



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Thursday, 20 May 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Freedom of Information Requests

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.54 a.m.): Finally I have one other matter that I want to draw to the attention of the House. Today I will continue to demonstrate that this is the most open and accountable government in Queensland's history. Earlier this year a bottle of wine was found on a government plane at Lockhart River. This resulted in much media attention and requests for documents under freedom of information legislation. I table for everyone's information the 40 folios marked A that were made available to the *Courier-Mail* under its freedom of information request. I also table the 65 folios marked B to which the opposition was granted full access under its freedom of information request and six folios to which it was granted partial access, which translates to 73 actual pages.

But the opposition's request went far beyond the normal search through filing cabinets. The opposition requested that for this FOI search the hard drive of my chief of staff's computer should be searched for emails which had been deleted. As anyone who uses the email system knows, deleting an email is not a crime; it is good housekeeping and has to be done to ensure that your email system does not clog up to the point where it will not send messages. I am advised that it is highly unusual in the FOI process to request a search of the email trash bin archived on a backup tape of a backup server, which is what happened in this case. It is the equivalent of rummaging through someone's dustbin and really is typical of how low this opposition has sunk.

This was not an FOI search for a targeted document. This was just a trawl at taxpayers' expense to see if anything juicy turned up. The public has a right to know that the opposition has wasted \$1,785 of taxpayers' money for computer experts to trawl through the computer's rubbish bin searching for documents relating to a bottle of wine that cost less than \$10. I will table all the documents found in the bin in order to demonstrate to taxpayers how the opposition is wasting their money. What we have are 32 folios in FOI terms which amounts to 37 actual pages.

I table an email dated 8.30 a.m., 5 March 2004, from Ms Teresa Mullan to Rob Whiddon, my chief of staff, containing an attachment, which is a letter regarding the Lockhart River incident. That is document 1. I table an email dated 9.17 a.m., 5 March 2004, from Ms Teresa Mullan to Rob Whiddon, which contains what appears to be exactly the same letter as in document 1. There is document 2. I table a three-line email dated 4 March 2004 from Cathy Newman, the Office of the Premier, to Rob Whiddon regarding the number of phone calls received in relation to the issue. This is document 3. I table a three-line email dated 4 March 2004 from Mike Goodman, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, to Rob Whiddon regarding a letter of termination for Teresa Mullan. That is document 4.

I table an email dated 4 March 2004 from Mikhal Mitchell in the Ministerial Services Branch of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to Rob Whiddon providing the period of Teresa Mullan's service with Minister Judy Spence. That is document 5. This email contains an email dated 4 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Mikhal Mitchell requesting details of Teresa Mullan's service with Ms Spence. I table an email dated 3 March 2004 from Uschi Schreiber, Deputy Director-General, Policy, to Rob Whiddon and

Leo Keliher, Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, forwarding an email from Helen Ringrose, Director-General of the Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development, to Uschi Schreiber, which also contained a memo dated 3 March 2004 to the Police Commissioner. That is document 6.

I table a two-line email dated 5 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Fiona Kennedy and Adrian Gane, Office of the Premier, regarding media releases issued by Minister Judy Spence. That is document 7. I table a nine-word email dated 5 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Mike Goodman, Ministerial Services Branch, regarding Teresa Mullan's government car and mobile phone. That is document 8. I table a two-line email dated 5 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Richard Cleal seeking the results of two telephone calls. That is document 9. I table a 12-word email dated 5 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Sue Harper, Office of the Premier, asking Minister Liddy Clark to visit the Premier. That is document 10. I wonder if the taxpayers are happy that they have paid about \$48 in order for the opposition to learn that the Premier wanted to see Liddy Clark on 5 March?

I table an email dated 4 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Mikhal Mitchell requesting information regarding information about a payout for Teresa Mullan. That is document 11. I table a 16-word email dated 3 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Sue Harper, Office of the Premier, saying that Vicki Nicholls had arranged a meeting with Minister Liddy Clark and Dr Warren Hoey, Director-General, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy. That is document 12.

How do taxpayers feel about \$48 of their money being spent by the opposition in order to learn that this meeting had been arranged? I table an email dated 12 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Hedley Thomas, from the *Courier-Mail*, declining an interview, which contains an email of the same date from Hedley Thomas requesting an interview. That is document 13. The opposition spent \$48 of taxpayers' money on buying a document which shows that a journalist asked my chief of staff for an interview.

