



Speech by

JANN STUCKEY

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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FIRST SPEECH

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (5.22 p.m.): As the new Liberal member for Currumbin, I am honoured, proud and privileged to present my inaugural speech to this House. With respect for the traditions of this democratic institution, I pledge my loyalty to this the 51st Parliament of Queensland and to the people who reside in the Currumbin electorate. I wish to express my deep appreciation to the people of Currumbin who in giving me their vote also gave me their confidence to represent their views, concerns and their aspirations. It is my belief that actions speak louder than words. My community activity over a number of years supports this belief.

But now let me tell members about Currumbin. The seat of Currumbin was derived from the southern portion of the South Coast electorate in the 1986 redistribution. Located on the most southern aspect of the Gold Coast and bordering New South Wales, Currumbin plays an ambassadorial role as the southern gateway to Queensland. The border is invisible until summertime when it causes havoc for businesses, families, schoolchildren, tourists and locals alike with its time differences. Currumbin is one of the most beautiful, diverse and nostalgic electorates in Queensland encompassing the lush Currumbin and Tallebudgera valleys and magnificent golden sands of our world-famous beaches. According to Australia Post office history, the word 'Currumbin' means high up or places where high trees grow. Nearer the coastline it has also been referred to as a place of shifting sands. And of course local historians have recorded the famous beach parties of the fifties which stamped Coolangatta as the fun spot to be during summer.

The Currumbin electorate comprises 146 square kilometres with a population in the 2001 census of 41,401 people and with an enrolment of 29,559 as of 30 May 2003. The demographics are changing quickly in line with land values, creating a shortage of low-cost housing and a rapidly increasing number of homeless people. This is most prevalent in our seaside suburbs of Coolangatta, Kirra, Bilinga, Tugun and Currumbin as land prices soar and the wooden and fibro shacks are pulled down to make way for apartments which are snapped up by retirees. We need to address the situation of homelessness as a matter of urgency before the chills of winter hit.

Other suburbs have also been affected by the price rises. Tallebudgera was once dubbed 'nappy valley' because of the high number of young families. It is now more appropriately called 'teen valley' as it has become too expensive for young families to purchase property there. Large numbers of youths roam the streets during the weekend evenings looking for things to do. As a responsible society we need to engage these young individuals in meaningful activities and encourage them to complete their schooling.

Our principal production is tourism, light industry, service establishments mainly based around accommodation, retail and manufacturing industries and is mostly residential with some agriculture in our beautiful hinterland. Currumbin is home to the Gold Coast airport with its own international airport supporting some 800 immediate jobs to our electorate, the John Flynn Hospital with its 24-hour casualty department and the unique Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary which is renowned for its feeding of cheeky lorikeets. We have 15 schools and preschools, nine surf-lifesaving clubs and numerous sporting, recreational and community clubs or associations.

My family and I have resided in Currumbin Waters since 1987 when we moved from Adelaide. My husband Richard purchased a medical practice with surgeries in Kirra and Tweed Heads and

amalgamated them into one surgery in Coolangatta 12 years ago. Whilst my initial career was nursing specialising in paediatrics—hence my keen interest in child safety—the past 20 years have seen me run my own small business as a communications consultant. This role brought me into contact with many charity and community groups who required help and led me to become proactive in local community projects and matters of concern within my electorate and throughout Queensland. I will mention a few of these as they shed some light on the handful of Liberal shadow portfolios I have recently been allocated.

During 1994 I had the pleasure of coaching Perry Cross to become Australia's very first motivational speaker on life support. Together we raised money and more importantly awareness for quadriplegics and paraplegics both on the Gold Coast and beyond. The courage and spirit of this young man is remarkable. In acknowledgment of his superhuman efforts to overcome his severe disability, he was recognised as Young Queenslanders of the Year in 1995. Last year I went in to bat for him again, this time over a severe cut to his carer funding package. Carers play an intimate role and are, in many cases, treated as part of the family. Keeping ventilated quadriplegics out of hospital wards and at home saves the government a considerable amount of money, and this should be encouraged, not penalised.

As a member of the Save Our Hospital Committee together with several thousand residents, we took to the streets of Southport in 1998 to lobby the state government for more funding for the Gold Coast Hospital. I was particularly appalled to learn that the paediatric ward was not airconditioned and that the tourist population was not factored into the funding. I shall continue to lobby this government for a better deal for our hospitals and an end to revolving-door staff employment policies that see us treated as second cousins.

In 1999 I joined the Coolangatta Community Renewal Association, a group of volunteers whose goal is to provide a safer community for children and their families. We were determined to create a community centre in Coolangatta, an area starved of services and high in need of a centre which could provide education, support and civic pride. To date we have secured funds to relocate and renovate an old house from Mudgeeraba to a site within the school grounds. This project has involved three levels of government and will hopefully be operational by the middle of this year. I am proud to note that this project is listed by the Gold Coast South district of schools as a district innovation. Volunteers who contribute here are the lifeblood of many communities and are to be treasured. Let us make their goals easier to achieve by working closely to support them.

Leading up to this election, Currumbin was thought to be a very safe Labor seat, with a margin of 14.5 per cent. In giving me a mandate to represent them, the people of Currumbin have made it transparently clear they wanted a member who will not desert them for Brisbane. They wanted a member who does not make promises they cannot fulfil. They wanted a grassroots local member who is prepared to stand up and fight for them, a member who will ensure that consultation processes are made openly available to a broader range of residents, not just committed business groups or recognised community associations. My commitment to the people of Currumbin is to provide ample avenues for consultation, to listen actively, to gain a thorough understanding of concerns, to speak on constituents' behalf, to care and to be ready to assist ably when injustice, disability or unemployment affects them. Above all, my commitment is to be honest.

