



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Wednesday, 11 October 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Influenza Research

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.54 am): I have welcomed an announcement from Griffith University to establish an International Rapid Response Network to tackle influenza outbreaks in the Asia-Pacific region. I seek leave to have details incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The collaboration between Griffith University's Institute for Glycomics and the Institute Pasteur Asian network will significantly boost Queensland's preparedness for pandemic influenza.

The announcement will see Queensland scientists working directly with researchers in Asia to study the evolution, transmission and treatment of influenza in animals and birds and their potential to lead to a human pandemic strain.

By working with scientists on the ground in bird flu hotspots—such as Indonesia, Cambodia and Vietnam—the rapid response team will be able to help identify new strains of influenza and fast track the development of new drugs to treat them.

The better we understand influenza viruses, the better prepared we will be to fight it in the event of a human influenza pandemic in Queensland.

The International Rapid Response Network is building on the Queensland Government's pandemic flu preparations.

We have a state-wide contingency plan in place in conjunction with other State and Commonwealth agencies.

This month, from October 16 to 19, Queensland is hosting the world's largest pandemic influenza exercise to test Australia's preparedness for any outbreak.

Health and emergency services from around Australia will participate in the four-day event that will exercise border control, quarantine and hospital plans; as well as national and state level response arrangements.

One of the operational phases will be based at Brisbane Airport to simulate an international arrival of people with suspected pandemic human influenza.

Other State Government initiatives include:

- The purchase of two new molecular virology extraction machines worth \$170,000 each to increase the surge capacity of the Queensland Health Scientific Services Laboratory to conduct rapid virus testing.
- An enhanced train the trainer program has been provided to 450 health care workers on infection control and pandemic influenza.