



Speech by

JOHN-PAUL LANGBROEK, MP

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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FIRST SPEECH

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (4.14 p.m.): I am truly honoured to represent the residents of Surfers Paradise in this House. I am humbled by the support that I have received and their support of the Liberal Party, and I thank the people of the electorate for their confidence. I was chosen to represent the Liberal Party for the Surfers Paradise electorate 12 months before the election. In that time and during the by-election in 2001, I was able to meet many of the people of the area. Many of these people are patients and friends of mine. From the shop owners to the residents in the high-rises and to the families in the suburbs behind the coastal strip, it is a delight to see how far the area has come since I moved back to the Gold Coast 17 years ago.

Surfers Paradise is an area that has seen great change and great expansion. Surfers Paradise is an area where people have dared to achieve, and the proof is in the pudding. The region is now a magnet for domestic and overseas tourists to come and see the golden beaches and the glitter strip. Many others are staying here permanently as the suburbs of the central Gold Coast expand, with people escaping southern winters in favour of our warm Queensland sun.

Six years ago my community service on the Gold Coast with the Surfers Paradise Chamber of Commerce led me to politics—an ambitious choice, something my fellow members will know all too well. The Liberal Party's philosophy has always appealed to me more than any other. It has been shown that this philosophy of the individual being rewarded for hard work and enterprise is the catalyst for a thriving economy and higher standards of living whilst always maintaining a social safety net for those who need a helping hand. It is my first commitment that these are the principles and ideals I wish to uphold in this House. Government should not interfere unnecessarily. However, let the individual be as free as a functional society will have them.

There are many people to acknowledge who have helped me to have the opportunity to speak in this House today. First of all, I want to thank my wife, Stacey, and my three wonderful children, Chloe, Bronte and Piers. Stacey is the calming centre of our family and helps maintain a serene household where friends and visitors are happy to visit while I descend and depart like a cyclone. Stacey has every right to be apprehensive about the latest Langbroek adventure that I have taken her on. I have to admit that I share some of her apprehension. Most importantly, however, she is there for all of us and I love her dearly.

I also want to thank her parents, Alex and Liz Smith, for accepting me so readily into their family nearly 20 years ago. Considering that I came from a completely different background, they have been a wonderful support and loving grandparents. I must also thank my parents, Jan and Anne Langbroek. They came here as migrants from Holland and the USA in the early sixties and provided everything my sister Kate and I needed as we were growing up. Thank you, mum and dad, for your unconditional love. Importantly, they taught us to have self-confidence in our abilities and to be independent and aspirational when sometimes those around us, though well meaning, can be discouraging. Australia has truly been a wonderful place for our family. In the words of Dorothea Mackellar—

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of rugged mountain ranges,
Droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel sea,
Her beauty and her terror,
The wide brown land for me.

I also want to thank Rob Knight and Councillor Bob La Castra who asked me to join the Liberal Party five years ago and my wonderful team of volunteers who helped us to a memorable win on 7 February. They included my campaign director John Lander, Les Howson, Cate Lawlor, Darren Sly and Tony Tooma as well as the hardworking Liberal Party members of the Moncrieff Federal Electorate Council.

I have had some helpful mentors over the last few years. I wish to thank Brisbane based senators Senator Santo Santoro, Senator Brett Mason and Senator George Brandis for their support. I also want to thank the federal member for Moncrieff, Steven Ciobo, and his wife Astra. Let me also note my sincere appreciation for the tireless work of Queensland Young Liberal President Mark Powell and the members of the Young Liberal movement who, too, worked tirelessly on my campaign. I would not be here without you all.

The election result was the culmination of a great deal of hard work by many people. We have achieved a memorable result. I am the first Liberal to represent the electorate since Bruce Bishop in 1977. He, too, defeated a sitting MP, Sir Bruce Small, who was a former mayor of the Gold Coast. I certainly hope my achievements will be looked on as favourably as Mr Bishop's. The electorate has had some wonderful representatives. Sir Bruce Small, as I previously mentioned, was 'Mr Gold Coast' for many years. Another former member in former Premier Rob Borbidge has also given me a great deal of support in my endeavours. Finally, I want to thank my predecessor Lex Bell. I know Lex as a patient of mine, and he is an honourable man. He has given the Gold Coast great service for many years as a mayor and a member of this House. I wish him well in his future endeavours.

