




Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 13 May 2021

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (5.43 pm): It is a great honour and privilege to stand here again in the people's house on behalf of my home, the Noosa electorate, and all who inhabit that very special place. To the newer members of the chamber as well as those who have been re-elected may I offer my hearty congratulations. If you have never visited my community, please drop by. It is an incredible, diverse and welcoming mob, beautiful inside and out, even when sorting out our differences with a passion that can be stunning and as fierce as our summer storms, ultimately revealing great compassion and connectivity in the calm of the aftermath. To say that I am intensely proud of those I represent is an understatement. They inspire me to be better and do better, as they do.

The election just passed saw this passion and commitment displayed again through our local teal army, both two- and four-legged. This proud movement reflected an ongoing intent to see politics and electioneering move from deceptive tactics and the power of the purse to true community campaigning. Comprised of all ages, political ideologies, religious beliefs and income levels, they were united in their effort to continue the culture of the collaborative 'can do' with representation that is focused on people and respect; one that rejects misleading advertising, misinformation and misdemeanours and disrespect to residents, which sadly was displayed by some yet again. We trust this will be the last time we ever see that in my community and that future candidates will reject divisive methodologies as part of their offerings. I also trust that in future the reply paid envelopes for postal votes clearly articulate who the post office box belongs to out of respect for all Queenslanders, and I will not rest until this deception ends.

There are so many to thank and so many unforgettable moments shared during the election: the famous 'corflute kings', bonza booth managers and market matriarchs. Many were hesitant first-timers; however, their confidence soared when they experienced the incredible energy created by a positive campaign. We also had times of great sadness and introspection—the passing of a long-time friend on the first day of pre-poll who worked the booths for my four campaigns. Trying to hide grief while handing out cards is never easy, and to find out that one of our much loved 'tealers' put off having an operation for her cancer to support our efforts left me speechless. It really hit home about our responsibilities when we are elected and how it is both a selfish and selfless undertaking. There are times of great guilt, which I know at some point we have all shared as MPs.

To my much better half, 'Shoey', family and friends and supporters in the Noosa electorate, all I can say is how much I treasure and love you. For those unrelated by blood, whether you like it or not, as you know, I consider you extended family. We are one mob, and I thank you for putting your trust and faith in me again.

To say that I learned much in my first term through both achievements and frustrations is an understatement. To progress commitments made was not easy, however, it was very worthwhile, including the historical ones. Funding for stage 1 of the Tewantin bypass, also known as Beckmans Road, and replacing the very dangerous Six Mile Creek Bridge No. 7 were welcomed by my community—we do very much look forward to that shovel ceremony—as well as hulk removal, improved

management of the Noosa River, including dioxin testing and progress for our Noosa North Shore 'overlove'. It is a start, yes; however, we have a way to go and the rollovers, hooning, congestion and safety of our turtle hatches are urgent priorities.

Our decommissioned TAFE site will finally be brought out of its disintegration after a seven-year journey that no-one will forget and I hope to never encounter anywhere again. To see taxpayers' dollars treated in this way is beyond wasteful. It goes against everything we fight for, including repurposing and recycling. The COVID Works for Queensland assistance to Noosa council has seen everything from our halls—some of them very historic and loved—getting the work they need through to pathways and walkways, stage 1 of the master trails, and a community development officer for disaster recovery. The list is long and the funds are much appreciated. I will never stop requesting that Noosa be re-categorised for this funding ongoing.

We cannot forget the journey to equity in the chamber. With the first of the crossbench parliamentary policy officers commencing, it is the start of a new era and one that will be of benefit now and for future parliaments and parliamentarians.

Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, as you know, representing our electorates is much more than ticking off the big ticket items. The hundreds of good outcomes for our community and individual cases that are never broadcast are ones that bring tears of grief, as well as hope and joy. Thank you to all involved—from our frontliners, to departmental staff and ministers, to fellow residents and to my fabulous staff Lisa, Zac and AMF, volunteers and interns. These outcomes are a result of hard work, compromise, prioritisation and negotiation, as well as pulling out of hairs. Most importantly, there was lots of collaboration. It is never easy, but if our systems worked as they should they could be delivered with greater efficiency than what we are at times seeing. It should never be about which of us is elected or what the issue is. Our role as MPs, I believe, is to ensure departments and agencies have the legislation, systems and resources to do what they need to do. When they cannot do that, they need a concise way to get the message through to us about what needs to change.

Some of these failings of our systems are deeply affecting our community's physical and mental wellbeing which leads to even greater costs that could be avoided. Examples are easy to find. Within my own electorate, there is an inappropriate volume of heavy haulage impacting our infrastructure, businesses and residents in our country villages, and that is why an urgent review of policy surrounding reviews of environmental authorities is essential. As well, we are going to need plenty of funding for major works that are now needed.

