



Speech by

## Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Thursday, 30 November 2006

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**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (8.10 pm): I appreciate this opportunity to, on behalf of the government, wish all members and their families a very merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous 2007. We all know how tough politics can be. During the festive season we need to wish one another and our families joy for the Christmas period.

At this time we should put aside the argy-bargy of politics and reflect on the festive season and also on the fact that we live in one of the great countries on this planet. As I said, we often get caught up in the argy-bargy of politics and our political allegiances. However, if we look at the TV news or at the world in general it reminds us that we are very, very lucky. We live in a country that changes government by the ballot box and not by the sword or the gun. In many places in the world one cannot drink the water. In fact, that could be said of most of the world. There are many places in the world where one cannot walk down a street or cross the road for fear of being killed by a stray bullet. There are many places in the world where diseases can strike people down. We are very lucky and we should not forget it.

From time to time in this place we have tense debates, but we must never forget that we are all Australians. At the end of the day, we can say that those opposite have bad political judgement but they are still Australians. We are all Australians and we should not forget that. We are a lucky country. We can have our differences, but we show it in a sensible way. When we change our governments, we do it without any bloodshed. We do it with the will of the people. In recent times, I have been very appreciative of the will of the people.

Our ability to debate and discuss the major issues in such an open, frank and cooperative manner sets us aside from most countries in the world where, as I said, a lack of democracy is dictated at the end of a gun. We should not forget how lucky we are. That said, this is not a shy chamber. Spirited debate is actively encouraged. I love spirited debate.

**Mr Seeney:** I've heard a different story to that.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Those opposite should not misunderstand me. I must tell the honourable member that we loved the TV coverage this week. He must not be under any misapprehensions about that. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that he will see a bit more of what happened this week. We might rerun it in three years time. The Leader of the Opposition should not be under any misapprehension about that. He should remember that sometimes politics is not obvious. He will learn that. I remember sitting across the chamber from members of the opposition in Rockhampton. They already had their tails up and I said, 'We will be on this same side after the election.' I remind the honourable member of that. What looks obvious in politics is not always obvious. I have warned the Leader of the Opposition that we will be using this week extensively in three years time.

This year we sat for more than 437 hours spread over 38 days. We introduced 74 bills and 61 government bills were passed, which means that the Leader of the House did a reasonable job. Seven private members' bills were introduced. One hundred and nineteen paper petitions signed by 143,767 petitioners were tabled, as well as 47 e-petitions from 98,504 petitioners. That is not bad. A lot of hard work was done, but I believe that it is work that will make a real difference to the lives of hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders.

The issues debated were many and varied, ranging from drink spiking and drug testing to workplace safety and the wild rivers legislation, which were passed tonight. There were many significant

achievements, including the creation of the statewide water grid, the ongoing implementation of the \$9.7 billion Health Action Plan and the passage of the 2006-07 \$28.8 billion state budget which is delivering better services, more tax cuts and record capital works spending.

Of course, none of this could have been achieved without the assistance of a number of people. I thank my deputy, Anna Bligh, for her terrific support. I have to say that, based on the excellent performance she put in during the two weeks that I was overseas, I might do a bit more travel, particularly with some of the issues that happened to occur while I was away. We will see if we can find a few more difficulties—

**Mr Seeney:** Which is the very reason he went.

**Mr BEATTIE:** That is an outrageous suggestion. In deference to the spirit of Christmas, I will take the interjection of the Leader of the Opposition. The Deputy Premier is more than a match for him, so it is fine.

**Ms Bligh:** Thank you for the Christmas presents.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Exactly, Christmas came early. The Deputy Premier showed that she is more than capable of doing the job. She has done a very good job and I thank her for that and for her support.

To the Leader of the House I say, 'Well done.' He has had only 12 months in the job and the record of bills passed by the House shows a job incredibly well done. I thank him. I thank all my ministerial colleagues for their efforts.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Let the Valedictory address continue.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Good heavens; I do not think it is a position that he will ever achieve. I thank my ministerial colleagues. I expect an enormous effort from them. It is tough being in the ministry. People work incredibly hard. We all know what community cabinets demand, we all know what the community forums require and we know about the huge workload.

We have a good balance in cabinet. We have some new blood and that new blood is performing very well, as are the experienced ministers. Since I have been leader, I have sought to ensure that there is renewal from time to time. Renewal is important. We have certainly seen a lot of that. We now only have five ministers from my first government, and I am one of them. The others are Anna Bligh, Robert Schwarten, Judy Spence and Rod Welford. Other than that, there have been at least 13 changes, and that is a good thing. That is good for government, provided that those changes are balanced and measured. As I said, we have a blend of experience as well as new blood. Some of the new blood has been performing very well and I congratulate them.

I thank the parliamentary secretaries. We have increased the number of parliamentary secretaries, which means that a broader number of people will be able to gain experience. That is good for the future. People on both sides of politics should accept that it is all very well to be half smart about some things, but if we are going to have good government then people need to gain experience. That is why it is important that we have parliamentary secretaries who can work with ministers to develop that experience, and then they are in the box seat to become ministers. The state wins from that. In the same way, the Leader of the Opposition will encourage people in his shadow ministry to do various things and they learn from that experience as well. That is part of renewal and ensuring that people are given an opportunity to perform.

