



Speech by

Lillian van Litsenburg

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Hansard Thursday, 12 October 2006

MAIDEN SPEECH

Ms van LITSENBURG (Redcliffe—ALP) (6.03 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, may I congratulate you on your appointment to that high office. Would you please pass on my congratulations to the Speaker. You have my support in upholding the time-honoured democratic traditions of this House. I would also like to extend my congratulations to the Premier and all the other honourable members of this House on their election and re-election.

I am proud to be part of this fourth-term Labor government. Despite many challenges during the last term, this Labor team went to the election with a vision for a better Queensland, backed by plans and promises to implement that vision. The people of Queensland have expressed their confidence in our ability to realise that vision and they trust us to deliver the Queensland that they are proud of and that they want to live in. Now that the people of Redcliffe have passed the baton on to me, I want to be part of delivering that vision. I welcome all the roles I will have to enable me to do that. This is a team task, and I look forward to working with my government and parliamentary colleagues to deliver the result that Queenslanders are looking for.

Previously, as part of the Murrumba electorate, Redcliffe elected the Hon. Jim Houghton as its first member in 1959. Interestingly, there must be something in the water, because there has been a high percentage of Speakers from Redcliffe. The first was Sir David Nicholson, although he was the member for Murrumba, which later became part of the electorate of Redcliffe. Jim Houghton was the next member for Redcliffe who became Speaker and latterly Ray Hollis. The only first that I can claim is that I am the first woman to be the member for Redcliffe, and I am glad to say that that was not an issue during the campaign. I was accepted for the issues that I stood for. It is pleasing that gender is no longer an issue in standing for public office. In this regard, Redcliffe can be proud of its recent history. Currently, half of the city councillors, including the deputy mayor, are women.

I stand here very humbled by the decisive support that was shown for me by the people of Redcliffe on election day. They have shown their faith in me, and I will work hard to do all I can to ensure that their faith is justified. My pledge to the people of Redcliffe is that I will do everything in my power to advocate for them and represent them irrespective of who they are, their vote or their issue. I pledge to work with community groups and towards developing the resources and improving the quality of life for the residents of the Redcliffe electorate. I also pledge to work to ensure that Redcliffe gains the entire infrastructure and environmental safeguards that it requires as it develops into a modern tourist town with a population that needs good access around the peninsula, to Brisbane and to the surrounding areas on a daily basis.

I have been very blessed by the support I have had from the Labor Party right from the time of the by-election, including the support of the state secretary, Milton Dick, Labor Party organiser Anthony Chisholm and many of my parliamentary colleagues, including the Premier, Peter Beattie, and Dr Heather Beattie; the Deputy Premier, Anna Bligh; honourable members John Mickel, Warren Pitt, Paul Lucas, Dean Wells and Bonny Barry; and also Wayne Swan, John Hogg and Victoria Newton. I can never thank all of them enough, because I am here today through their support.

I am also grateful for support from the Australian Workers Union and the Queensland Teachers Union. I am very proud to be a member of the Australian Labor Party. As an immigrant to Australia, I was motivated to join the Labor Party when the GST was proposed and I fought it. New Zealand's GST was introduced at the same time as IR laws similar to the Howard government's were introduced. That was a fight we lost, but it began my passion for Labor and for what the Labor Party stands for. The social justice issues that I have always held dear to my heart are the most striking thing that sets us apart from the conservative parties. Once I joined the party, I was accepted into the Labor family.

The then member for Redcliffe and Speaker of the House, Ray Hollis, became my mentor and encouraged me to run for the Redcliffe City Council. Council gave me a good foundation in representing and working with people and community groups to solve issues and develop plans for long-term community wellbeing. In learning all the technical issues of roads, drains, sewerage and town planning, the mayor, council colleagues and directors of departments were very helpful. I learned the nuts and bolts of developing policy in conjunction with community groups. But my learning time was soon over, and within two years of being elected to council I found myself contesting last year's by-election.

