



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Hansard 5 August 1998

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Mr D'ARCY (Woodridge—ALP) (5.42 p.m.): Mr Speaker, let me congratulate you personally and publicly on your elevation to the high office of Speaker. Interestingly, I have stood for 11 elections and been elected nine times. I think I am the only serving member of the '72 Parliament left in this place. Perhaps that has given me some ability to look at the bigger picture.

Firstly, I wish to speak a little about Woodridge and something that we have seen all Governments do—something that I hope in my time I see the end of. I am referring to marginal seat politics. During my time in this place, Governments of all political ilks—and I do not absolve Labor Governments; certainly with respect to one period—have pork-barrelled marginal seats. That is a disgraceful thing for politicians to do. One thing that we must do is move away from having three-year terms. In my time, politicians—there have been very few statesmen—have not looked at the big picture. That is particularly so when it has come to policies in marginal seats.

For example, electorates received police shopfronts when they did not need them. We had massive problems in areas such as Woodridge, but we were not getting them. We were promised many things, and we did get some—for example, police in schools and some other things. However, under various Governments pork-barrelling has taken place on a large scale. Surely we represent all Queenslanders. It is important to address the areas that have the greatest need. There are other issues apart from obtaining police shopfronts and police in schools that should form a part of addressing the crime problems that we face in those areas. I have always been a great advocate of crime prevention. It is best to prevent problems, whether they be in relation to police, health or any other areas, before they arise.

One of the problems we face because of our short political terms is that there is often pressure to find short-term political solutions. If I have left this place before somebody has had the sanity to introduce terms of at least four years, I will be very sad for Queenslanders of the future. That is something that should have been done. There has been plenty of opportunity to do so. We would not even have to go to a referendum to do that. The fact is that that is one of the things that is necessary if we are to look at the big picture.

I wish to mention a couple of issues in relation to my electorate. I am still very much opposed to having a single road to the Gold Coast. New members might not know how much I campaigned for a second road. I still think it will happen. Members who know what is going on would know that land is still being resumed for a second road. Electorates such as mine on the outskirts of Brisbane through which the Pacific Highway funnels are the ones that have been disadvantaged. The people in those electorates have to get onto that highway to get into the city. They have to compete with all of the traffic that should be just through traffic. To some extent the coalition and the Goss Government's vacillation on the issue left Queenslanders nonplussed. However, the people of my electorate have been left with a pollution problem and a traffic problem. It solved nothing. I object to the massive amounts of money being spent on the highway in that area.

I wish now to speak about one of the things that has frightened me concerning the outer suburban area. We have not been able to achieve integrated transport planning. Under our present system, the buses run on a different timetable to the trains and the two are not coordinated. We have an exploding population in south-east Queensland. We have not got it right. I do not want to go on

about the busways and what the new Minister for Transport has to do. Members should read some of the cross-factional and cross-party reports submitted by the Public Works Committee and others about the transport problem. We should get serious and look at the big picture. If we did, a lot more things would be happening in that regard.

I will address one of the things that should be happening. I cannot understand, for example, in the morning why we cannot have a train coming in from Woodridge, a train coming in from Cleveland and a train coming in from Caboolture that is an express train in the morning after it is full. It is amazing that they cannot get a timetable right, that they cannot get a couple of express trains to come through from the outer suburbs. It is too hard for the authorities; the trains have to stop at every station. That has gone on since time immemorial. As I said, in relation to the transport system in the outer areas, Woodridge and other area of Logan have always been disadvantaged, because we have not had access to the good bus system operated by the Brisbane City Council. We have relied on private bus systems, some of which have grown like topsy from small companies to big companies. Often, they have not been able to meet the needs of the people. That is still happening in those outlying areas.

I wish to refer briefly to health. I am a great believer in preventive health care. The other day, I read some frightening statistics in relation to the United States. Its health bill has reached \$1 trillion. Interestingly, according to the statistics, 30% of that amount is spent on treating people in their last 30 days of life. Clearly, somebody has missed the boat very badly. To some extent, that is happening here, too. We are not doing nearly enough in terms of prevention. I am not talking about snake-oil salesman and other things we hear about.

