



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Wednesday, 5 September 2007

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## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Equine Influenza

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.19 am): I acknowledge Brisbane Grammar School and welcome them to Parliament House. It is great to have them here.

I want to thank the member for Toowoomba South for tabling a copy of the email from the Australian Chief Veterinary Officer from 22 August regarding equine influenza. Let me advise the House that I was unaware of that email. But having read it what the document proves is the case I mounted yesterday, and that is that the federal government failed in its duty to Australian horse owners in this matter. This email absolutely proves my case. The Commonwealth knew that there was a threat from this exotic disease, and it proves my case.

The document proves the case I mounted yesterday. The federal government failed in its duty to Australian horse owners in this matter. As this email proves—and I have read it in great depth—the Commonwealth knew there was a threat from this exotic disease. It has a national action plan, the AusVet Plan, and it failed to act on it. It failed to implement it.

**Mr Horan** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Mr Acting Speaker, they are good at throwing mud but when I put the facts on the table they do not like it. I have read the plan. This plan was not implemented, and I will tell the House why. It states—

Containment relies on the following principles:

- quarantine of cases and in-contact horses;
- immediate imposition of horse movement controls until the extent of the outbreak is clarified ...

On any test the federal minister has failed. He should have imposed these vital controls immediately, as his own plan clearly states. He did not, and horse owners across Queensland and New South Wales are paying the price for it.

**Mr Hobbs** interjected.

**Mr Copeland** interjected.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Warrego! Member for Cunningham!

**Mr BEATTIE:** The document further states—

If a complete national horse standstill is not invoked immediately and maintained rigorously until the extent of the outbreak is known, it may not be possible to contain an outbreak of EI.

What the document tabled by the member for Toowoomba South proves is that the Commonwealth knew from 17 August that horses in its quarantine station in Sydney had symptoms consistent with equine influenza, yet it did not stop—

**Mr Copeland:** We told you.

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! I warn the member for Cunningham under standing order 253.

**Mr BEATTIE:** He does not like the truth, does he? Yet the Commonwealth did not stop the movement of horses in this country until 25 August—too late to protect our horse industry from this highly contagious disease. The Commonwealth knew, but the Commonwealth did not stop the movement of horses in accordance with their own plan. There is no mention in this email that there is any possibility that equine influenza had escaped the quarantine barrier—no mention at all. Those opposite know that it is like a foreign country, the way this operates. All this email says is—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Their only defence to facts is rudeness. Their only defence to truth is rudeness. Let us have the facts, not the rudeness. They know as well as I do that all I said was they had some issues internally. There is no suggestion of a breach of quarantine, which is like a separate country—not one breach. Secondly, the Commonwealth did not stop horse movements. This is actually worse. What those opposite have done is hung their federal minister, because it shows that not only did he know but he did not implement his own plan. This is actually worse. I think based on this email that Mr McGauran should either resign today or be sacked. This is worse than what we thought.

There is no mention in this email of any possibility that equine influenza had escaped the quarantine barrier, nor does it say that Queensland authorities should take any action. There is no suggestion that we should take any action at all, other than to note the information on the Japanese outbreak and to note the possibility of the EI outbreak in the quarantine station.

**Ms Bligh** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** That is right. Not only that; the Commonwealth did not stop horse movements in New South Wales. Hence, some of these horses ended up in Warwick. This is even worse. Those opposite have hung their own minister. Your federal minister should have stopped horse movements. He knew sooner than we thought—

**Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Please direct your comments through the chair, Premier.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Through you, Mr Acting Speaker, he should have stopped horse movements. I call on the Prime Minister to sack Minister McGauran. He is clearly absolutely incompetent.