There are several specific issues that the people of Currumbin want resolved. On top of their list is the long-awaited, much-promised Tugun bypass. The Gold Coast Highway between Tugun and Kirra carries 54,000 vehicles per day, and forecasts suggest that traffic may double by the year 2015. The matter is indicative of previous poor regional planning, detracting from the quality of life in so many areas of south-east Queensland.

Already mentioned in this House is that the Gold Coast is Australia's sixth largest city and growing rapidly. We deserve a better deal. The patience of the constituents of the electorate of Currumbin and the wider community is wearing very thin, and it is therefore crucial that I work vigorously to make sure the promises and plans of the preferred route for the Tugun bypass—west of the airport—are brought to fruition. It is vital for this government to keep the pressure on New South Wales to negotiate a successful outcome.

Traffic problems are spreading through the suburbs as people try to find routes to avoid known congestion spots. Works at Stewart Road are exacerbating the existing congestion and putting undue pressure on Currumbin Creek Road, which requires the implementation of immediate safety measures if we are to avoid a fatality in the future. The installation of an Armco rail and a raised pedestrian crossing will do much to alleviate this accident waiting to happen, yet pleas to the local member for this course of action have fallen on deaf ears in the past.

Another issue causing headaches for the electorate is the Tweed sand bypass project, which commenced some three and a half years ago. Our world-famous beaches are being choked with sand due to the New South Wales and Queensland governments' 24-year Tweed sand bypass pumping agreement. Locals, lifesaving clubs and tourists alike have been complaining to their local member for

two years. These complaints have also fallen on deaf ears. People find it incomprehensible that our state government would sign off on a lengthy process such as this, give 60 per cent of the control to pump to New South Wales and not have provision for annual review. They want to see more flexibility in this project.

Since the sand pumping began, the mouth of Currumbin Creek has silted up far more critically than in years gone by. As a founding member of the Fix Currumbin Creek Committee, I am determined that Currumbin Creek must be cleared to ensure safety in crossing the bar. In fact, just recently the creek mouth was nominated as one of the five most dangerous swimming locations in all of Queensland. Also in recent times our volunteer marine rescue has been unable to assist stricken craft on numerous occasions. There is a very real danger of homes further up the creek being flooded. Even worse still is the water quality. Fish stocks and breeding grounds are all declining. Ongoing maintenance of the creek mouth must be undertaken so that the VMR, fishermen, recreational anglers and other creek users can access and return from the ocean safely.

As I enter the final chapter of my inaugural speech, I wish to take a few moments to recognise and thank the colossal number of people who supported and assisted me during the year-long campaign to win Currumbin and all those who helped on polling day. I say 'colossal' because there were literally hundreds of people involved in some way; however, there are simply too many to list here in the House today. Without the help of these dedicated and generous individuals I would not be here today.

The seat of Currumbin had been held by Labor for 11 years and, as stated, required a mammoth swing of 14.5 per cent for it to change hands. It is therefore fitting to firstly acknowledge the outstanding effort of the members of my campaign committee, chaired by my husband, Richard. They were all committed 110 per cent and applied themselves wholeheartedly and acted in a professional manner. The Currumbin branch has worked tirelessly for years towards this goal and are to be praised for their loyalty, dedication and never-quit attitude. The Burleigh branch support was sincerely appreciated, as was the efforts of the members of McPherson FEC, or federal electorate council.

My deep personal gratitude is extended to the following people, who went the extra mile for me on numerous occasions: Mr Brad Smith and the Fix Currumbin Creek Committee; Ruth and Keith Fleming; Heather Haynes OAM; Anne Hertel; Robert Wright; and Alan Campigli. To my dad, Eric Coleman: I thank you for firing up the Liberal spirit within me all those many years ago. To my greatest fan, 88-year-old Jean Russell: this win is dedicated to your beloved Wilson, who passed away three years ago and was one of the most fervent Liberals you could ever hope to meet. To my husband of 27 years, Richard: it is difficult to put into words how much I value the special nature of our precious relationship. Your absolute belief in me, together with your unconditional love, has made my dream to become a member of parliament come true. Our children, Olivia and Edward, have been full of support and encouragement throughout this campaign, which was a great comfort to me.

I wish to thank Mr Neil Laurie, the Clerk of the Parliament, and his colleagues for delivering our three-day new member induction program in February. Your patience, knowledge, courtesy and professionalism are commendable, and I thank you.

I stand before this House proud to be a Liberal and part of Bob Quinn's new-look team. For the last three elections the Liberals have outpolled all other non-Labor parties in the state. This will give us a platform for the future. I am looking forward to being part of such a talented and enthusiastic team. What we may lack in seat numbers is more than compensated for by our united determination to keep the government accountable and focused on the real issues affecting Queenslanders. May my positive actions continue to speak louder than my words, and may we all in this House work together in this robust atmosphere for the betterment of all Queenslanders.

I would like to finish with a quote that has carried me through the last few years. I hope that you will find it of some value. 'Character is the ability to listen to your heart, hear what it says and follow it through, no matter what in your mind you think you may lose.'