



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 13 September 2001

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT CHOGM

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.34 a.m.), by leave: Another day has passed, and still we struggle to come to terms with the terrorist attacks that killed so many innocent people in the United States on Tuesday evening. As the death toll mounts in New York and Washington, it is hard to accept that terrorism on this frightening scale has become part of our world.

Naturally, many have now raised the question of whether the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, scheduled for Queensland in early October, should proceed. Such concerns are entirely understandable. The events of 11 September have stunned the world and prompted a major reassessment of CHOGM security risks.

Queensland government departments and, in particular, the Queensland Police Service have been providing advice and data as Canberra and the Commonwealth secretariat in London work through the issues. Yesterday I met with the head of the CHOGM task force, Hugh Craft, and his senior officials. Also present were Deputy Premier Terry Mackenroth, Police Minister Tony McGrady, Queensland Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson, the head of the CHOGM Planning Unit, Chief Superintendent Bob Watson, and Premier's Department staff. We talked through the implications for the CHOGM agenda and reviewed security preparations for the meeting.

I can assure everyone that Queensland police are well prepared for CHOGM. They have the full support of the Australian Defence Forces, the Australian Federal Police, ASIO and other security agencies.

I also spoke with the Acting Prime Minister, John Anderson, and hope to speak with the Prime Minister when he returns to Australia from the United States. I want to make it perfectly clear that whatever decision the federal government and Commonwealth secretariat reach, Queensland will support that decision.

In this place yesterday I expressed my strong view that our democracy should be cherished and protected. I believe that Commonwealth leaders should have the opportunity to come together in a spirit of peace and goodwill without fear of intimidation by terrorists.

The preparations for all aspects of CHOGM, including security matters, are to the highest international standards, and nothing that has happened in recent days has altered that fact. That is the message I conveyed to Acting Prime Minister John Anderson when I spoke to him yesterday. I also assured him of our bipartisan support on this matter and our view that CHOGM should proceed.

Last night I, along with Judy Spence, the relevant minister, met with CHOGM volunteers during a general orientation evening at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre. I was impressed by their enthusiasm for CHOGM and their desire for this important international event to proceed. Indeed, applications were received during the day yesterday from people wanting to volunteer.

Sometimes single moments change everything we know about the world. Events in America have reminded us that violence is still the preferred method for a tiny, tiny percentage of people and that a world governed by discussion remains in their view just a dream. But it is more than a dream for us. We should not give up the ideal that democracy is better than brute force, dialogue better than terrorism, peace always the only honourable way to settle differences.

The forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Brisbane does place a special responsibility on Queensland to provide security for both guests and residents. For that reason, CHOGM will be declared a 'special event' for the purposes of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act. This declaration, which I announced with the Police Minister on 20 August, gives police certain exceptional powers that will only be used from 1 to 10 October and only in specified areas.

The powers mainly relate to allowing police to search bags in specific areas where there is a reasonable belief that a person may be concealing something which could be used illegally at CHOGM. These powers will be extended to police at a limited number of special event sites to ensure that public safety is maintained and to ensure the safety of officials and their guests.

As well, certain items will be prohibited. These include animal manure, a major component part of a firearm, crossbows and spear guns. I think members would agree that these are commonsense restrictions. These powers are designed to have minimum impact on the normal rights of people and will cause minimum disruption to normal movements around special event sites.

We announced in January last year that we would make it possible to temporarily increase police powers to cover specific major events in this way. I said then that, from the Queensland government's perspective, we have to put the safety and security of all Queenslanders and visitors first when we are hosting the large number of major events planned over the next few years.

The use of these special event powers at the Olympic Games' soccer tournament around the Gabba and associated hotels was reviewed and there was no adverse comment in relation to police actions during that event. Queensland police have demonstrated that they have the capacity to use these powers in a manner that provides only minimum disruption for the public.

Police are very aware of the need to meet the community's expectations when using these powers and they will receive extensive training prior to the event. In consultation with the Council of Civil Liberties, we will also be making arrangements for a representative to act as a legal observer at CHOGM. There will be a full report on how the powers are used at CHOGM so that we can assess the impacts and outcomes of this measure.

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