



Speech by

# Hon. Margaret Keech

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

Hansard Wednesday, 7 March 2007

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## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Surf Safety Initiatives

**Hon. MM KEECH** (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women) (10.19 am): Each year, millions of tourists visit Queensland's beaches, which are acknowledged as the best in the world. That is why the Beattie government is determined to further improve surf safety on Queensland's beaches. A recent meeting of a government working group focused on visitor safety set in motion plans for a range of new surf safety initiatives.

The plans were formulated following a summit to improve visitor water safety which I convened in early January. I called that meeting after two tragic drownings and five near drownings on the Gold Coast. Sadly, there has been another drowning and scores of serious incidents on beaches since.

One of the outcomes was a plan to target key airlines to help us communicate safety messages to passengers on incoming flights. We will also be approaching major airports about displaying safety messages. We will also discuss with Main Roads the possibility of including simple surf safety messages on road signs, reminding visitors to swim between the flags and to check conditions. Educating lifesavers and lifeguards about how different cultures behave on the beach is another option.

Last week I told inbound tourism operators from around Queensland and Australia attending an Australian Tourism Export Council familiarisation meeting on the Gold Coast that they had a vital role to play in educating tourists. I told them that they were in a position to save lives. I also told them that I want the tourism industry and lifesavers to work in a very strong partnership.

Including representatives of Surf Life Saving Queensland at major industry events, such as the Australian Tourism Exchange to be held in Brisbane in May, would give the inbound tourism industry an insight into the role of lifesavers and increase awareness of the absolute necessity to swim between the red and yellow flags. I want lifesavers to have access to tourism industry seminars on international markets to help them understand different cultures and visitor behaviours.

Other initiatives we are considering include extending the existing beach walk scheme for large tour groups. We want to have safety information included with electronic travel authority visas and improve information available for inbound operators and tour guides to pass on to tourists. Although the number of drownings on Queensland beaches continues to decrease, one drowning is one too many.

The Beattie government is committed to looking at new approaches to help achieve the goal of zero preventable deaths and injuries on the state's beaches. In the Year of the Surf Lifesaver, on behalf of the tourism industry I thank the thousands of volunteer surf lifesavers and lifeguards on patrol around Queensland for the absolutely tremendous job they do in protecting our visitors.