



Speech by
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Hansard Wednesday, 22 April 2009

MAIDEN SPEECH

Ms BATES (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (4.54 pm): I rise today in this chamber humbled, grateful and privileged—humbled by the confidence the people of Mudgeeraba have placed in me, profoundly grateful for the support of all those who have worked so hard to get me here and deeply privileged at the opportunity afforded me by the people of Mudgeeraba. Let there be no doubt: I am here to represent the residents of Mudgeeraba and represent them I will. I am conscious of the honour they have bestowed upon me, I am conscious of the trust that they have put in me, I am conscious of their rightful expectation that I will work tirelessly on their behalf, and I am conscious of the enormous responsibility that now rests with me as the member for Mudgeeraba.

The electorate of Mudgeeraba covers the rural hinterland of the southern Gold Coast west of the Pacific Motorway as well as urban centres west of the Robina Parkway. It includes the Robina Hospital, the Robina Town Centre—surely now one of the world's great shopping centres—and Skilled Stadium, home of the mighty Gold Coast Titans and the newly formed and eagerly anticipated A-League team Gold Coast United.

The Mudgeeraba electorate encompasses some of the most beautiful areas in Australia including Springbrook, Natural Bridge, Numinbah Valley, Advancetown, Austinville, Lower Beechmont and the sought-after lifestyle centres of Bonogin, Gilston, Mudgeeraba, Reedy Creek, Tallai, Worongary, Merrimac and sections of Carrara and Robina. If one were to sit down to design the ideal area to represent, an area of both natural beauty and modern convenience, an area of exciting growth and centuries-old natural wonder, an area of commercial excitement and superb lifestyle, then tell them to stop their designing: it has already been done and it is called Mudgeeraba. This is an area and these are people that I have come to know well, especially over the last few years.

My family and I have been Gold Coast locals for over 10 years. My children and I originally moved from a small country town in Victoria known as Healesville. Ours was one of the very early Healesville families where my family name is well known as local dairy farmers. As a youngster you would have found me harvesting with my cousins, riding horses with my sisters, and learning to drive a car and motorbike in our paddocks. My father worked for the Forest Commission and was a Country Fire Authority volunteer, and my mother was a proud second-generation schoolteacher.

AFL footy was a big part of my life. Apart from being a trainer for the Healesville Football Club, I barracked for North Melbourne while my father played for Melbourne and other relatives played for Geelong and St Kilda and, I regret to say, even Collingwood. My parents moved to the Gold Coast in 1989, and the children and I regularly holidayed on the coast every year before we finally made the move to be with the rest of our family.

I joined the Liberal Party in 2000 and quickly found myself immersed in the political world, having campaigned in every state, federal and local council election on the Gold Coast since that time. I was a candidate for the Liberal Party in Mudgeeraba at the 2006 state election where I was narrowly defeated. It was during that campaign that I doorknocked more than 7½ thousand homes in the electorate. For those of you who know the Gold Coast hinterland, this was not an easy task. Up hills and down valleys, I learned

from residents in farmhouse kitchens, on the balconies of town houses and in the common rooms of retirement villages. I heard the views of people working on shop floors, business owners in their home based offices, customers in coffee shops, police officers and firefighters, and mums and dads at local schools and sporting events. I listened to schoolteachers and parents, nurses and patients, retirees and professionals. On more than one occasion I shared the unforgettable ordeal of passengers on the infamous 'Bombay Express'. I travelled and learnt from the people the length and breadth of the electorate. I learnt that overwhelmingly the residents of Mudgeeraba understand that our area is one of contrasts.

Like much of the Gold Coast, Mudgeeraba is characterised by rapid population growth as thousands of southerners cross the border into the great state of Queensland. Alongside that rapid growth is the development of related business infrastructure. We need look no further than the magnificent Robina Town Centre precinct to see an area that is growing as a commercial and retail heart required to serve the surrounding region. That dynamic growth contrasts dramatically with the heritage listed pristine forests of the hinterland—bushland areas that remain untouched and are recognised internationally for their diverse wildlife, incredible plant life and remarkable views; areas that contribute to our state's tourist industry year in and year out by drawing tourists from all parts of the world.