Today, I was a little taken aback when I read an article in the Courier-Mail concerning a heart scorer. Having had a few heart attacks and a bypass, I know a bit about this area. When we speak to cardiologists, we realise that a lot of the information we get is not factual. What I am holding is a CAT scan. It looks like it is a CAT scan that has the ability to read angiography. It is not.

I rang the doctor about the article this morning and I said, "Are you bringing this machine in?" He said, "It is an Israeli machine." I said, "Are you going to charge a CAT scan fee?" He said, "Yes, that is basically it." I said, "What have you done to it? Is it so much faster?" He said, "No, it is not." Then I checked with some of the medical people who told me that the machine costs about \$700,000—which is roughly the price of a CAT scanner—and is linked into a computer which may or may not pick up the right information. It could be preventive.

However, a machine to do exactly that work has been around for ages in the United States, and the technology has been around for 14 or 15 years. It is just too expensive to introduce into Australia. That is the Imatron machine, which actually does do a fast CAT scan and does some of the things that are being claimed about this new machine. I am not saying that these people are not introducing another tool that can be used by cardiologists to determine if there is a risk factor. However, the Imatron definitely does do that. It takes so much of a millisecond to take a photograph, and it can tell doctors just from the photograph whether the arteries are blocked or not. This current machine cannot.

Mr Borbidge: Have you got the franchise?

Mr D'ARCY: I thought about it. The bad news is that—and I have probably mentioned this—when I was in San Francisco in the United States with the current Premier when he was Health Minister and because of my knowledge of things I suggested that we go out and visit the Imatron works. Of course, they took a CAT scan of both of us. Mine does not look so hot, but his was perfect. The bad news for people on the other side of the House is that the Premier is going to live a long time.

Basically, I am saying that preventive medicine should be a priority. I do not care what area it is in—we have done a lot in some preventive health care areas, but we have not done nearly enough to prevent our Budgets blowing out in the longer term as a result of the costs of just keeping people alive. That is not what it should be about. We have to do a lot more in the preventive areas.

I mentioned population growth the other day in a short speech during the Matters of Public Interest debate, although I did not quite finish. Two things always come against the argument for population increase. They are the fragility of the environment and the infrastructure. I can deal with infrastructure because I have just dealt with it to some extent. We spend massive amounts of money on infrastructure. From what I have seen of State and Federal Governments and the white elephants that they have managed to pursue—with departments running their own agendas—it seems that about a third of that money is wasted. If transport and infrastructure departments were much more coordinated, we would not be wasting the massive amounts of money that we currently do.

The subject I really want to talk about is my pet of coastal management. When I went back through Hansard the other day I was quite proud to see that the Minister for Lands in 1974 said in this Parliament that he found it absolutely extraordinary that I wanted to save the wetlands and the mangroves, because at that time they were regarded as a pest. It was the old Australian adage that, whereas some people care for the land, there is some sort of conquering of the land mentality in this country—and conquering every part of it. The mentality was: if you see a swamp, you drain it; if you see

a mangrove, you cut it down. That has been the case, despite the fact that the knowledge has been available for decades that the mangrove is the lifeblood of the ocean, that it is the lifeblood of the fishing industry, that it is the lifeblood to curing pollution and that it is a natural thing. We have to be able to protect our wetlands.

Quite frankly, in my time in this place I have seen nothing but grey from every political party. A couple of times there has been an attempt to introduce extra measures for coastal management, and I see the former Minister for planning in the Chamber. The Integrated Planning Bill was one of the things that was supposed to coordinate all of this. I did not believe that it was ever going to achieve that, and I said so at the time and I say it again now. Even if all the measures of the Integrated Planning Bill were introduced, we would still have departmental issues in which one department would fight another department, and that would result in a conglomeration of decisions. In the end, the only thing to suffer would be the environment.

