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Leader of the Opposition Queensland
Peter Beattie
Parliament House
Alice Street
BRISBANE

25 June, 1998

Dear Peter,

Thank you for your letter dated June 25, 1998 outlining our recent discussions.

In light of the above, I confirm that I will support your Government on Confidence motions unless, there is evidence of gross fraud, misappropriation or like illegal activities, and, that I will support your Appropriation Bill and not abstain from voting.

I look forward to taking my seat in the next Queensland Parliament as the Independent Member for Nicklin.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Wellington



LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION QUEENSLAND

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25 June 1998

Mr Peter Wellington MLA
Member for Nicklin
PO Box 265
NAMBOUR 4560

Dear Peter,

I refer to our discussions yesterday and now confirm in writing my plans for Parliament and government should we receive the support of one or both Independents.

Liaison with Independent Members

Both Independents must be properly resourced with appropriate staff to carry out their duties. Consistent with the resources provided to Mrs Cunningham, Independent Members should be entitled to an extra staff member in their electoral offices and a policy adviser based at Parliament House in Brisbane. All other Members of the Queensland Parliament are members of political Parties and therefore have the benefit of staff provided to their Party. Independents require extra personal staff to assist with the enormous work load that goes with holding the balance of power.

A senior member of the Premier's personal staff will have responsibility for assisting the two Independents to ensure access to Ministers, key public servants including heads of Departments, and the Premier.

Parliament

I note and share your strongly held desire to lift the standard of behaviour in Parliament. Accordingly, there will be an early meeting between the Leader of the House, the two Independents, the leaders of all political Parties represented

1



in the Parliament and myself to ensure Standing Orders allow adequate opportunities for all Members to:

1. Ask Questions both without notice and on notice.
2. Move private members bills and have them debated.
3. Participate in the 6pm debate.
4. Participate in legislative debates.
5. Assume an appropriate role on at least one of the Parliamentary committees.
6. Involve Independents in the budget process, in particular through Estimate Committees.

I reconfirm my commitment to requiring all ministers to actually answer questions put to them during Question Time. I intend to lead through example by providing answers which are specific and respond to the terms of the question. I will also direct Ministers to answer questions within three minutes, so maximising the number of questions asked. This will ensure the government remains accountable to the Parliament.

Term of the Government

I note your strong support for stable government. I also re-state my own commitment to stable government, intent on serving a full term so it can tackle unemployment. Accordingly, I indicate my support for a resolution to be moved by you to the effect that outside the fall of the government through a successful motion of no confidence, the Government will continue in office for its full term. There would be no election held before May 2001.

Assurances from Independent Members

Independent Members deserve to be treated with courtesy and respect.

I confirm my verbal advice that I would seek your support and the support of Mrs Cunningham for Parliamentary motions of confidence/no confidence and supply. I also seek agreement to detailed consultation on any legislation arising from the electoral platform that I took to the electorate for the June 13 election, noting however your right as an Independent to vote on bills and clauses as you see appropriate.

Community Consultation

In our discussions you have emphasised strongly your belief in a more participative style of government. One possible approach you have raised is that of Citizen Initiated Referenda (CIR).



While sympathetic to your concern to improve opportunities for participation, I have serious reservations about the fairness and cost of a referenda-based system of consultation in a State like Queensland. CIR allows city populations to force their views on regional and rural Queensland. Further, CIR takes complicated policy problems and reduces them to simple and sometimes misleading 'yes/no' questions. Finally, the track record of CIR in other places highlights the risk that special interest groups will fund expensive campaigns to further their own ends at the expense of ordinary citizens. You will recall we discussed Californian experience in this regard.

However, I accept absolutely your views on the need for government to find new ways to listen to people. My suggestion to you therefore is that Queensland institute a form of regular community cabinet meetings. These would involve the whole cabinet and senior public servants spending a full day of consultation and discussion with individual citizens and community groups in each major region of Queensland at least once a year.

To ensure all communities have an opportunity to get involved, the State would be divided into regions for the purpose of consultation. The existing Australian Bureau of Statistics regions may provide a useful basis on which to ensure that Queenslanders, no matter where they live in this State, can have their voices heard through this process. This could mean up to 15 separate regional meetings each year. There would be advance advertising of community cabinet meetings, and an opportunity for individuals and groups to book time with particular Ministers to pursue pressing local concerns.