I learned that the people of Mudgeeraba understand their right to be treated by government with the respect, dignity and honesty that is the right of every single Queenslanders. Having my home and family in the area and speaking with thousands of fellow residents over a number of years has helped me crystallise a shared vision for our wonderful electorate—a vision that I dedicate myself to making a reality during my time as the people's representative. That vision includes: a significant increase in police numbers in Mudgeeraba and surrounding electorates that will lead to a major reduction in graffiti crimes and hooning; underground powerlines as the norm rather than the exception, where new developments and major projects listen to the voices of residents and do the environmentally and aesthetically right thing; a reduction in traffic concerns for local residents and a significant amount of mandatory community consultation that is both meaningful and credible, especially for those residents west of the M1; solutions to the Mudgeeraba traffic gridlock caused by cars utilising Robina Parkway and Robina Town Centre Drive and again driven by meaningful community consultation; reconsideration of the closure of the Elysium Road overpass which will severely affect residents and businesses in the area and requires much more consultation during the planning for the eventual upgrade of the M1 to eight lanes; consultation on the restriction on cold production burns which remains a huge safety concern for the residents of Springbrook and surrounds in the wake of similar communities being totally destroyed in the recent Victorian bushfires; rapid and significant upgrade of the treacherous Beechmont Road where families are concerned for the safety of their children on school buses and where 14 motorists and cyclists have sustained injuries since December 2008; the introduction of more east-west bus services for the residents in the towns west of the M1; an increased response to community concerns in the Merrimac area where the dangerous lack of crossings on Bourton Road is a safety concern for the elderly and children; greatly improved access to their own homes for the residents in Carrara at River Gardens Caravan Park and Casino Village Caravan Park; increased fire services to the 4211 postcode area and fast-tracking of the long awaited Nerang Fire Station which will serve areas such as Carrara; and a dramatic increase in patient services on the Gold Coast, particularly cancer services, so that our oncology and radiation oncology patients do not have to travel on a bus to Brisbane.

These are all concerns that have been raised with me over the past four years whilst campaigning full time in the electorate and which form part of my vision for Mudgeeraba. You will hear much from me on these and many other issues of concern to the people of Mudgeeraba. I will not go quietly into that good night on these and other issues. The people have elected me to represent them in this place and represent them I will, without fear or favour.

I have worked tirelessly in the local community for the past four years as a candidate and as a spokesperson for the Mudgeeraba Action Group. I will continue to fight to improve a whole range of local services, including: to ensure that the government keeps its promise to underground the overhead powerlines in Reedy Creek; to lobby for a new state high school much needed west of the M1; to pressure for a significant increase in our local police numbers; to continue working to save the Elysium Road overpass at exit 75; to bring about fast-tracking of the long awaited duplication of the M1 and further community consultation for those interchanges at Mudgeeraba, Robina and Reedy Creek; and dramatic upgrading of Worongary Road, Springbrook Road and Beechmont Road.

The health system is very close to my heart. I have been a registered general nurse for over 25 years. I am still a registered nurse in Queensland. I was motivated to run for the state seat of Mudgeeraba in 2006 after watching my two sisters, both nurses, and many of their nurse friends being burnt out by a system that did not reward or recognise their contribution to nursing. I was formerly the general manager and director of nursing at the Wesley Gold Coast Hospital. During that time I was awarded the Royal Australian College of Nursing distinguished services award for Queensland as well as the Prime Minister's Centenary of Federation medal for distinguished service to the Australian community in health. I am particularly delighted that I will be able to provide to this place that vocal and credible representation that

nurses are so rightly demanding. I will ensure that this most trusted and dedicated profession gets the acknowledgement it deserves.

I have been a successful businesswoman and a vocal health advocate and was the winner of the Telstra Queensland Businesswoman of Year AusIndustry category in 2000. I was also awarded the outstanding role model award in 2001 on International Women's Day for my services to the Gold Coast community in health. This is part of the background I bring to my role. You can rest assured I will focus my skills and experience to stand up for locals and provide strong representation on behalf of the residents of the Mudgeeraba electorate.

Before continuing, Mr Speaker, I would like to pause to congratulate you on your appointment. I look forward to seeing your legendary fairness, good humour and even-handedness permeate the proceedings in this chamber for the life of your appointment.

My sincere good wishes also go to the former member for Mudgeeraba. I wish her well as she rediscovers her family after representing Mudgeeraba. I hope that her future is everything she wishes for herself.

As well as the electors of Mudgeeraba who have helped me to properly understand so many local issues, there are some other people who have helped me on my journey to this place. My campaign team was outstanding. Many of those who assisted in the 2006 campaign again assisted with this latest campaign. Some are here today and I must thank them. My campaign manager, Nikki Ross, has learnt in this hotly contested political battle just how significant are the demands placed on family. I thank Nikki, her husband, Craig, and our Mudgeeraba mascot their young daughter, Ella, for their time, their unwavering support and their friendship.

My parents always believed in me. In particular, my father Snowy who passed away before the 2006 state election—I can hear him saying today, 'We expected it of you, Mate.' My mother, Barb, who passed away less than six months ago and is buried in the Mudgeeraba cemetery, would have been cheering me on from above during many a protest at the Mudgeeraba interchange. I know my mother and father are watching over me today. I pray the courage and determination that characterised their lives will live on in me.