I am the first dental surgeon to be elected to the state parliament since 1938. This, I hope, is more due to the small numbers in the profession as opposed to this being a terrible place for a dentist to come. I am sure that I will find out in due time. I suppose it is also an irony that a dentist comes to a place where pain can be inflicted as opposed to inflicting himself. Working in the profession for over two decades, one gains some knowledge into the areas where the government can assist in better oral health care. While school dental vans and public dental clinics do a very good job under a great deal of pressure, more can be done. Fluoridation of our water supplies is an example.

The argument for fluoridation is very strong. Fluoridation will make our children's teeth better. We already add vitamins to many everyday items in our diets such as bread and cereal. Why not supplement our water with fluoride? It has been proven that water fluoridation is the most efficient form of using fluoride to strengthen teeth. While fluoride tablets and adding fluoride to toothpaste are very efficient, water fluoridation provides these benefits to all.

The world's leading health authorities support the concept—authorities including the World Health Organisation, Australian Medical Association, American Medical Association and British Medical Association. They see the benefits of such an initiative, in particular the benefits it provides to children—strengthening their teeth from day one—as well as the benefits for those from low socioeconomic groups who may not be able to afford dental care.

Water fluoridation, along with a correct diet, provides a cost-effective method for healthier teeth. Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, Adelaide, Canberra and Hobart all have fluoride added to their water. The government is adamant on pursuing its Smart State mantra, yet how smart is it to place our children's teeth at undue risk by not fluoridating our water? I can assure the Minister for Health that I will be an ally in securing bipartisan support for this measure—an important measure for the health of Queenslanders.

Having lived on the Gold Coast and worked in the Surfers Paradise area for a long time, I have seen the area grow. As with any such area, the constant challenge for elected representatives is to keep infrastructure in step with the increases in population. The Gold Coast is Queensland's second largest city and Australia's sixth largest city, yet we are treated like second-class citizens by the present government. Whilst we are thankful for the convention centre, the Gold Coast is still proportionally forgotten in terms of funding. In Brisbane the state government funds tunnels, buses, river cat and ferry networks, buildings, bridges, stadiums and roads as part of joint initiatives with the Brisbane City Council. There is no such relationship with the Gold Coast City Council and, as such, the Gold Coast is forgotten.

Main arterial roads, especially through central Surfers Paradise, need to be improved. The current state of the roads was fine for the holiday village atmosphere of the Gold Coast 15 years ago but does not accommodate the thriving metropolis today. In the western suburbs of Ashmore, the duplication of the Ross Street bridge must be urgently completed to ensure a better traffic flow into the growing suburb of Carrara. Similarly, it is my aim to work with community representatives and officials to find a solution for a viable east-west route from Surfers Paradise to the Bundall business district.

The Gold Coast is Queensland's fun capital. One of the problems associated with being the hub of entertainment is a potential increase in crime. I commend Assistant Police Commissioner David Melville on his efforts to clean up the image of Surfers Paradise. I also assure him that I will work with him to ensure police numbers in Surfers Paradise are increased to reflect the actual population of the area, which swells to over double in the holiday season and regularly on weekends as well.

In 2003 the Gold Coast had 16 police officers per 10,000 residents. This is compared with 24 in Cairns, 20 in Rockhampton and 20 in Townsville. These figures are also based on the Gold Coast's permanent population. In fact, the Gold Coast figure can be halved due to the tourist population. This represents an indelible deficiency in police numbers on the Gold Coast and one that must be rectified. One way to achieve more police officers on the Gold Coast is to secure a police station in Benowa or Ashmore. At present the residents of those suburbs rely on assistance from the non-local Surfers Paradise Police Station and Southport Police Station.

The electorate also has an underrated green behind the gold. The electorate encompasses the Gold Coast Botanic Gardens. I will work with the council to attract more people to this beautiful facility. We also have the Cascade Gardens and lengths of beachside parkland that Gold Coasters and visitors come in droves to enjoy. One such area is on the Spit. I am a member of Friends of Federation Walk, which is a volunteer group that has made a scenic path through the Spit for all to enjoy. Importantly, the electorate houses the MacIntosh Island park, the backdrop for the Indy race. I will work with community groups to secure the park's future without compromising the present success of the Indy festival.