I table an email dated 12 March from Rob Whiddon to Fiona Kennedy, Steve Keating, Steve Bishop and Steve Rous, Office of the Premier, forwarding the two emails contained in document 13. That is document 14. That is \$48 more of taxpayers' money wasted by the opposition on exactly the same information.

I table an email dated 11 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Vicki Nicholls, Office of the Premier, asking for a phone number. That is document 15. An email costs virtually nothing. Directory Inquiries is a little more expensive. The search for this email by the opposition cost taxpayers \$48.

I table an email dated 10 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Vicki Nicholls regarding a letter to the chair of the Crime and Misconduct Commission. That is document 16. I table a 13-word email dated 10 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Sue Harper, Office of the Premier, to say that Mike Goodman was sitting in the boardroom awaiting the Premier. That is document 17. How many taxpayers are going to believe that they got good value from the opposition for spending \$48 of their money on buying that 13-word document?

I table an email dated 8 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Vicki Nicholls containing a letter to Brendan Butler. That is document 18. I table an email dated 8 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Brendon Strong, Office of the Premier, requesting a transcript of a Teresa Mullan radio interview. That is document 19. I table an email dated 7 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Mike Goodman asking for a copy of Teresa Mullan's state government work history. That is document 20. I table an email dated 7 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Steve Keating, Office of the Premier, containing a letter to the chairperson of the Crime and Misconduct Commission. That is document 21. I table an email dated 7 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Vicki Nicholls containing an email of the same date from Steve Keating to Rob Whiddon with an attachment, which contained an email from Rob Whiddon to Steve Keating which contained the same letter as contained in document 21. That is document 22. There are lots of words, but it is not worth the taxpayers' \$48 that the opposition spent on buying them.

I table an email dated 5 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to staff of the Office of the Premier saying that Matthew Carter had been appointed as acting senior policy advisor to Minister Liddy Clark. That is document 23. We were telling people this news for nothing, but the opposition has spent \$48 of taxpayers' money on this message.

I table an email dated 5 March from Rob Whiddon to Steve Bishop and other staff in the Office of the Premier containing an email from Mike Goodman to Rob Whiddon about Teresa Mullan's car and phone. That is document 24. I table an email dated 5 March 2004 from Rob Whiddon to Bruce Cousar, Office of the Premier, containing an email of the same date from Mike Goodman to Rob Whiddon giving an answer to an email of the same date from Rob Whiddon to Mike Goodman about Teresa Mullan's car and phone. That is document 25. I table an email dated 5 March from Rob Whiddon to Richard Cleal and other staff in the Office of the Premier containing the email of the same date from Mike Goodman to Rob Whiddon giving an answer to an email of the same date from Rob Whiddon to Mike Goodman about Teresa Mullan's car and phone. That is document 26.

It is outrageous that the opposition has spent \$1,785 of taxpayers' money on a trawling expedition through the rubbish bin of a computer. I hope that the media will report how taxpayers' money has been wasted. As I said, we are the most open and accountable government Queensland has ever had. When freedom of information is used wisely and positively I have no objection at all. Hunting through computer waste bins shows how low this opposition has stooped. I believe it is in the taxpayers' interest that their money should not be wasted in this way.

The transcript of the police interview with Jason O'Brien has already been tabled by the honourable member. Today I table a copy of the transcript of the police interview with the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Liddy Clark. Liddy has requested that I table this for the information of all members as part of our openness. We have now made public everything we can on this issue. My hope is that the opposition will now start concentrating on the issues that matter to Queenslanders—education and health. My hope is that the opposition will get out of the gutter and try to join us in our positive politics.

This week we have seen the most disgraceful and despicable abuse of privilege I have ever seen in this parliament. This opposition will wreck this parliament and FOI for cheap political expediency. We will stand by the institutions, but we will not support the opposition while it behaves in a morally corrupt way.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the employment minister, I welcome to the public gallery the former Premier of Victoria, Joan Kirner.

I inform honourable members that a memorandum issued today under my signature unfortunately has the wrong date on it. The date should be today's date, 20 May. The memorandum relates to a local film industry project which I believe all members of this parliament will support.