



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 18 March 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Counterterrorism

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.18 a.m.): The terrorist bombings in Spain on 11 March are a jarring reminder of our world's potential for evil. All members will join me to extend sincere sympathies to the people of Spain and congratulate the millions of Spaniards who marched in defiance of terrorism in the aftermath of those attacks. Terrorism hates strength and defiance, so I am pleased to remind the House that Australian governments have grown stronger and more united in their response to the terror threat. On Monday, four days after the Spanish assault, the National Counterterrorism Committee, which comprises representatives from all states, territories and the Commonwealth, held a teleconference to discuss security arrangements, including transport security, in light of the Madrid bombings.

Five senior Queensland officials from my department and the departments of Police, Health, Emergency Services and Transport took part. On the same day the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee delivered timely recommendations about investigations of terrorist activity as part of its first three-year review of the Crime and Misconduct Commission. The PCMC recommended extending the CMC's coercive powers for terrorism investigations. I can now inform the House that the government will broadly implement the majority of the PCMC's terrorism related recommendations in a bill expected to be introduced to parliament next month. The Terrorism (Community Safety) Amendment Bill 2004 will strike the fine balance between protecting civil liberties and acknowledging the terrorism threat. It is all about preventing terrorism and being better able to respond to a terrorist event. The bill results from a government review of the strength of Queensland's legislation from a counterterrorism perspective.

At the end of last year cabinet approved the drafting of a bill based on submissions from the CMC, similar to its submissions to the PCMC. Policy officers are now studying the PCMC report as they refine and finalise the bill for its final consideration by cabinet. It will legislatively refer the investigation of terrorist related major crime to the CMC. The CMC and police will be empowered to conduct surveillance of a place where there may be terrorist activity but where the actual names of the people involved are not known. The existing law only allows surveillance of a specific person, not of property. The CMC will have the power to access financial records or seize travel documents of people suspected of involvement in terrorism. The bill will also contain other measures to improve our law enforcement agencies' ability to deal with terrorism and to ensure better cooperation between Queensland and interstate police on terrorist matters. Overall, it will mean that the police and the CMC have more muscle to investigate, prevent and respond to terrorist activity.

For the information of the House, I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my ministerial statement in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The government also has initiatives to address security of critical and mass gatherings infrastructure, including transport infrastructure. Queensland Rail has done detailed risk assessments of its key mass transport facilities and put in place preventative security measures.

The Queensland Police Services rail squad also bolsters rail security.

Last year, owners and operators of critical infrastructure—including transport infrastructure—were briefed by the two State counter-terrorism co-ordination units, and they will be kept updated.

The government will never baulk at new ideas if they have the potential to make Queensland more secure, just as we will work in genuine partnerships with other governments and businesses to reinforce Queensland's safety.