Since the dark days after the by-election I have had steadfast support from a number of Redcliffe Labor Party branch members, including Brad Heilbronn, Rosemary Hume, Stella Rey, Daniel Cheverton, Jackie Columb, Mark Whittaker, Anne Draper, Dorothy and Neville Lines, Kendal Rolley, Troy Fenandez, Dylan Adams, Edith Yanieri, Shirley and John Antonio, Sybil and Rod Kirkman, Munroe Cuttmore, Yvette D'Ath, Myra and Alan Robertson, Tony Brennan and Gavin Brady. These were the people who were out with me every Saturday and Sunday from before Easter doing stalls, doorknocking, organising branch meetings and barbecues, and all of the things that needed to be done to keep the branches ticking over and to get amongst the people. It was vital that we began to talk with constituents and understand their concerns and issues well before the election was called.

It is lonely after you have lost an election and these people know how much they gave me strength and helped me gain the courage and energy to win the state election. I am grateful for their friendship and loyalty to me and to the Labor movement in Redcliffe.

During the election campaign I was blessed to have a group of loyal supporters who worked long days from the moment the election was called. These included Keith Franklin, Bill Kelly, Mark Newlands, Linda Collins, Bill Winchester, Carl Winchester, Elenoa Winchester, Pat Roche, Brett Armstrong, Ernie Faulkner, John and Margaret Carr, Jenny Sams, Jeanette and Murray Ryan, and Liz and Steve Baker. There were also many others who helped during the campaign and on election day. I am very grateful for all their hard work.

Although I have no close family in Queensland, my sisters, Lia Martin, Yolanda Attrill and Jackie van Litsenburg, my nephew Luke Herbert, my niece Danielle Martin and Monica Schulze sent daily emails and cards supporting me. My close friends, who are my adopted Queensland family, Ros French and John Krammer, Linda Holman and Bruce Harkness, Di and James Houghton, Annetta and Will Moses, Angela Draycott and Collin Williams, and Helane Ayres were invaluable in their emotional and practical support.

The Redcliffe electorate is located on a peninsula with Moreton Bay on three sides and Moreton Island on the far side of the bay. No matter where you go on the peninsula you are never far from our beautiful beaches which have won clean beach and friendliest beach awards and tidy town awards as well as environmental awards. I was responsible for some of these as part of my role as a Redcliffe city councillor.

Redcliffe has a wide variety of wildlife from koalas and kangaroos to the migrating bird life in the Ramsar site at Hayes Inlet, the iconic pelicans on the lights across the Houghton Highway and the turtles, dugong, whales and other ocean wildlife in Moreton Bay. Historically, Redcliffe is known as the place of first European settlement in Queensland. John Oxley arrived in 1824 to establish a penal colony. After such an auspicious beginning, Redcliffe became a holiday destination when the main settlement was moved to the Brisbane River. It grew into a small town where generations have brought up their families. Because of its relative isolation, people relied on local businesses and services for all their needs. It is now one of the most densely populated areas in Queensland. It now enjoys a vital and vibrant community with a colourful mix of people from all walks of life, many nationalities and with one of the highest ratios of retired people in Queensland. It is a unique social mix of people that has resulted in a collective pride in their town. Consequently, they are very involved in the community and demand a voice in all local issues. In fact, Redcliffe has more volunteers per head of population than anywhere else in Queensland and we are proud of the contribution each person makes in the community.

There are a myriad of clubs, sporting bodies, community groups and volunteer organisations in Redcliffe to give people the scope to be involved in and add value to the community. These include the Redcliffe Arts Society, the Redcliffe Peninsula Surf Life Saving Club, the Mousetrap Theatre, the Kippa Ring Lions Club and two other Lions clubs, the Redcliffe Leagues Club, the Moreton Bay Boat Club, the Redcliffe Neighbourhood Centre, Redcliffe and District Wildlife Rescue, the Special Needs Toy Library, the Redcliffe Pottery Group, the Redcliffe Multicultural Liaison Group, the Redcliffe Dugongs, the RSL, the

Redcliffe and District Woodcraft Society, Sunshine Place, ROPE, the Peninsula Environment Group, the Henzell Street Quilters, Zonta International Club of Redcliffe, Rotary, the Tuesday Club and a full range of children's and adults' sporting teams, including the Dolphins, who have just won the Queensland Cup.

