



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Wednesday, 23 May 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

State of Origin

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.44 am): Tonight the mighty Maroons go to battle in the first State of Origin match for 2007. I am sure members will all join me in wishing Mal Meninga and his team well. I will be attending the match and hosting a number of potential sponsors and participants for our Q150 celebrations, as well as some members of the Queensland press gallery. A capacity crowd of 52,500 is also expected to join us at Suncorp Stadium to cheer the team to victory.

The construction of this magnificent stadium is a large part of why Queensland is now recognised as the home of Rugby League in Australia and why Queensland will host the Rugby League World Cup Final in 2008. Both State of Origin matches scheduled for Suncorp this season were sold out within a matter of hours, yet I understand 30,000 seats are yet to be sold for the second origin match in New South Wales. If posteriors on seats are any gauge, I think Suncorp Stadium should be entitled to host all three games next season. They may as well move them all up here!

More than 3.54 million patrons have attended a sporting event at the redeveloped venue since its completion in 2003. The government's decision to redevelop Suncorp Stadium has been vindicated time and time again. It was opposed by the opposition, but we made certain that it happened. We wore a lot of criticism when we went ahead with the redevelopment, but now it is one of the most popular venues in the country and is recognised around the world.

The stadium has played host to top class Rugby League, Rugby Union and soccer matches and continues to be lauded by players, officials, spectators and indeed a number in the media as one of the best venues in the world. Certainly, in terms of facilities, service and atmosphere, I have not experienced anything else like the 'cauldron' on State of Origin night—and I do not think anyone else has either.

Unfortunately, it appears that the Howard government is not aware of this fact or very supportive of Queensland. In the recent federal budget, commitments were made to provide \$25 million to redevelop the Adelaide Oval and upgrade the Sydney Cricket Ground. In addition, a further \$10 million was provided for the second stage of the National Sports Museum, including the construction of the museum entrance and interactive installations at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. However, there was no allocation in the budget for any major sports facility in Queensland. I just say this to the Prime Minister: remember Queensland, because we will remember you. There was not one cent for Skilled Park on the Gold Coast, not one cent for Dairy Farmers Stadium in Townsville, not one cent for the Gabba and not one cent for Suncorp Stadium. Fortunately, Queenslanders can count on my government. I wish the team well tonight. Go the Maroons!