I turn to more statewide issues. I will vehemently campaign for a smarter allocation of funds in our health services. My family has been touched by loved ones having to battle with debilitating diseases. My father's brother died from multiple sclerosis and now my brother-in-law, Murray Kirk, has been struck down by motor neurone disease. I have watched him deteriorate from a strong family man three and a half years ago to someone who is wheelchair bound with an increasing need for nursing help. Having talked with Murray and his wife, Maryanne, one realises the discrepancies in the health system.

Compared with Victoria, the options available in Queensland for illnesses of this nature are appalling. For instance, at the Calvary Health Centre in Melbourne the following services are offered in their palliative care ward—basics such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy, along with music therapy, which provides patients with a diverse and very individual relief from the pain of their illness and the rigours of intense medication and treatment. Social workers are available to patients and their families if they need advice or a shoulder to cry on in such a trying situation. This is coupled with pastoral care and chaplaincy for the strain such illnesses bring to families. While some of these services are offered in Queensland, they are limited by comparison. While I am not advocating a new allocation of funding, I am certainly calling for this House to look into a smarter allocation of current funds. Queensland lacks a facility that would help families carry the cross that they manage, mainly on their own.

As a father of three children, I live with the constant anxiety of 'is what I'm doing is right thing?' The current generation of schoolchildren do not have the strong family unit that was once present. In any given class there is a mixture of children with two always-present parents, children with one weekday parent and one weekend parent, children with one parent and children with a guardian. None of these structures is wrong, and saying so would be unfair. The problem, however, for legislators is: how do we overcome this instability in the family unit to produce stable members of society? By 'stable' I mean young Queenslanders with the resolve to achieve, young Queenslanders who do recognise that they do not need to be destructive or delinquent to express themselves—destructive expression such as graffiti.

Unfortunately, the Surfers Paradise electorate is increasingly being tarnished by graffiti. I commend the work of the parliamentary graffiti task force for its work to date; however, there is more to be done. Graffiti, as the task force has correctly recognised, is the result of behavioural problems that can be detected and addressed at a young age. I am committed to working with the other members of this House to implement more effective mechanisms for the detection of early childhood behavioural problems and at the same time implement more effective ways of addressing those problems before they become too great in adolescence. The flow-on benefits will be great. As Rudy Giuliani points out in his book *Leadership*, one broken window leads to another and the problem escalates exponentially. If we can deal with the issues leading to graffiti rather than concentrating on punishment after the fact, that first instance of graffiti is less likely to occur. Therefore, the problem will be easier to control.

One of the beauties of growing up with migrant parents is the enthusiasm they have for the Australian lifestyle. Too often second and subsequent generation Australians take for granted the way we live. We are not scared of going to sporting events as generally there is no riotous behaviour, as there is overseas. We are not scared of voicing our opinions as the worst we will receive in return is ridicule, not rifles. We enjoy an exceptional quality of life, with our five mainland state capitals all currently in the 10 most livable cities in the world. This demonstrates something that no string of adjectives can explain.

While Australians are democratic, tolerant, patriotic, compassionate and friendly, there is something intangible over and above these things that makes us Australian. I mention this because Surfers Paradise plays host to many overseas visitors who get addicted to this X factor in our personality. They keep coming back for more and more. The flow-on benefits to our economy and the

marketability of our state are enormous. Add to that the fact other Australians are moving to our state by the thousands and we realise that Queenslanders, more so than the rest of the nation, are very attractive to domestic as well as overseas visitors. The more Queenslanders can do to aid this growth and market our greatest resource—ourselves—we should do.

Surfers Paradise has got it all. The coastal strip has golden beaches and a vibrant night life. The suburbs have a firm family orientation that gives the Gold Coast its friendly face. The electorate has the heart of the Gold Coast business district. All of this, though, is tied in with its strong community spirit and a will to see the Gold Coast succeed.

I look forward to working with my Liberal colleagues over the next three years. I commend Bob Quinn on his strong leadership to date. I also look forward to working with the other fresh faces in the Liberal parliamentary team. Together we will form a strong opposition ready to keep the Labor government accountable for its actions. I thank the people of the electorate for placing their faith in me. I look forward to working with the people of the Surfers Paradise electorate in the years ahead. With such a changing demographic in the area, I cannot rest on my laurels if I am to succeed next time around. I love the area and I love the people. I will work hard to accommodate their needs.