I will give another example. We have incredible volunteer organisations that work tirelessly in multiple realms, yet they live in uncertainty when waiting for funding of the essential services they deliver and this impacts the health of the organisation and the individuals involved. That is totally unnecessary. We have recently seen the ongoing impacts of COVID, with delays to surgeries and, concerningly, our ambulance services. As exemplified in my adjournment speech during the last sitting, if we cannot get assistance to our elderly in their time of emergency, we need a system that can advise of the delay and options of assistance available. We could have lost one of our matriarchs through blood loss, and a community nurse or a volunteer first responder would have averted this near tragedy.

Bad behaviours on our Noosa North Shore require a firm stance with greater consequences, as current infringements are not a deterrent—although the drone has been a very welcome addition. On the other hand, change brought in without community consultation is a recipe for great dissent and one that can be easily rectified. Advising key stakeholder groups should be a standard before any announcements are made in the media.

What can I say about our housing crisis? I have brought this issue into this chamber on numerous occasions over the past three years. Some simple changes in legislation and how we view housing would have gone much further than the provision of 800 social houses per year, when across Queensland 26,000 approved applicants waited. These numbers do not take into account those who apply and do not meet the criteria. I have many of those in my community who are workers with such high rents and they are not eligible. This again needs reviewing. The current commitment of 5,500 social homes to be built is welcomed. However, it still falls far short of demand. We are now hearing—and we have heard it in this chamber this week—from many more MPs across the state who are experiencing what could have been averted if those who work in community, cohousing and share housing spaces, as just some examples, were listened to and assisted by all levels of government.

For Noosa, we are now having a staffing crisis on top of the social impacts because of this housing crisis. After the year that our tourism and hospitality businesses have gone through, to be confronted with closing hotel rooms through lack of staff is another result of slow response times and is damaging to our economy. However, it is one that we will find options for and I thank Minister Miles and the state planners for working with us on this, as well as Minister Hinchliffe.

Arenas that are not meeting community expectation should not be feared. We need to build trust in our governance systems. Being independently critiqued is one way to build confidence. Greater efficiency would be welcomed by not only constituents, communities and their MPs but also the frontliners and departmental staff who are doing the very best they can in a system that at times appears designed to grind everyone down through process. A demonstration of this was the recent motion for an inquiry into the estimates process. I may not have agreed with the form the motion took. However, I will support any avenue that can deliver equitable outcomes. The attack and defence mechanism used across the chamber was disappointing and is one that we need to move beyond. All that was required was a bipartisan agreement to look at how we can do better. This includes ensuring that allocated speaking spots are not guillotined, as was experienced this morning during question time.

The list going forward this term is not short by any means. Stages 2 and 3 of the Tewantin bypass need committed funding, and projects that demonstrate sustainability and deliverability for our sporting, wellness, housing and connectivity endeavours need support. We need an extension of our emergency department at Noosa Hospital to minimise going into bypass mode, plus the initiation of a volunteer first responder program to decrease duress on our ambulance services and our residents. Patients find it difficult to get back home when they are sent an hour away to SCUH instead of to Noosa Hospital, and that also needs to be considered. In a small community that swells by over a million visitors each year, we appreciate borderless policies—however, not when our services are being utilised elsewhere, making our community vulnerable and putting the lives of our vulnerable at even greater risk.

Noosa is really innovative and not shy of trialling programs. Our Be: Noosa Connect pilot has begun, providing transport to SCUH for our frail who cannot access their medical appointments. This pilot is self-funded with the assistance of volunteers and is already identifying where the gaps are. Concerningly, it is quickly facing being oversubscribed by those who need daily treatment for weeks at a time. The unfair eligibility criteria of the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme is a contributor to this and I will continue to seek that this be rectified. This was a result of services at Nambour Hospital being moved to SCUH. Appropriate care for an ageing community is paramount and we await the clinical master plan recommendation. This includes when access to affordable medicinal cannabis will eventuate.

Affordable and sustainable living continues to be a priority for the majority of my residents. Currently, there is a determination being considered around the minimum size of home water treatment plants that will increase the cost to the small-size end user by over \$6,000. Why, you ask. I have yet to hear a legitimate rationale. However, what users in my community say is very clear. Those who are trying to live smaller with less impact on the environment should not be penalised by mandated larger systems. Their efforts should be encouraged and applauded. There are many other examples where policy is problematic, including those STAS rules which make no sense and are contributing to family duress.

An open mind to future school models that can deliver a reported better experience and outcomes for our children and teachers by reducing stress without impacting on results is essential. Reviewing aged practices and conventions in this chamber that preclude the inclusiveness sought is needed to demonstrate we are more than words. We need to walk the talk. Hence why I have and will continue to seek independent reviews of our systems and processes that fall outside the realm of the Queensland Audit Office.