



Speech by

MARK McARDLE

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

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FIRST SPEECH

Mr McArdle (Caloundra—Lib) (4.50 p.m.): I am honoured to stand in this chamber as the member for Caloundra and offer to Her Excellency the Governor on behalf of the people of Caloundra their best wishes. The boundaries of the electorate positions it wholly on the coastal strip, where the best social qualities of Queensland—sea, sand, blue skies and friendship—make it an ideal destination.

The seat itself forms part of the city of Caloundra and, over the past 10 years, the demographics of Caloundra and indeed the Sunshine Coast have changed dramatically, making it the 10th fastest growing regional area in Australia. Caloundra has seen enormous economic growth from what could be described as a coastal resort to a dynamic urban environment, taking into account large-scale tourism together with property development and retail growth unprecedented in its history. This growth has brought with it many bonuses and a number of needs, to which I will return later.

Caloundra, as a seat, is rightfully proud of its political heritage, claiming Premiers Frank Nicklin and Mike Ahern at a time when the current seat formed part of the seat of Landsborough and, more recently, Joan Sheldon who was a member initially for Landsborough and then Caloundra from 1990 to 2004. Mrs Sheldon was the first female Leader of the Liberal Party, the first female Treasurer of Queensland and the first female Deputy Premier of Queensland. This is the calibre of person Caloundra elects to parliament and, although I do not put myself in that category, I am honoured to say they have elected me. I hope I can help them achieve their needs. Joan Sheldon worked for the electorate of Caloundra and for the greater benefit of all Queenslanders during her time in parliament, and I undertake to do so to this parliament.

I am first and foremost the member for Caloundra, yet with pride I bring with me the fundamental principles and beliefs of myself and my party. I am a firm believer in rewarding effort and in a government that maximises the individual and private sector initiatives; encouraging our citizens to achieve for themselves and their family by providing incentives; providing equal opportunity and the facilitation of the highest possible standards of living, health, education and social justice; and preserving Australia's natural beauty and the environment for future generations, to name but a few. These principles focus on the needs and aspirations of those we serve and who we have an obligation to protect.

Proudly, I can say that the seat of Caloundra is served by many groups and organisations who put in hundreds of volunteer hours each week to provide essential social support and without which we would all be the poorer. Such groups include Red Cross, Rotary, Save the Children, Caloundra Ratepayers and the Caloundra Hospital Auxiliary to name a few. Time does not permit me to name them all, but I pay tribute to all such groups and their members and wish them well in their endeavours.

Additionally, Caloundra is well supported by what I call economic groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Sunshine Coast Regional Organisation of Councils and Tourism Sunshine Coast. Again, these groups are critical to Caloundra's long-term development and prosperity. Yet perhaps the most important element of Caloundra's population is its families—the mums, the dads, the aunts, the uncles, the grandparents and step-parents who daily face a rapidly changing world and who through it all continue to bring up their children and instil in them the best principles of our society. Today they have a most difficult task, but they rarely shrink from that obligation. Most of all, they deserve to be honoured by this House, as they hold the fragile minds of our future in their hands.

Caloundra is well served, as I said, by the Sunshine Coast Regional Organisation of Councils, which is the body formed by the councils of Noosa, Maroochy and Caloundra to lobby for infrastructure and funding across the coast. The councils are to be congratulated on this step, and I will assist them in any way that I can to achieve their goals.

I earlier stated that Caloundra's growth has brought with it significant needs, and those needs are mirrored throughout the Sunshine Coast. The local newspaper, the *Sunshine Coast Daily*, reported on Sunday, 14 March 2004 that between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2003 10,148 people had relocated to the Sunshine Coast. By comparison, the largest migration prior to this was 8,400 people in any one year. The reasons for this migration are manifold, including lifestyle and affordability. But, of course, these people have to be fed, housed and educated, and they need access to hospitals, transport, roads and entertainment.

As I stated earlier, the seat of Caloundra is part of the Sunshine Coast region, and in its *Report on the Sunshine Coast Regional Economy* for the third quarter 2003, AEC Economics projected a population for the Sunshine Coast of 441,797 people by 2021, or a yearly growth rate of 2.9 per cent. That can be compared with the projected state growth rate of 1.6 per cent per annum. Additionally, in relation to travel demand, the report stated that by 2011 trip times will increase by around 35 per cent and the amount of car travel on the local roads will increase by more than 300 per cent. There are significant issues Caloundra will need to deal with not only immediately but, in my opinion, in the medium to long term. These needs include our transport system, health services, education, the environment, our personal security, developing business and creating jobs and assisting those in need.