Redcliffe is well known for its schools and the quality students they produce—Humpybong schools on the seafront, Clontarf Beach schools, Woody Point Special, Redcliffe Special School, Scarborough schools, Kippa-Ring State School, Clontarf and Redcliffe high schools and the Southern Cross Catholic College and Grace Lutheran private schools. We have a range of groups including the Redcliffe Hospital Foundation, the Redcliffe and District Cardiac Support Group, the Diabetes Foundation, Cart Mill, Meals on Wheels and U3A, who perform a service or raise money for worthwhile causes within the community. The *Redcliffe and Bayside Herald* is a regular sponsor of community causes.

The conversation I want to have in this parliament is about the future of Redcliffe. This is the issue dearest to my heart. I want a Redcliffe that has retained its unique village character but has developed a robust and expanding economy able to sustain growing employment needs. I want a Redcliffe that has the social infrastructure to ensure the health and wellbeing of all its citizens. I want a Redcliffe that has effective physical infrastructure ensuring security and free movement for all citizens around Redcliffe and when travelling to surrounding areas. I believe steps have begun towards realising these goals but a lot more work is needed before this vision becomes reality. These are the things I am committed to working for.

Central to many issues in Redcliffe is the economy. I am committed to working with the Combined Chambers of Commerce and other groups to develop strategies to ensure businesses attain greater profitability and further the town's tourist strategy. Hand in hand with a robust economy is the ability to provide employment to the local population. This includes young people entering the workforce for the first time and mature people returning to employment. This requires that young people are adequately prepared for the workforce and that postsecondary training is easily accessible to them. This has traditionally been a difficult area, but state government grants for work readiness programs have helped many people access employment and further training.

With the recent escalation in the cost of housing, it is vital that a long-term strategy is put in place to ensure our elderly do not have to leave the peninsula when they need special home modifications to stay independent. Young people on low incomes also need affordable housing.

Because of Redcliffe's location outside the centre of Brisbane, it is vital that we have an effective transport system. I am proud to say that the duplication of the Houghton Highway is due to begin next year. It will improve the flow of traffic by ensuring there are two lanes travelling each way at all times and a bus lane, ensuring that buses have a swift passage to link with trains at Sandgate. The upgrade of the Gateway, although not within the Redcliffe electorate, will enable many Redcliffe commuters to have fast and more trouble-free daily trips.

The TransLink system has heralded an effective change in public transport, with the proportion of people using buses greatly increasing. The new smart card, currently being trialled in Redcliffe, promises to make entry on to buses quicker. The added benefit is that journeys are able to be tracked, so that if a number of people making journeys requiring two stages is recorded then a route straight to that destination could be added to the system.

The T2 lane being added to Anzac Avenue will help the congestion in the mornings and after school. These lanes can be drop-off lanes while through traffic use the other lanes. Buses will be off the road while they drop passengers off, retaining an even flow of traffic. I am committed to the continued improvement of transport within the Redcliffe electorate.

Redcliffe Hospital has worked hard to deliver the best-quality services to the community. As part of the government's health plan, the hospital will receive a new emergency department and 10 new surgical beds to lower the waiting lists along with the long list of improvements since the by-election. Due to our location, environmental and conservation issues are important to ensure we retain the health and balance of our many ecosystems.

There is a huge task ahead to realise my goals for Redcliffe and to implement the commitments of the fourth Beattie Labor government. This is my agenda for my first term in parliament. With the continued backing of those who have supported me over the last year and honest engagement with the community, I believe we can achieve the fantastic commitments laid out. I believe we can achieve a better lifestyle for the people of Redcliffe through improving our social and physical infrastructure and igniting our economy, and I believe this government can come through with its commitments and achieve a better Queensland.