



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 22 April 2004

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Middle East, Trade Opportunities

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.49 a.m.): There are a couple of other quick things that I want to make reference to. The Middle East is an important and growing market for Queensland. Exports to the region exceeded \$400 million in 2002-03. I visited the United Arab Emirates and Qatar in February last year and saw for myself the massive opportunities available there and moved quickly to capitalise on them.

On my return I established a Middle East specialist unit, which has implemented a number of successful strategies to help Queensland companies win more business in the region. The Queensland representative began to work in Doha, the capital of Qatar, in late March this year. Doha is strategically located in the centre of the gulf. I seek leave to have more details incorporated in *Hansard*, because I want everyone to understand what we are seeking to do.

Leave granted.

Furthermore, our Queensland special representative to the Middle East, the Honourable Mike Ahern, has been successful in building a large network of strong and productive relationships in the region.

Queensland companies such as GRM, Jimboomba Turf, Green Concepts and Austchilli have leveraged from Queensland Government contacts to win business in the region and Wagner Composites in Toowoomba have agreed on the terms of a joint venture in the United Arab Emirates.

A recent mission led by the Department of Primary Industries, supported by my Department's Trade Division, has resulted in Queensland company, Pars Ram, reporting orders for grains and pulses valued at A\$8 million from Libya and Egypt.

The Queensland Government is focusing on those Middle East countries that offer the best prospects for Queensland exporters. That makes good commercial sense.

Our major priorities are the Gulf Cooperation Council countries—Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Saudi Arabia.

Of these, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Saudi Arabia are our current main focus. Emerging markets for agribusiness supplies and services, such as Libya and Sudan, are also a focus.

Queensland links with the region are many and varied. Queensland has a memorandum of understanding with the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

This special relationship has enabled Queensland companies to gain access to the Chamber's membership of over 40,000 in the largest and richest Emirate in the United Arab Emirates.

Regular visits by Mike Ahern and Trade and International Operations Division staff have resulted in close relationships with chambers of commerce and major companies and institutions in other Emirates, including Dubai and Sharjah, and in Jeddah and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia.

Our Queensland representative in the Middle East is located in the office of Australian architectural services and project management company, GHD Global, which won the master planning contract for the Asian Games, to be held in Doha in December 2006.

GHD now has over 150 staff servicing infrastructure projects in the region, most of them located in Doha.

I would like to thank GHD for participating in this arrangement, which has allowed Queensland to hit the ground running and steal a march on our competitors.

The Queensland office is still in start-up phase, nevertheless 21 solid business opportunities ranging in value from A\$100,000 to A\$100 million have already been passed on to Queensland companies.

The scale of current and planned development in Qatar is staggering. Qatar sits on one of the world's largest gas reserves and revenues from this resource are fuelling the country's development.

Qatar is spending over US\$1 billion dollars on infrastructure for the Asian Games. In addition, a new airport will be constructed in Doha for a total project cost of up to US\$5 billion.

Doha is undergoing urban redevelopment on a very large scale. Applications for the construction of 150 new high rises in Doha have been lodged.

The Qatar Government is determined to make Qatar a major business and conference hub in the gulf and I am determined that Queensland exporters will play a major role in Qatar's development and in supplying goods and services to all our target markets in the region.

The Leader of the Opposition should know that the Smart State has particular advantages over our interstate rivals when it comes to securing trade and investment opportunities—our environmental and human capital—they are unrivalled and without question and I don't think it reflects well on any representative of Queensland to be suggesting otherwise.

He would do better to engage in promotions rather than politicking when he travels overseas.