I thank my Director-General Ross Rolfe and the staff of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Parliament would grind to a halt if it was not for the dedication and professionalism of approximately 200 staff who work in these grounds. Everyone from Q-Build and the gardeners, through to the switchboard operators, administrative staff and cleaners do a terrific and invaluable job.

To our new Speaker, Mike Reynolds: you have proven yourself more than capable in this new position. You have grown in the role. I am sure that you appreciate the wonderful support of everyone who works here. I hope that the opposition shares this view: I believe that the new Speaker has demonstrated fairness and tolerance. I congratulate you, Mr Speaker. You have had a great start. You have suitably warned both sides of politics about behaviour in this place.

**Mr Schwarten** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Yes, that is exactly right. We had to correct you with a vote yesterday in relation to various matters, Mr Speaker, but I am sure the Leader of the Opposition was not unhappy with your call. I do want to congratulate you, Mr Speaker. I think you have had a great start.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I also want to thank all of the whips. On our side we have Carolyn Male, Rachel Nolan and Simon Finn. Thank you for doing a great job

**Mr Mickel:** Two women.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Well, women are taking over.

**Mr Mickel:** Yes. Carolyn Male is the first woman to be the whip and she is really taking it to heart. I do not know how you take a whip to heart, but she is certainly doing it, so good luck.

**Ms Male:** It is always a pleasure.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I have to say that I never did see Terry Sullivan's photo in the paper, and yours was there this morning, so there you go. As much as we all loved Terry, the questions you ask have lifted a little notch. We have Steve Dickson and Ian Rickuss as whips for the opposition and Liz Cunningham as coordinator for the crossbenches. I want to thank all of you because you all know that the whips do need to work together on an informal basis.

I want to also thank the Clerk of the Parliament, Neil Laurie; the Deputy Clerk, Siwan Davies; the parliamentary committee staff and all of the Parliamentary Service staff. I say to Neil that we all know it is tough being the Clerk. You do need to give the Speaker advice, and in the hurly-burly of parliament you often have to give advice in tough circumstances. That is not easy, Neil, and I think both sides respect you for it. So thank you for that. We certainly know you are impartial.

I want to thank the Chief Reporter, Lucinda Osmond, and her team in Hansard. They have an unenviable job of sitting through every minute of every day of debate in this place. I cannot guarantee they sit on the edge of their seats for all of our engaging discourse, but they certainly do a terrific job. I have to say that Hansard regularly turn our babble into English, and that is not without achievement in itself. I do think Hansard in this place are absolutely superb.

**Honourable members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr BEATTIE:** When you see the robust exchanges, the frequency of the exchanges, the interjections, you realise that Hansard do a magnificent job. I want to say to all the Hansard reporters thank you very much. I know you work closely with all the members here. You certainly work closely with my office. You report accurately what is done on the floor and, after all, that is an important part of this place.

We have now been audio broadcasting parliament on the net. Next year will be an exciting time because parliament will actually be televised over the internet. That will be a good thing, because if we are determined to engage the community rather than see parliament become alienated from the people, then the video broadcasting of parliament will be an important advance. E-petitions are important. To televise parliament over the net is even more important. So I think next year will be a significant milestone in engaging the community even more. While I know there is a bit of argy-bargy from the television stations about who does what and where and all the rest of it, the important thing is that this will be televised.

We have to remember that Queensland is a decentralised state; it is 1.74 million square kilometres. This will mean that whether you are in Barcaldine or Longreach in the member for Gregory's seat or you are in Chermside, you will be able to sit there and watch what your member does on the net. This is about shrinking the state, it is about engaging the regions, it is about engaging everybody. We know that from time to time there are debates that affect everybody across this state, and people should be able to see it—not just hear it, they should be able to see it.

This is about relevancy, too. Let me make the point that it is important that, if we are going to remain relevant as a democratic forum with the will of the people, they need to engage in it and see it. We do not want any great mystery about it. One of the good things that the Speaker has been doing and his predecessor did was to open this place up and invite the community in—in the same way Her Excellency the Governor has done at Government House. Mr Speaker, you and your predecessor have removed the mystique of what happens here. We need to let people come and see parliament in action. They may not like every part of it, but at least they see how it works. It is their democracy. That is why the telecasting of parliament next year will be a good thing.

However, before any of us even get to our feet to debate any legislation, the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel has pored over the documents to make sure the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed. We have had another huge legislative program this year, and I want to thank Peter Drew and his team for their hard work. Peter, I know we have asked you to produce miracles in the frequency and consistency of the requests for legislative drafting. I want to say to Peter Drew and your team: you do a great job and I thank you for it. I think the quality of the drafting in this parliament is first class.

