



Speech by
BRUCE FLEGG
MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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FIRST SPEECH

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (3.47 p.m.): In the democratic traditions of this place, I begin by pledging my loyalty to the people of Queensland and the people of the electorate of Moggill, and I commit myself to work diligently for them while I remain in this place. I want to record my thanks to the people of Moggill and to the enthusiastic and hardworking group of supporters who assisted me throughout my campaign and made it both enjoyable and successful. I shall try to live up to the standards that they rightly expect of me, having given me their support.

I extend special thanks to my family, who have put up with their father's longstanding ambition to enter this House. It is not easy to explain to my teenage sons why their father is suddenly so busy and has so little time for them, yet they appear to understand that he is doing something that he considers important.

Moggill is an area characterised by detached housing, with much of the electorate on larger suburban and semirural acreage blocks. The community has a high proportion of professional and businesspeople, academics and senior public servants. In short, it is a highly educated self-reliant community. But if one thing characterises the community of Moggill electorate more than any other it is that it is a community of families. People have chosen larger blocks and semirural ambience as a great place to raise their children and enjoy the area's lovely natural amenities. The Brisbane River meanders along the edge of Moggill for many kilometres and provides a relatively preserved river scape—an environmental corridor that local residents and myself intend to jealously protect.

Residents understand that there will be continuing development in keeping with the explosive growth in south-east Queensland but they do not want their natural beauty desecrated and their roads choked by lines of motionless traffic. I have committed myself to be a vocal and vigorous—and, yes, even at times annoying—advocate for the people of Moggill in their fight to preserve the area's natural beauty and to get a fair go in the allocation of resources for transport and community services. I repeat that all Moggill residents are asking for is a fair go in the allocation of the state's resources.

There is a widespread belief abroad in Moggill that because the area has generally returned Liberal representatives it has suffered neglect at the hands of successive state and local Labor administrations. It is not hard to see where such a belief arises. We have one road in and out of the Moggill electorate and it is used by or affects almost every person. I know members are waiting for me to mention it. Yes, we are talking about Moggill Road.

Year after year we have never seen the funds allocated in the Roads Implementation Program. This is a measure of this government's lack of priority for our area. Further, residents of Moggill know that mere upgrades will never fix what ails Moggill Road. Kenmore has become a bottleneck with three schools, 10 sets of traffic lights and a roundabout at Brookfield Road that simply cannot cope.

While this may sound a familiar story around Brisbane, unlike many other bottlenecks, the Department of Main Roads has preserved a short transport corridor that links Moggill Road to the Centenary Highway. Building this three kilometres of road would remove the through traffic that passes along Moggill Road at Kenmore and Chapel Hill. It would not add significantly to the traffic volumes on the Western Freeway as it would not be bringing new traffic into the area. It would cut 15 to 20 minutes off a trip to Brisbane for many but it would also make our three schools safer. It would enable Brookfield and Kenmore Hills residents to get out on to Moggill Road in the morning and it would help residents of

Kenmore and Chapel Hill by reducing rat running and returning their local retail strip to the more appropriate levels of local traffic.

It is very hard to see any justification for not building such an obvious solution, especially given the longstanding neglect of roads in the area and the budgeted funds that we have never seen. The Premier is quoted as saying that he would govern for all Queenslanders not just those of his political persuasion. Well I intend to hold the government to that commitment. Members will be hearing from me time and time again about this problem that grows worse with every new housing estate.

No discussion of Moggill Road would be complete without considering public transport. Moggill residents understand we cannot just continually add more cars to the roads in Brisbane. The Liberals will support strong public transport alternatives. The construction of the short link between Moggill Road and the Centenary Highway offers exciting prospects for public transport. Access to fast, efficient public transport should be available to all residents of a city like Brisbane.

Karana Downs, a beautiful, family-orientated area along the Brisbane River in point of fact has no public transport whatsoever. Some time ago a brief trial of a bus service was deemed to have produced insufficient patronage and was abandoned. One does not have to be very bright to realise that, after years of the total absence of public transport having forced from the area many people who need or depend on it, a short trial of a bus service is not going to produce high levels of patronage. It requires a consistent service that people can depend on for the long-term to encourage the return of that patronage.

Whilst local residents may be self-reliant in many areas, important community services need to be established for the future. Kenmore police station remains empty. Our local state government health clinic is at Spring Hill. Of particular concern to me is that no provision has been made now or into the future for a community centre, a library or youth facilities. Land with potential for community facilities is rapidly disappearing in our area. The youth and the retirees of the future will not thank us for our lack of foresight in not making provision for them now.

