



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 11 May 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Ministerial Motor Vehicles

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.32 p.m.): My government is the most open and accountable Queensland has ever had, and I want to re-emphasise what I said earlier in question time and in ministerial statements in relation to providing information to this House. The opposition filed an application under the FOI process for documents relating to accidents and repairs to motor vehicles between 10 November and 24 December 2003. Nine documents, including 32 folios, were located by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet official responsible for FOI in the resulting research. We do not interfere with what FOI officers do. She ruled that they could not be released because they were cabinet documents, which is appropriate. The department does not have the mandate to release these documents. I have the power to overrule the department, and I have done so.

My department handed me the documents referred to in the FOI decision and I tabled 28 pages of the 32 referred to in the FOI decision. I do not want to be misunderstood on this. The other four pages are simply the cabinet submission itself and the cabinet decision, which cannot be photocopied. They are rules and protocols of cabinet accepted by all sides of politics. I believe that most people would agree, having seen the list, that the information in the documents is hardly going to turn the world upside down. In other words, it should be plain now that these documents were not being hidden by the government because it feared the release of the information they contained. Quite on the contrary; the same is true of the documents considered by cabinet that have not been released.

Today I have given parliament information on damage to ministerial, electorate and staff cars. In an answer to a question asked on 18 March, I outlined all of the accidents at that time to ministerial vehicles for ministers and party leaders from 2001 to date. I table that again for the House. Ian Streete, the Acting Director of Ministerial Services, wrote to me on 20 April stating—

I certify that, in my opinion, details provided in the amended response to question on notice No. 44—

which is what I have tabled—

in relation to accidents to ministerial vehicles and party leaders' vehicles is a true and accurate reflection of records held by Ministerial Services.

So we have put it all out there. In the chart that I have tabled, members can see that there are three categories. If members look at 'Documents received after 10 November 2003 but repair done prior to 10 November 2003', my vehicle fits into that category—that is, \$185.08 that resulted from attending and supporting Queenslanders during a fire. As members can see, 4 November was the notification date, but it fits into that category. So that there was no doubt about this issue, I made sure my vehicle was included.

In relation to documents received after the date range but repairs incurred during the date range, they have been included and accident details contained in FOI documents were released as part of the answer to question on notice No. 44. We cannot be more accountable than that, and I would ask for the Leader of the Opposition to follow our lead. There have been a couple of accidents involving the Leader of the Opposition which he has not tabled in this House, and I urge him to do so. One accident involved one

of Mr Springborg's staff members. I urge him to follow the lead set by the government and to simply look at what we have done and do the same thing.

I should say that I know that this is an interesting stunt being pursued by the Leader of the Opposition, and he had these so-called 603 documents today. I have to say that on a very quick and initial count there seems to be only 518 pages, not 603. But I do not want to be unkind because it was a quick count and we could well have made a mistake. I have to say that I liked some of the material he tabled. It was really a stunt. It included media monitoring material of newspaper clips. There were old news releases. One of the beauties in here—I have to say it was fantastic—is an old news release from Bob Quinn which says—

The State Liberal Leader today announced that the state coalition is fully committed to upgrading the existing Ipswich Motorway to at least six lanes.

The only problem is that there is no money in the federal budget for it—

Mr Seeney: That is what recycling is about.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, recycling; that is right. I agree with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. That is what recycling is all about. I have to say—

Mr Seeney: It's old rubbish.

Mr BEATTIE: It is old rubbish, and I agree with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I would never have said that about the Liberal Party, but I take the interjection by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I make this point: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for including some of this nonsense because it will be of invaluable assistance to us. I thank him for his help.