



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Tuesday, 28 November 2006

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## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Nuclear Power

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.07 am): This week we will introduce legislation that is vitally important to protect the lifestyle of Queenslanders and our wonderful regional and rural communities. Under a plan being pushed by the Howard government, our towns and shires face the very real threat of becoming homes to nuclear reactors and a dumping ground for dangerous nuclear waste. If the Howard government has its way, we will turn from paradise one day to a radioactive dump the next. That is against Queensland's interests and we will fight it every step of the way. Cabinet approved this legislation yesterday.

So this week the Minister for Mines and Energy will introduce a bill to prohibit nuclear facilities including uranium enrichment plants, nuclear power stations and nuclear waste sites in Queensland. One thing that has been lost in the debate is this: if we have nuclear reactors, frankly something has to be done with the waste and it has to be dealt with in Australia. I ask those on the other side of politics who support this to put their hands up if they want a nuclear dump in their backyard.

The Nuclear Facilities Prohibition Bill 2006 will help protect regional and rural Queensland from the threat of nuclear facilities being built in their neighbourhood. As part of the legislation we will also make provision for a future plebiscite on the issue. We want to make sure that Queenslanders have a chance to have their say—democracy in action.

In the event that the Commonwealth government adopts a policy position in support of allowing the generation of nuclear power, uranium enrichment or the creation of nuclear dumping facilities, we will put a plebiscite to the people of Queensland to ask them whether they support the location of such facilities within Queensland. My government does not support the use of nuclear power in this state. We do not want nuclear generators and we do not want nuclear waste dumped here. Our concerns are many, including the management and disposal of high-level radioactive waste, and the cost and risk of transporting nuclear waste on public infrastructure.

Secondly, we are concerned about the safety of facilities located near major centres of population. The industry safety record of the industry has improved since the incidents at Three Mile Island in the United States and Chernobyl in the former Soviet Union, but there are still major concerns. Our concerns also include the requirement of nuclear power stations for significant quantities of water. A recent independent study that we commissioned shows that a nuclear power station would use 25 per cent more water than a coal-fired power station. Finally, there is the impact on our multibillion-dollar coal and mineral industry.

If the Howard government will not move to protect Queensland communities, we will. The Howard government argues that nuclear power is an essential response to climate change. We do not agree. We believe that clean coal technologies and renewable energy are safer and more economically sensible options for Australia compared to nuclear power. We are happy to engage in a public debate with the Prime Minister and the federal government in relation to it.