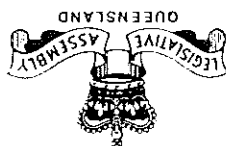
By developing a regular schedule of such meetings, and through detailed feedback to participants about government action to meet their concerns, I would hope a community cabinet approach would bring government closer to those it serves and make it more responsive to their needs.

While the technical details of this proposal need further development, I am confident we could establish regular meetings to the benefit of both government policy and community concerns. I would hope to include representatives of both federal and local governments in this important and innovative process.

Queensland Finances

In our meeting you expressed very clearly your commitment to maintaining sound financial management of the State. I share this concern and commit my team to maintaining the Queensland tradition of a surplus budget and rigorous management of the State's resources.

In our discussions yesterday I provided you with a copy of the financial analysis of Labor's policy proposals offered during the 1998 election campaign. The essential guarantees provided in the independent KPMG Report are:



1. Labor's new initiatives are accommodated within the framework of the existing budget and forward estimates with only modest adjustments to outlays.
2. Labor will maintain a surplus budget framework and in each year, will further reduce net debt.
3. Labor will deliver a budget surplus in both cash and GFS terms.
4. The adjustments to the surplus figures reported in the recently delivered State Budget can be funded without drawing upon reserves for future superannuation liabilities or the contributions paid by members of public sector superannuation schemes.
5. Labor can deliver its capital and current program without imposing any new taxes or increasing existing taxes and charges above current real levels.
6. Labor's policies are fully costed and fully funded.

For six years under the Goss government, Queensland recorded budget surpluses. As you are aware, the budget is presented to Parliament each year and you will have an opportunity to compare our proposal with the principles outlined here.

Ministerial Financial Responsibility

I concur with the priority you have placed on imposing stringent guidelines on Ministerial financial arrangements including Ministerial travel, entertainment and office expenses.

I will insist on nothing less than complete probity in the way Ministers meet their obligations to government, the Parliament and the electorate, and will put in place systems to achieve full and open disclosure of Ministerial expenses to the Parliament on a regular basis.

The guidelines would include:

1. Six-monthly reports to Parliament on Ministerial expenses provided in a format that is readily understandable by the community.
2. All overseas travel by Ministers will require personal approval by the Premier, based on a detailed submission outlining the benefits for Queensland and the proposed cost. There will be a full report to Parliament on the travel and its outcomes.
3. Ministers will only be given approval to be accompanied on overseas travel by their spouse or partner when expressly approved by the Premier, based



on a specific benefit to Queensland and where a separate detailed program has been provided.

4. Ministers will not be entitled to Ministerial credit cards. We will restore the system in which Ministers are required to charge their travel, accommodation and entertainment expenses to their personal American Express cards and claim from the Ministerial Services Branch under strict guidelines. Those guidelines will be strengthened through consultation with the Ministerial Services Branch and the Auditor-General.

5. The Ministerial Services Branch will report directly through the Director-General of the Department of Premier of Cabinet to the Premier and be free from political interference.

6. Ministerial staff will no longer be entitled to the \$250 entertainment allowance instituted by the current government. Only the senior adviser and senior media adviser in each Ministerial office shall be entitled to government credit cards, and then only for travel and accommodation expenses. They will be subject to the same strict guidelines, accountability mechanisms and acquittal procedures as Ministers.

7. There will be no entertaining at public expense by Ministerial staff other than on specific occasions by the Premier's senior staff and then only with prior approval by the Premier.

Parliamentary Entitlements

I agree that there is a need to review urgently Parliamentary entitlements. Accordingly, as soon as the Parliament meets, I will take action to establish a Parliamentary Committee to review all entitlements comprising:

- Three representatives of the government (Premier, Deputy Premier and Leader of the House)
- Leader of the National Party
- Leader of the Liberal Party
- Leader of the One Nation Party
- Independent Member for Gladstone
- Independent Member for Nicklin

This Committee will review all entitlements and report to the Queensland Parliament no later than 1 November 1998.

Concluding Remarks

In our discussions you have emphasised parliamentary accountability and a government committed to addressing the sense of alienation among many Queenslanders. I believe the initiatives outlined here - and broader policy program advanced by Labor during the 1998 election campaign - can make a real difference.



Our job now as parliamentarians is to ensure honest, stable and accountable government for Queensland. I believe Labor can work effectively with the Independent Members in the interests of our State, and I look forward to discussing these issues further.

Kind regards



Peter Beattie
Leader of the Opposition

