



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 27 April 2004

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Shafston International College

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.32 a.m.): I am deeply concerned at issues raised last night on *A Current Affair* on Channel 9. It has detailed serious issues in relation to Brisbane's Shafston College and one of its former executives. I am deeply concerned at what I am told was presented and what has since been published. I hate to see—and I hope all members join with me in this—or read anything that may in any way damage Queensland's reputation overseas, especially our burgeoning \$800 million a year international education initiatives.

As you know, Mr Speaker, my government has established an export education strategy. So successful has that been that Queensland is now home to more than 35,000 international students each year. I believe the matters raised last night and this morning warrant appropriate investigation. I had a meeting this morning with Anna Bligh, the Minister for Education, and I told her I wanted this matter investigated. The minister has directed senior departmental officers to seek an urgent meeting with the board of Shafston College. As the screening body for higher education providers in the state, Education Queensland will take this matter very seriously. I would urge *A Current Affair* to forward all of its material to the police.

I notice there was reference made to an endorsement that I made of Shafston College on their web site. I want to make sure that everyone understands this is a normal practice. It is of a general nature and not directed to any individual. As always, I support worthy groups developing the Smart State, particularly in export education. As Premier and Minister for Trade, I am frequently asked to supply messages which sum up the advantages that Queensland has to offer to foreign investors and business leaders as well as to students.

A typical message basically goes that my government has vigorously driven strategies to establish Queensland as Australia's Smart State. Queensland leads Australia in encouraging the growth of new age industries such as biotechnologies, communication and information, and has invested heavily in research and development in these areas, and as always there are particular announcements or messages in education. We are applying smart solutions to our traditional industries, and we are radically modernising our education system so that tomorrow's graduates continue to be well equipped to excel in emerging Smart State jobs.

By way of example, in 2002 there were nine web based documents featured in web sites administered by my department containing a message supporting the Smart State. There were 99 messages that I signed. There was also associated material for 65 events supported by Queensland Events Corporation during the period January 2000 to July 2003. I hope this matter can be resolved quickly. I do not want to see anything damage the educational opportunities in Queensland because it means jobs for Queenslanders.