No area can survive without an adequate transport system—a system that not only takes goods and services from place to place but also ensures its residents can access shopping, schools, hospitals and resorts to name a few. The economy of the seat of Caloundra is entering a new phase, yet the transport system is wholly unable to deal with the current situation, let alone the expected explosion in the future. Immediately, Caloundra Road must be four-laned from Pierce Avenue to the Bruce Highway. Caloundra Road is the main feeder road into Caloundra from the highway and is used by thousands of vehicles daily. The housing developments immediately adjacent to Caloundra Road and the surrounding area of Pelican Waters make this essential. Indeed, with the new industrial estate located off Caloundra Road, purportedly 12 to 18 months away, this and the construction of an alternative route to the Bruce Highway are economically essential.

Caloundra's population in the 50 years and over age group exceeds the national average. Thus there is a higher need for public medical services. Though Nambour General Hospital remains the mainstay for delivery of such services, our growing population demands the expansion of services at Caloundra General Hospital and Caloundra dental services. Dovetailed with this is the necessity to provide dedicated bus services to the hospital in Nambour as opposed to a one-and-a-half to two-hour one-way trip currently endured by many who reside in Caloundra.

Securing our children's education is an investment in our future and one of our most important obligations. Caloundra is well served by the principals, staff and parents of the children who are all dedicated to achieving just that. Yet the public schools in Caloundra have now reached saturation. We must now move to identify the location of the next public school, secure the purchase of the land and plan that school's construction.

We are well aware that development comes at a cost—one being the loss of green space. The balance is very difficult to strike yet our obligation in this House is clear. Caloundra's growth, as in all other areas, is driven by forces that, on the whole, are difficult to contain yet we must realise that we must preserve the reason many of us moved to the area—that is, the environment. This obligation includes our responsibility to future generations. For although we may enjoy and use the environment, it is also our obligation to maintain its benefits for years to come. Specifically I refer to Tripcony-Hibiscus Caravan Park, which is an area of approximately three hectares located just outside the central business area of Caloundra. Ideally, this should be maintained as green space and returned to the people of Caloundra to do with as they deem fit.

Population increase brings with it additional personal security risks. This, in particular, is an ongoing issue in Bulcock Street, the main street of the electorate. There is a strong need for a police beat to be established to combat a growing problem in this area, particularly at night and on the weekends. In fact, a full strategic plan to cope with the growth in the region's policing needs must be developed urgently.

One of the most important facets of any region is its economy. Caloundra and, indeed, the Sunshine Coast is well catered for in the retail, construction and property development areas. Yet the economy of Caloundra needs to diversify. It must use its current strengths to establish new employment opportunities. At present, the Sunshine Coast University is working with local government and business to provide IT infrastructure, yet, in my opinion, this needs to be supplemented by a greater use of apprenticeships and school based traineeships. We cannot allow skilled worker levels to fall at the current rate. We need to acknowledge the necessity to arrest this trend and put in place plans to do so.

This is an integral step if Caloundra is to diversify its economic base in the near future. In particular, I would like to see manufacturing and green industries encouraged and supported. This can only occur through the cooperation of local, state and federal governments. By increasing worker levels and retaining people in Caloundra we continue to grow a positive community spirit and a positive community economy.

Finally, there are those in our community who, for reasons of age, health or other reasons, are in need of assistance and protection. This place is responsible to ensure that the rights of such people are protected and their needs met. One of the areas of concern is public housing within Caloundra. There is a dire need for accommodation to be made available.

The people of Caloundra are about to embark on major changes over the next two to 15 years touching many of the areas I have just outlined. It is an exciting time in the life of what was once a sleepy coastal hamlet but, rather like the slumbering dragon, it is now awakening. If Caloundra is to move forward then we will require millions of dollars of infrastructure of both a physical and social nature to be put in place. I intend to lobby this place to achieve those funds.

The people of Caloundra have entrusted me to provide the structure and assistance for developing their lives and assisting them in attaining their goals. It is an obligation I do not take lightly. I will strive to do my utmost not to disappoint them.

There are many people who have assisted me to attain this position today. They have worked tirelessly for they have a belief in my abilities and the policies of my party. I can never repay them, but I certainly acknowledge each and every one of them. I will read their names into *Hansard*. They include: Lesley Godwin, Ken Hinds, Mo Barnes, Frank and Pam Gower, Gloria and Norm Stevenson, Rhonda Smith, Jarrod Bleijie, and Joan and Colin Butterworth. There are many other people whom I should name but time prohibits me doing that. I simply say to each and every one of them that I hold them dear.

I wish also to thank the people within the Liberal Party as a whole for their support to me and my family over the last seven to eight years—in particular, during the campaign period. There is, however, one lady who more than any other person has been with me and has never lost faith in what I was doing. My wife, Judy, provided me with inspiration in time of doubt and support when my spirits were low. I have seen her surrender personal goals so as to allow me to achieve success. I thank her sincerely and love her dearly.

To my Liberal colleagues in this place, I will endeavour to meet the high standard of my office and their expectations. Finally, I congratulate all members in this House on winning or retaining their seats. I thank them kindly for listening to me today.