



Speech by

Steve Dickson

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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MAIDEN SPEECH

Mr DICKSON (Kawana—Lib) (5.08 pm): First, I offer my congratulations to the new Speaker on his appointment. I also congratulate all members of parliament on their election and re-election. My great desire is that we work together in harmony to make the people of Queensland proud.

None of us would be here if it were not for the support of our families and our community. I offer my heartfelt thanks to all those who campaigned on my behalf and, in particular, my campaign team. In the weeks leading up to the election this group of people from varied backgrounds worked in harmony—no disagreements, no raised voices; in fact, the perfect accord. I feel confident that this atmosphere of cooperation and teamwork is a benchmark that we can expect for my electorate of Kawana.

I also give my heartfelt thanks to the people of Kawana for their support and confidence in choosing me as their representative. I will not let you down. My door will always be open. My experience in local government has taught me well. If a resident comes to me with a matter or an issue I know is important to them, then most often it is also important to the entire community.

My electorate of Kawana on the Sunshine Coast is under siege. New residents are coming over the border at a rate of 8,000 per year. This is expected to increase to 9,500 in the next decade.

The lifestyle and beauty of the Sunshine Coast is based on a series of small coastal villages, but we run the risk of losing what matters most. If we are not diligent, if we do not work to save our coastal lifestyle, it will end up like the Gold Coast—a concrete jungle. We should all take heed and remember that the Gold Coast was also a series of sleepy coastal villages not less than one generation ago. It is an unbroken line of high rise from the Tweed to Paradise Point.

I support the people of Kawana and the Sunshine Coast who do not want to see the beaches shaded by high-rise apartments. I support the people of Kawana who do not want to see the natural beachfront environment become a paved car park and fast-food centres, but sadly we face more problems than being turned into a tower of cement. With the constant influx of new residents, we are battling to maintain even the most basic resources. Our highway is one of the most dangerous in the state. The train is nonexistent; the rail line from Brisbane to Nambour veers north, bypassing the entire coastal strip.

The latest statistics show that 90 per cent of people arriving are under 50 years of age. They are all mostly workers and they have families to support. They need to work. For this, we need to plan for even more commercial and industrial land. We need to improve transport services for both goods and people. We already run a serious risk of becoming a satellite suburb of Brisbane. People live here for the lifestyle but have to work in Brisbane to survive. We must retain the lifestyle which is famous. We must retain a coastal village integrity and atmosphere. At the same time, we need to provide employment opportunities for new families who are moving to Kawana. We must ensure that we are a community, not a strip extension of Brisbane.

I will be calling on the members of this House to support the wishes of the Kawana community and save what is one of the most beautiful and liveable places in this great country. I put this House on notice that I will be ensuring the Premier implements all election promises made during the election campaign. I table a list of election promises made to the people of Kawana for the information of the House. These

include the promises to give us some confidence in our health system, to improve our roads and the transport network, and to ensure a constant water and power supply, to name just a few. While I congratulate the Premier and those ministers who have been retained in government, I am mindful of the fact that it is very easy to make promises and it is even easier to mean what you say. But a leader and a politician has to do more than say, 'It will be fixed.' This time it has to be fixed. To me, this state is running like my much-loved childhood go-cart: made of odds and ends, tied together with No. 8 fencing wire, rattling along and patched up for many years until it finally fell apart and was beyond repair.

Tabled paper: Document headed 'Kawana electorate promises'.

Take our health system, for example. It is not just a simple matter of installing more beds; it is creating an environment that attracts trained medical professionals. A small day surgery and medical clinic opened recently in Kawana. Before the building was finished, 20 medical professionals had signed up. The Lake Kawana Private Hospital is now fully operational with day surgery facilities and attending specialists including orthopaedic surgeons, plastic surgeons and gynaecologists. We have world-class doctors and nurses in Queensland but too many find it difficult, if not impossible, to work under the Queensland Health regime.

There are a number of aspects where health was rarely mentioned during the recent hospital crisis, and that is the care and treatment of mental health patients. In south-east Queensland care for these sufferers is virtually nonexistent. A person suffering mental trauma should not be the responsibility of overworked police officers. The Sunshine Coast community is in desperate need of mental health emergency wards and supporting rehabilitation facilities. The idea of putting sufferers of mental health conditions back into the community sounded admirable 20 years ago. So did the notion of closing down inefficient and badly-run mental institutions. But the assurance that adequate funding would follow those patients and assist them out of the community obviously did not happen. We can no longer ignore the fact that one in four people suffer some sort of mental disorder, and it is fair to say that every one of the people we represent is connected directly or indirectly to a person needing professional mental health treatment. Alarming, one in 1,000 suffer from the acute mental condition schizophrenia alone. This means that there are literally hundreds of people in the south-east corner of Queensland in dire need of help—help that just is not available.

