outrage must be dealt with. We cannot let terrorism succeed. They cannot be allowed to go unpunished. But then we must all work to create a world where we defuse the hate that fuels terrorism, and that is important. We have to work to build a world that defuses the hate that fuels terrorism.

At the conclusion of this statement, I will move that it be noted to allow the Leader of the Opposition to make a statement. He and I have had two discussions this morning about parliament today, and I thank him for his cooperation. Following that, I will ask members to rise for a minute's silence. Then, as a mark of respect to all those who have lost their lives and, of course, to their families, I will move that the House adjourn until 9.30 a.m. tomorrow.

This is a tragic day. It is a tragic day for the world. It is a day that all of us will remember. What we have to do as elected representatives, together with the high honour and responsibility that goes with that, is to use every bit of resolve we have to make the world a better place. I would hope that after today everyone would commit themselves to that purpose. We have a high honour. We have to take the responsibility that goes with it. I move—

That this statement be noted.
