



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Wednesday, 7 June 2006

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## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Fire Safety

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.35 am): While we are talking about matters federal I want to talk about fire safety and aged care. I have written to the Prime Minister, John Howard, this week about the woeful level of fire safety preparedness in federally funded nursing homes and aged-care facilities in Queensland. Fire safety is an important issue for everyone in our community and particularly the elderly in care, who are dependent on others.

In 2004 the Commonwealth provided one-off grants of \$3,500 per resident to aged-care providers to improve fire safety by the deadline 31 December 2005. Last month's figures from Canberra reveal that 34 per cent of Queensland's 505 aged-care facilities—that is 174 homes—still do not meet the federal government's own fire safety standards. Not only have some owners not acted to protect the elderly, but some may not have used the taxpayer funded assistance for the purpose it was intended. Yet little action has been taken by the Commonwealth.

Senior Queenslanders living in aged care and nursing homes deserve better. These are some of the most vulnerable people in our community. I urge the federal government to immediately investigate what has happened to this \$3,500 per resident grant. If taxpayers' money has not been used appropriately, taxpayers ought to be informed and this serious problem addressed immediately. It is time to name and shame operators who have not done the right thing, and I make no apology for saying that. So concerned is my government that we will audit aged-care facilities, and I shall write again to the Prime Minister with a list of operators that have failed to use their grants for fire safety and have failed Queenslanders. I call on the Commonwealth to take this matter seriously. I table a copy of my letter to the Prime Minister.

*Tabled paper:* Copy of letter, undated, from the Premier to the Prime Minister, Hon. John Howard MP, regarding funding for fire safety in aged-care facilities.