I do not need to remind this House that our health system is a basket case. What I do need to remind all of us of is that the condition of diabetes, particularly in children, is now on the verge of becoming a health epidemic. My father was a diabetic and it killed him at the age of 59. That young children are now being diagnosed with the same deadly condition is alarming. It is not just the health of our children that concerns so many of my constituents; it is the fact that the system established to care for these children is failing them. It is failing us all.

It is stomach-turning to read newspaper reports on the number of children injured or killed who have been brought to the notice of the Department of Child Safety, and one can only imagine the heartache and frustration officers from the department go through, stretched to the limit and underresourced as they obviously are. Time and time again we see children returned to their homes straight back into the hands of their abusers. The alarming increase in deaths of children from abuse must end. If we cannot protect our children, we cannot protect our community and therefore our society at large. No-one wants to see abused and neglected children placed into institutions, but we can no longer pretend our overburdened social workers can make it right.

As leaders appointed by a community to make decisions, I believe we must now face the fact that the foster system is collapsing. I do not presume to have the answers, but there are obviously voices suggesting we consider establishing some small-medium residential housing where professional carers could supervise these children and keep them safe.

My community is aware of the fact that for the past six years I have been a board member of Aquagen and the Caloundra-Maroochy water board. Despite the current four-year drought we do not have a problem on the Sunshine Coast. We do not have to consider water restrictions. This is due to the forward planning of those local government state leaders of the eighties who assessed population growth, prepared for drought, bought up land and built the Baroon Pocket Dam. So why are the residents of Kawana faced with increased water charges to pay for a hastily cobbled together pipeline grid? The pipeline to serve Brisbane from our dams alone is already priced at \$400 million. That is petty cash compared to the \$2.7 billion—yes, that is billion—that this government has stated is the estimated cost of stage 2 of Traveston Dam. This does not include increased property prices or unexpected blow-outs.

The Traveston Dam decision was engineered for an election. The cost to the community after much thought—if that; afterthought—means 900 families will be thrown out of their homes in the Mary Valley. This is a bandaid political campaign to the wider problem. This government's own report on future dam sites declared the Traveston site unsuitable. The valley is a sandpit and it will leak. Engineers have declared the site too wide and said that the dam will be too shallow. Without bedrock, engineers have been tearing their hair out trying to determine where the dam wall should go. The list of environmental damages is on par with the social fallout, and let us not forget that it was this government's own department of

natural resources which advised the Mary Valley landowners not to build dams in some areas because of the dangerous arsenic residue from cattle dips.

For our future water needs we need to look further ahead—not just for the next drought, not just in south-east Queensland. We need to look at the future water needs of Queensland from the gulf to Tweed Heads. We need to plan further ahead than the next five to 10 years. We must prepare for a future using only clean energy to eliminate global warming and the possibility of a massive increase in population from neighbouring nations. We should not have to warn residents of expected power blackouts. Instead we must improve our power supply. We need to spend resources on investigating clean power. We need to investigate all options for renewable energy that do not require the use of fossil fuel.

The job of political leaders is to prepare for the future. The drought we are experiencing is not a one-off. Dramatic displays of nature, such as the tsunami in South-East Asia, will happen again and again. Global warming is not a scare campaign by the Greens. It is a reality.

Greenhouse gas induced climate change is now widely accepted, and it is only a matter of time before the global economy becomes carbon constrained. Queensland is particularly vulnerable—environmentally, socially and economically. Our high per capita emissions of greenhouse gases put us in the public spotlight both at home and overseas. Our export earnings are heavily dependent on products with high emission intensity. Our domestic energy servicing is largely dependent on fossil fuels—namely, coal. Our tourism and agricultural industries are likely to be adversely affected by climate change. Even our unique Great Barrier Reef is under threat.

We need to work closely with the federal government, our Asian neighbours and our South Pacific neighbours. We need to take heed of advice from scientists and environmental authorities. We need to face the challenge of dramatic climate changes that will, without any doubt, have major and lasting impacts on our lifestyle.

Good government needs good opposition. I am part of a coalition team with enthusiasm and a powerful will to be diligent in our efforts for our constituents. On closing, the most important people in the world to me are my wife, Debbie, and our two sons, Christian and Zeik. I owe a great debt to them and I am truly blessed. My parents gave me a powerful and loving sense of family and a good education, for which I am eternally grateful. The community of Kawana which I represent in this parliament is a family, and I will work to ensure that like my immediate family I give them the best I can offer. In my family and my work life, I have been blessed and for this I thank God. My belief in Jesus Christ and God the Father sustains me. Today, I stand in this House of democracy and I declare my thanks and respect to the Lord for the love and understanding he shows us all. God bless you, and I look forward to working with you all.