



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Tuesday, 18 May 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Biodiversity

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.43 a.m.): Queensland's staggering biodiversity is one of our great assets. Almost 4 per cent of the world's biodiversity is unique to the Smart State. Nearly half of Australia's plant species are found here, as well as 80 per cent of Australia's native birds, 70 per cent of native mammals and 50 per cent of native frogs and reptiles.

Exploring biodiversity can be as exciting as space exploration. We do not know what is out there and we can only guess at its potential to cure diseases, ease pain and relieve famine. Scientists are already searching reefs and rainforests for cures and wonder drugs, and smart investors and corporations are turning a profit from this research.

I am delighted to inform the House that the government will ensure Queenslanders get a piece of the action. The Minister for Innovation, Tony McGrady, will today introduce the Biodiscovery Bill, an Australian first, approved by cabinet yesterday. Through this legislation, Queenslanders will share in the potential bonanza from biodiversity, in terms of royalties, investment, jobs and training, especially in regions, and knowledge.

Effectively, when companies take research success from the lab bench to the boardroom, Queenslanders will be shareholders. There will be big penalties for non-compliance. For example, a corporation that takes a sample without a proper permit and then uses it without a benefit sharing agreement will be fined up to \$3 million. The fine could be greater if the value of any commercialised material exceeds \$1.875 million.

There is more detail in my ministerial statement and I seek leave to incorporate it in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The regime will be carefully controlled and monitored; the research will be sustainable; and samples will be small.

Examples of safeguards in the system include:

Research will need to comply with the Code of Ethical Practice for Biotechnology in Queensland;

Access to National Parks will be tightly controlled;

The Director-General of the Environmental Protection Authority will have discretion to require a more detailed impact assessment when a permit to collect a rare and threatened species is sought;

Researchers with a collection authority will need to report every six months on the material they have taken and whether their authority has been transferred to a third party.

Mr Speaker, this legislation will expand knowledge of Queensland's plants and animals, with researchers required to give the Queensland Museum or the Queensland Herbarium a sample of what they collect.

It will also encourage the protection of Indigenous knowledge and sharing of benefits with traditional knowledge holders, in line with the United Nations' Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Environment Minister will administer the Biodiscovery Collection Authority and the Innovation Minister will administer benefit sharing agreements.