



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Regional Parliament

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.46 a.m.), by leave: I am delighted to confirm that this parliament is to meet in Townsville next year. For the first time in its 141-year history, it will meet outside of Brisbane, and it is about time. It is the honouring of our election commitment, and I was delighted to announce it with you, Mr Speaker. It will be a special moment for all members of the 50th Parliament because we are going to make history together. Parliament first sat in Brisbane in May 1860. For the first eight years, parliament used to sit in the convict barracks in the centre of Brisbane, near where the Myer Centre is located today. In 1868, it shifted to George Street and has always met here since. We all have to remember that Queensland is Australia's most decentralised state. Brisbane is the capital of Queensland and it is important, but there is also more to Queensland than Brisbane, and we have to continue to remember that.

It comes as no surprise that regional centres want to have the second sitting of the regional parliament. Cairns and its members have been most vocal and are already showing a keen interest in the next sitting. No doubt other regional centres are, too. That decision and its placement will be for another time. Townsville has warmly welcomed the sitting. The five Townsville based government members—and I use Townsville in a general sense—include the member for Townsville and Emergency Services Minister, Mike Reynolds; the member for Mundingburra and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health, Lindy Nelson-Carr; the member for Thuringowa, Anita Phillips; the member for Charters Towers, Christine Scott; and the member for Burdekin, Steve Rodgers. They have all welcomed the decision, and I thank them for that.

Even the Liberal member for Herbert, Peter Lindsay, says it would be terrific. The President of the Townsville Chamber of Commerce, Peter Duffy, says it will offer a unique opportunity for business. The Townsville Enterprise Chief Executive, Richard Power, said the sitting's most important aspect is the profiling on offer for Townsville and Thuringowa and the North Queensland region. The *Townsville Bulletin* rightly says that it will offer a 'grand opportunity for North Queenslanders to see for themselves how democracy works'. The Townsville Mayor, Tony Mooney, has described it as a wonderful initiative. And in a rare moment of fairness and objectivity, even the *Courier-Mail* got it right in its editorial of 10 October when it correctly highlighted—

This is an important step in bringing parliament to the people and will enable many in the far north, particularly schoolchildren, to see it.

I agree. But there's more.

The father of the House, the member for Keppel—the former member for Peak Downs and Belyando—has drawn on his vast knowledge of this great institution and his length of service in seeking to look after the people of regional Queensland to lobby for any future sittings to be held on the Capricorn Coast.

Mr Lester: Absolutely.

Mr BEATTIE: Not only that, he made a pertinent point when speaking on ABC Radio in Rockhampton on 9 October when he said—

Mr Lester: Do an extra sitting and bring it to the Capricorn Coast.

Mr BEATTIE: Hang on, Vince. I am going to quote you, mate. Don't get too excited. He said—

It would give people an opportunity to see how parliament works. But in addition to that, of course, parliamentarians would have the opportunity themselves to see what a wonderful buoyant area we have.

Thanks, Vince. I am sure all parochial regional members would hold views similar to his. As a lad who grew up in the country, I do. I, too, think the people of regional Queensland would cherish the chance to see parliament sit in their area.

This is all about ensuring that all Queenslanders feel part of the state's decision making and democratic processes, but there was one whinger. Who do honourable members think that was? Why would the Opposition Leader attack Townsville, Thuringowa and regional Queensland? It stuns me. After all, this decision is part of an election promise we made in the lead-up to the election. We were given the mandate to hold one parliament per term in a regional area.

Mr Mackenroth: Whilst he has been missing from Brisbane, we thought he was out talking to regional Queensland.

Mr BEATTIE: I thought he was in the bush, but he hates the bush because he is out there saying that we should not have parliament outside of Brisbane.

Townsville is ideal. It has all the logistics. It is in an ideal central northern location. It is four hours drive from Cairns in the north—the same to Mackay in the south and Hughenden to the west. So everybody can get together. This decision is all about one Queensland—one that includes and welcomes rather than continually criticises and whinges. It is a win for all.

Taking the parliament to the people is what democracy is all about. I am happy to say to the people of regional and country Queensland: we think of you, we want you to share in the democratic process and we will continue to look after the regions and the bush.