We all value the provision of timely and accurate information, and Ian Thompson and his team in the Table Office ensure this happens by managing the thousands of documents that come across our desk every day. Mary Seefried and her staff in the library also provide a terrific service and it is one I am sure that all members use. I can only hope that our magnificent new State Library of Queensland that opened last week does not try to poach too many of them.

The only service utilised more than the library would be the kitchen. The executive chef, Sucil De Silva, and his team tantalise us each and every day with a wide variety of tempting treats. In my case, it is too often and too regularly. We all know that the food here is very good, and I thank them. Given the long hours we all spend in this precinct, it is an invaluable service that we appreciate, as do our families,

journalists and visitors. My thanks go to Sucil and his team, as well as to Jaakko Ponsi and his team in catering.

In addition, I would like to record my thanks to the Manager of IT Services, Mike Coburn; the Manager of Property Services, John McDonough; the Director of Corporate and House Services, Michael Hickey; the Manager of Human Resources, Peter Morris; and the Manager of Financial and Administrative Services, Craig Atkinson.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the staff in my office. There are some new faces this year with a number of key changes. After more than 11 years, my principal media officer resigned to seek new challenges. Steve Bishop did a wonderful job.

**Mr Mickel** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Yes. Steve joined me when I was the health minister. He and a certain current minister spent some time in Health together. Steve Bishop remained with me during all that time. John Mickel went on to become a humble minister in my government, which just goes to show there are some good things that come out of the health ministry.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Okay, he went on to become a minister, forget the humble bit. Steve Bishop, as John would know, was a fantastic—

**Mr Mickel** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** That is right. He certainly was. He worked with me in Health and stuck with me through opposition and for most of my time as Premier, and I am grateful for that.

**Mr Mickel:** He was 150 per cent loyal.

**Mr BEATTIE:** He was certainly that and he was very good and very professional. As I said, he joined my staff when I became Minister for Health and stood by my side through thick and thin, good times and bad. I want to say this to Steve Bishop: your intelligence, patience and dedication holds you in good stead for the many ups and downs of life in a political office. While I miss him, I am sure his wife, Kay, will appreciate the opportunity to see a little more of him.

My senior economic adviser, Adrian Noon, also moved on not so long ago. Adrian previously worked in the former Treasurer's office; however, when Terry Mackenroth retired, I moved quickly to get Adrian on my team. His knowledge and experience was invaluable. He was well respected throughout the Queensland business community. However, change has brought renewal. We have a number of new members on staff and they are proving to be a great team—as are the hardworking members in other ministerial and opposition offices.

I want to thank all of the members of the press gallery for their work as well. We do not always see eye to eye but, at the end of the day, we are all simply trying to do our jobs to the best of our ability. They walk with us, jog with us, travel with us and eat with us. We spend more time with them often than we do with our own families—not necessarily by choice, but that is the way it is, and I do want to thank them for their reporting. I am sure that they appreciate that as much as we do.

I would like to thank my electoral staff. I have had some changes in recent times, and I want to thank all of them for their contribution. I want to thank the electoral officers of all the members on my side. As we know, the electoral staff of particularly ministers and parliamentary secretaries, as well as members who are not from Brisbane, carry an enormous burden when we are away. Even Brisbane members would know that our electoral officers carry an enormous burden when we are in this place. They do a fantastic job so I want to acknowledge them.

I want to thank our family members. I want to thank my wife, Heather, and my children, Larissa, Denis and Matthew. We all know that families are the ones who suffer in this business and that they are the ones who work incredibly hard without any great acknowledgement. I have to say to my wife, Heather, that I regret the fact that during the last state election campaign your chocolate chip cookies became so well known. She said to me during the campaign, 'I am a professor of nursing, I spent years getting my doctorate and all I will ever be known for is chocolate chip cookies and it is all your fault.' So there were some sensitive moments between my dear wife and I about those matters, but I said, 'Flo had pumpkin scones,' and I think that only made my position worse.

**Ms Bligh:** I don't think that helped.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I think it deteriorated remarkably.

**Ms Bligh:** You put the shovel down?

**Mr BEATTIE:** Yes, that is right. I had to put the shovel down. I do not think it helped for one minute, but I do want to thank her for that. I could not understand why a professor of nursing would not be delighted

with the fact that she was renowned for chocolate chip cookies. I thought it was a good thing. I think I have some education yet to be done.

**Mr Swarten** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** That is right, the wombat. It reminded me of my dog. I wish all honourable members, staff, family and friends a merry Christmas and a happy new year. I conclude my remarks by wishing the opposition leader well. I know it has only been a little time since he has been leader, but it is a great honour to lead your party. I say the same thing to the new Leader of the Liberal Party. Regardless of our political differences there is no greater honour to be given to you than to lead your party. It does not matter what happens in your life, you cannot have a greater honour than to lead your party. I wish you well. I do not want to wish you too much luck. I wish you both well in your roles. I congratulate the new shadow ministers. I think this will be a robust parliament. I think it is a parliament that can deliver for this state. I certainly look forward to the next three years as I know my team does. To everyone, I wish you a merry Christmas and I look forward to seeing you back here early next year.