A typical example that I come across in south-east Queensland is that there are more reasons for destroying more mangroves than just development. One of the big problems we have down here with the increase of population is that we need transport bases. Consequently, wherever we have catch transport—whether it be to the islands or so forth—somebody wants a lease, somebody wants a bit more land and somebody wants a bigger terminal. Of course, what suffers? Where does it have to go? On the mangroves!

One such case at Cleveland at the moment absolutely amazes me. Evidently all of the departments have been involved for some period. They must have been in conspiratorial collusion to have been able to do it. I see that Natural Resources is the one that eventually gave up the bit of paper. Transport was involved because it wanted to dredge up the land. Environment was involved as well as the local council. When I looked at it I thought, "That is not the high water mark." Then I found out that Cabinet had put a minute through changing the high water mark. I do not know which Cabinet, but it came out on the computer that a decision had been made that the high water mark was no longer where it used to be; it had been shifted back 20 metres. Of course, it had been filled immediately and a very unnatural group of mangroves is going in.

The latest trick is that the departments want to dredge up the poison from the bay and let it settle for a couple of years. The only place they want to dump it is right on the mangroves. Keith Williams would be proud of this. Because the site is in the Moreton Bay National Park, they then had to excise part of it. So every director-general is happy that this has happened. I brought it to the attention of the new Minister and I hope that something can be done about it.

I am basically saying that the Bills and the preventive medicine that we have had for coastal management and wetlands have not been good enough. There are just too many grey areas. One example is where the Department of Primary Industries can issue a mangrove removal permit for flood mitigation. That is a contradiction in terms to start with. There has not been just one; hundreds and hundreds of them have been issued for flood mitigation. So they take a nice, safe mangrove creek area and turn it into a drain.

Then we find out that most of the development between, say, Brisbane and the Gold Coast has taken place in ASS areas. It was only four years ago that we in Queensland found out what ASS was. Everyone else in the world knew that it was to do with the acid sulfate soils. I see the former Minister for Environment smiling over there. He did not get a lot of support at the time. We should not be allowing any of that to take place. New South Wales has banned all canal subdivisions for that very reason. It had some horrific fish kills in its rivers because of the poison from the acid sulfates. It is going to happen here again. We can forget about a fishing industry and clean oceans for future generations if we continue in the way that we are going. People say, "But we have already let that through; we cannot do much about it. In the Jacobs Well area all any Government has to do is understand that in the longer term not only will the State and the people suffer, but somebody is going to pay."

Whenever I talk about Raby Bay, I always get bucketed. But the fact of the matter is that the people who developed Raby Bay have now walked away from it. Their company has gone into liquidation, which it was always going to do. The walls are still falling down and there is still a collapsed area. At the end of the day, who pays? The people—the council and the Governments will pay! That is what happened when Gore destroyed the southern mouth of the Coomera River. They put up a rock wall instead of mangrove trees. What happens when a rock wall falls in? Who fixes it? The people—the Government ends up having to come in and fix it! That problem is going to get worse. We compound the problem just to allow people to live in these areas. As if we do not have enough land in Australia for land development without developing every major wetland on the coast! It is not necessary and it should have been changed ages ago.

I have sought assurances that something will be done in a much more coordinated way. Quite frankly, the only way to do it is to do what I suggested back in the 1970s: we need a strategic plan for the whole of the coast of Queensland. That was a time when F111s were already photographing every square millimetre of Queensland, so the maps were not difficult to obtain. Then, to be able to deal

with the departments and the Government, we need one end authority to be able to make the decisions and to strategically plan those areas. We should leave the wetlands alone; there are plenty of areas on the coast that can still be developed.

The number of tourist developments up and down the coast that have ended up looking like Hawaii or some other place in America is disgraceful. What they have destroyed in that period is unbelievable. From a commercial point of view—and I do know something about development from the commercial point of view—around about 70% of them have already been broke once, and a large percentage of those have been broke two or three times. So the fact of life is that most of these developments are not commercially viable, and Williams' operation at Cardwell is also not viable.