Leadership is about vision—vision to act now before the opportunity is lost forever. I asked a number of prominent citizens in Moggill for their vision for our area. All began with road transport and the fact that our achievements will be limited if we fail to address Moggill Road. All wanted to see fast, efficient public transport available to the whole community. All wanted our environment and waterways—with particular mention of Moggill and Pullen Pullen creeks and the Brisbane River—preserved for the future. All wanted our lifestyle preserved by sensibly controlled and compatible development. All wanted to see community facilities where local youth and community groups could meet, where a library may one day be housed or an SES base or even a health centre. All wanted to invest in the education of our young people—building on the excellence already achieved in our area by schools such as Kenmore State High School.

Over the two terms of the present government, infrastructure spending has dropped alarmingly as a percentage of budget outlays and road funding has actually declined in absolute dollar terms. Infrastructure is investment in the future. Infrastructure is about planning and investing today to make sure we maintain the lifestyle and jobs that Queenslanders aspire to in the future. It is about planning and investing in railways so that continued economic growth does not automatically mean our streets must be choked with more and more trucks. With strong growth in Ipswich, Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast it is myopic that the government has not even started to plan a western ring road corridor to link these growth areas.

Among the serious neglect of infrastructure right across south-east Queensland I want to focus my remarks on one particular infrastructure failing of the present government—the ageing and inadequate electricity transmission network. Residents of Moggill have endured repeated and prolonged blackouts and brownouts. First Energex blamed storms, although these are a regular feature of summer in Queensland. Then the blackouts continued in fine weather so Energex had to blame the effect of heat on their ageing distribution network. It is strange that Moggill residents would lose power just as the evening peak period began. The Energex recordings defined wide areas that were like affected.

In my experience, if it waddles like a duck and it quacks like a duck it is generally a duck. This duck is called load shedding. I do not understand why Energex and the state government cannot just come clean and tell us what has happened to our electricity supplies. However, I do know that the residents of Moggill from Karana Downs to Chapel Hill do not see the funny side of regularly losing power at peak periods and throwing out freezers full of food or watching their appliances blow up. I do know that electricity demand is growing strongly and Moggill residents will not face next summer with any more confidence than the one that has just gone. I can only presume that Energex and the state government are embarrassed about the special dividends that have removed the cash flow from Energex and the mounting debt as the government keeps its own debt off balance sheets and in its GOCs.

My closing remarks reflect my 25 years serving the health care needs of Queenslanders. In this time, around 100,000 Queenslanders have been through my consulting room. In the past, Queensland boasted the best public hospitals in Australia. We enjoyed probably the best primary health care system in the world. What has happened? We are witnessing serious problems in general practice and a hospital system that, while still having the skeleton of a world class system, has lost its focus. The public hospital system has taken its eye off the main purpose for its very existence—that is, to deliver quality and timely care to those in need.

The present Health Minister has announced a \$20 million package to reduce hospital waiting times. I applaud anything that reduces the waiting time for the many long-suffering patients. But let us not kid ourselves: there are endemic problems in the public health system that can never be fixed by stopgap measures. The continued haemorrhaging of highly skilled specialists from our public system, poor morale, nurse shortages and the lack of resources and equipment must all be addressed before we return our public health system to what it used to be.

This system could be thrown into complete chaos if the federal colleagues of those opposite ever succeed in cutting out the private health insurance rebate and making private health insurance unaffordable to those groups who have the greatest need of it, the elderly and the chronically ill. This sort of intrusion of political ideology over commonsense would be the very worst thing that could befall our already chronically ill health system. The focus in health needs to be brought back to patient care.

In conclusion, I look forward to the next three years of robust debate in this House.

A government member: Guaranteed.

Dr FLEGG: The member opposite should just wait. I acknowledge that most members on both sides of this House share my enthusiasm for making the lives of Queenslanders and their families as fulfilling and successful as we possibly can, even if they do not want to do that to my life. We live in an era of dynamic change, of ever-accelerating change. Let us not forget that our families and our young people are the future and let us not lose sight of how this rapid change will impact upon them. Members on both sides of this parliament need initiatives and leadership to deal with problems such as youth alcohol and drug abuse; the growing trend of new technologies such as the Internet to be used for exploitative purposes, particularly against children and families; childhood obesity and the impact of increasing urban density on families and children. It is clear that the state government needs robust opposition, and that is what we propose to provide.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Dr FLEGG: The member should just wait his turn. I trust that when we look back on the achievements of this parliament in three years time, the citizens of Queensland and their families will have benefited by our leadership and our achievements.