My sisters, Josie and Cathy, who have always been there for me, who helped on election day and at many of the 75 listening posts I held during the course of campaign and in all sorts of other ways, have watched their sister achieve many things since moving to Queensland and I know that they are very proud of me and will continue to keep me grounded as only sisters can. Many people today have spoken of family. Without my family none of my achievements would have been possible. I can never thank them enough but I will leave them to last.

There are other people from my campaign team, booth captains and workers to thank such as Di Hayson, Lindy Sloane, Eunice Simpson, Richard Lennon, John Snell, Jacquie Clarey, Rod Clarey, Bryan Durham, John Kearney, Geoff Provest, Greg McKenzie, Ray Cavanaugh, Peter Pedersen, Peter Yaun, Glenn Snowdon, Robert Magyar, Di Grayson, Sarina Patane, Wendy Flett and Cheryle Royle. I thank my very good friend and confidante Geoffrey Greene who I frequently say was the one person who drove me onwards to this place, often against insurmountable odds.

I thank the big bloke from up north for his advice of 'Never give up, never give in', for his support and encouragement during many dark days both politically and more importantly personally during my mother Barb's illness and subsequent death. I thank the political mentors and people I so very much admire—the Hon. John Howard, Senator the Hon. Nick Minchin, the Hon. Tony Abbott, Dr the Hon. Brendan Nelson, the Hon. Alexander Downer and the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop—all of whom have supported me both personally and politically over the years and who in many ways have moulded me as the progressive conservative who stands before you today.

I must make mention of three other servants of the people—firstly, my colleague the member for Southern Downs and shadow Attorney-General, Lawrence Springborg, rightly described as the father of LNP. I was privileged to work closely with him in the historic formation of the party as a united conservative force. His advice, support and friendship are deeply appreciated. Secondly, I acknowledge the universally respected the Hon. Bob Quinn for his solid advice and friendship over the years that it has taken to get me here today. Thirdly, I acknowledge the Rt Hon. Ian Sinclair, the former federal Leader of the National Party, who provided me with support, encouragement and his own personal endorsement even in a three-cornered contest when I first stood as the Liberal candidate in Mudgeeraba in 2006 and again in 2009 as the Liberal National Party candidate.

I thank Tom and Ruth Tate, Daryl Fenell, Terry White, Peter Ord, Kevin Ryan, Bob Bryan, the Hon. Warwick Parer, Dan Wood, Peter Epstein, Christopher Stear and many others who never gave up on me after my narrow defeat in 2006. I thank close friends such as Kaye and Shane Martin and Lyn Fidler and my parliamentary colleagues such as Steven Ciobo MP, Stu Robert MP, Tim Nicholls, Jann Stuckey, Mark McArdle and John-Paul Langbroek for their guidance and friendship over the ensuing years until I finally

arrived at this most momentous of occasions—my maiden speech. To all of the amazing residents in the electorate who have travelled this journey with me such as Ross Kouimanis, Lucy Moss, Diane Ednie, John Crauford, Mary Hegarty, Ian Bolton, Stewie Elliott, Jill Waddell, Barb Malcolm, Kim Wooler, Karen Fullarton, Lloyd Mills, Des Brown, Pat Bastow, all of the business owners at City Links estate, the residents who had my sign sites proudly displayed in their front yards and to those tireless workers during the campaign who stood on the side of the road with me every weekend, my thanks to you can never be repaid.

Finally and most importantly, I thank my children, Ben, Greg and Jill. Their support, love and sacrifice have enabled me to be here today. My children have lived and breathed the last four years of politics with me and have sustained me through many highs and lows during this process. To my sons, Ben and Greg—Ben is here today—who sat on the side of the road with me every weekend, who hammered in corflutes, who set up booths in the rain, who manned polling booths and scrutineered, who put out A-frames at the crack of dawn on the Nielsens Road roundabout for a year so that it was safe for me to protest later in the morning and for the countless hours of stuffing envelopes, running errands and cooking dinner when they needed to: I have never been so proud to be your mother. To my daughter, Jill, who worked tirelessly through my first campaign and flew up for this campaign to make sure she was here to help me win: I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

So many people have put their faith and trust in me to deliver in this place to work on their behalf and to be a voice for their concerns—a voice that will help shape the future for our children and grandchildren and for their children and grandchildren. That is the case with every one of us who is privileged to sit here today. In good conscience, how can I or any other member not return that trust by way of total commitment, honesty, loyalty, focus and dedication? I have lived my life by the motto, 'If you tell me I can't, I will show you I can'—doubtless the catchcry of many successful people and especially, by necessity, many successful women.

To the residents of Mudgeeraba, my resolve to effectively and vigorously serve you is made even stronger by your continued support and encouragement. You told me many times my role is to champion your local issues, and that is how I will spend my time. My pledge to you is that I will not let you down. Your concerns are my concerns. I will continue to listen to you and I will continue to fight on your behalf to ensure that our needs are loudly and effectively represented in this parliament.